

Science and Mathematics Education Centre

**A Phenomenological Account of the Formation of Self through
Interplay of Memories and Life**

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Doctor of Philosophy
of
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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for any award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. H. Starnes", is written over a horizontal line.

Signature:

Date: 24/06/2016

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Abstract

In 1876 a twelve-year-old boy commenced work in a jam factory in Hobart town. His name was Henry Jones and his job was to paste labels on tins of jam. After becoming an expert jam boiler he took over the factory and built it into a multinational business. He was knighted in 1919. His jam brand, which is still in use, is IXL—an acronym for his personal motto ‘I excel’.

Ninety years on a slightly older young man commenced work in the same factory pasting labels on jam tins. This thesis includes the narrative of the protagonist’s more modest journey over half a century from the same starting point. From the perspective of impending retirement from work, shards of memory are recalled from the variety of tasks, roles and contexts experienced. John Dewey, Robert Soklowski, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Peter Drucker, Max van Manen and Mark Rowlands are amongst those who assist the researcher in the interplay of memory and phenomenological reflection. Dynamic heuristics ranging from poetry, journalism, media, popular novels and the reflections of others contribute to hermeneutical reinforcement as the author uses the metaphor of ‘the Everyman’ to draw on both uniquely personal but also ostensibly universal experiences of work.

The initial interest for this thesis was to understand the phenomenon of the lived experience of transition from work to retirement. It became apparent that before life after work and separation from work could be contemplated, an understanding of self and the experiences that contributed to the formation of self required reconciliation. A long-forgotten work, Abraham Maslow's, *Euspychian Management*, appeared and required an examination of the influence of this work on modern management practices, advocating a singular commitment to work in the interest of personal growth toward self-actualisation and that the workplace is where humankind could be perfected. Maslow's work has profoundly influenced how work is organised and how it has led to a blurring between work and leisure and how it affects the instrumental nature of work in conferring meaning for and on individuals. The nature of this influence has become central to the hermeneutic questioning in this inquiry. This examination includes a drawing of parallels between Dewey and Gadamer's notions of vocational virtue.

A curious dichotomy emerges—work is a blessing and a curse to all those who work. Studs Terkel uses the term violence to describe the impact of work on the body and spirit. Lars Svendsen reflects that work is too small a vehicle to meet the diverse aspirations of workers. This thesis contains part of a diary of the daily experiences of a knowledge worker and discloses some insights into his lifeworld. The reflection and recollection of recorded memories provides a vehicle for understanding forces that might be instrumental in the formation of self and permits some tentative guidance for the potential futures in life after paid work. Personal reconciliation becomes possible with

the contemplation of the paradox of idleness in pursuit of wisdom to move intelligently into an uncertain future.

Chapter 1 A beginning

It is the beginning of the week and I am refreshed after a three-day break. It is my 'prime real estate time' when the events of the week have not had a chance to fill the blank spaces in my diary. I have made a list of the things I need to do today so my mind is clear. Both the theory of neuroscience and the practice of a tidy desk attest to this. The month is my birth month and I am fresh into another year of life—a gift that becomes more precious as the years pass. The phenomenon of time passing at an increasing rate is an indicator of my stage of life. While memories of my youth contain languid days of leisure and periods of excruciating boredom where the clock stood still, my current reality is dealing with far too little time to accomplish my goals.

The year indicates that I am 64 years of age—an age my father never reached; he died of cancer at 61. Friends are retired, others dead, some are recovering from serious illness and others are about to enter that period where illness stalks them. I am not retired—I work in a variety of freelance roles that fill my week with variety and meaning. I feel young and vigorous having risen at 5.30am to ride an exercise bike for 45 minutes before plunging into a pool to stretch and temper my body. This is an exercise regimen I have tried to maintain most of my adult life in the belief that it will maintain my physical and mental vigour late into old age. I gaze out on a barren garden soon to be planted with a

profusion of flowers and shrubs to complement a recently renovated house. I am looking forward to the physical task of preparing the ground for them and nurturing them to create a verdant garden from neglect and barrenness.

I gaze from an office specifically designed to fulfill the function of a place to write and think. On my left is a bookcase with many volumes waiting to be read, old favourites to be re-read and sources of past insight. There are small stacks of notebooks full of early writing and musings to be re-read in the context of my current task. These books and notebooks are a small sample of the library that waits in cartons under the house for rediscovery. A piano sonata plays softly in the background thanks to iTunes Radio, a recent addition to my desktop.

The date and the description of the physical context provide the setting for the work I have just commenced, the writing of a PhD. Why would a time-poor person, in the last quarter of his life ignore the press of other activities and commence a difficult and grueling task—a task that will test his discipline, intellect and endurance?

The motivations for this undertaking are manifold but at its heart I want to tell my story. To quote Karen Blixen, “To be a person is to have a story to tell.” Why, at this time and in this place, do I have the need and the motivation to tell my story?

While this may fill my days and provide some limited interest to family and friends, it is the written equivalent of a scrapbook and perhaps an exercise in self-justification and puffery. So before commencing I need to address the question about purpose in depth. This thesis must serve a wider purpose than the chronicling of the modest career of an unremarkable person.

There is however, one unique lens that I do bring to this inquiry and that is the ability to be ‘an Everyman’. By this stage in my career, I have traversed the major job classifications that have formed the basis for modern economies and Western society. As a result while what I have been witness to may, on the surface seem unremarkable, these observations have the potential to reveal deeper truths about work and our relation to it.

This brings me to a consideration of the task of ‘an Everyman’. I have used the term to signify an observer from inside the action. Wikipedia risks telling us that ‘an Everyman’ in contemporary literature,

Occupies the role of protagonist without being a “hero” and without necessarily being a round character or a dynamic character... But the character’s near omnipresence shifts the focus from character development to events and story-lines surrounding the character.

This construct means that the narrative is not about me but about the broader themes that each worker faces during the course of a working life. This journey across

occupations, industries and particular roles is illustrated by the following passage I wrote in 2010.

A young man leans forward and takes the load of the heavily laden trolley. It gathers momentum and the steel wheels begin to clatter as they run across the cobblestones. The man regulates the speed of the trolley using his own weight to either lean forward on the draw bar to increase speed or alternatively lean back, heels seeking purchase on the cobbles. The trolley is traversing the central roadway of a large jam factory. The air is sweet with fruity steam and the cobbles slightly sticky on the soles of his feet.

This is his first job and effectively he is a beast of burden. Perhaps the only reason that he is pulling the trolley is that a pit pony would represent a hygiene risk in a jam factory. The scene could be described as Dickensian and this would have been accurate in chronological terms. One of the machines the young man worked on was manufactured in 1863, three years before Dickens' death and one hundred years before the young man's employment. As Chapter 2 will explain the jam factory was in some ways far removed from the dark satanic mills of the Industrial Revolution but in many others, little had changed.

A different scene occurs 40 years later. It represents a complete contrast to the one already described. The man, no longer young, is sitting in a leather chair in a boardroom on the 37th floor of an office tower in Perth, Western Australia. He looks out across the modern landscape of the city, the wide expanse of the Swan River to some of the most affluent suburbs in the country. The sunlight highlights the newness of much that he

sees, built at the start of a minerals and oil and gas boom that continues today. His real tools are an analytical mind and quick wit, a desire to understand the particular needs of his client, the patience to listen and modify messages to match his audience. He has made the journey from providing brawn to brain, from horsepower to intellect, from the factory to the office, from the bottom of the pecking order to the top.

Again, it is work that has brought him to this place. He is there to assist the senior audit partners of a chartered accounting firm in their fee negotiations with major clients. The only tools he has at his disposal is set of PowerPoint slides and a reputation as an expert in this area, having originally developed the materials for this firm. I should also add that his advice would be both deceptively simple and well-received. His clients take responsibility for the accuracy of the published accounts of some of the most important and complex companies in the country. The contrasting scenes are the bookends of a working life spanning 50 years. While I can reflect on my good fortune—to make the journey and the opportunities it has provided, others have not been so fortunate. That divide is reflected in the work of the American poet, Philip Levine. Lee Siegel describes Levine in an article, ‘Poet of Drudgery’ in the magazine *Intelligent Life* (2011),

Whitman, the hirsute bard of Camden, New Jersey, may be the great poet of American democracy. But it is Levine who has been direct about one of democracy’s most taboo subjects: the fact that members of one segment of humanity are doomed to soulless, unreflective, unfulfilling work, while those of another, infinitely smaller segment are blessed with the opportunity to live out their

destiny in their work. The unacknowledged gap between these two tribes of humanity has the profoundest social and political consequences. (Siegel, 2011)

As I struggle to answer these questions, the concept of knowing and wisdom recur in my thoughts and although the Henry Handel Richardson novel has popularised the phrase, the story and the journey are about the 'getting of wisdom'. As Mark Strom says,

No definition will do wisdom justice. It is simply too vast, subtle and profound. Yet wisdom is not utterly mysterious to us: we recognize it in the words, characters and actions of people. Perhaps like love, we know wisdom more tacitly than overtly: we know more than we can say or define. We know love, and wisdom, as much by its absence as its presence, and we can discern the genuine article from presence. And, like love, we long for the ways wisdom enriches and completes us. (2014, p.5)

Strom goes on to state,

Wisdom is as varied as we are. It lives with all our glory and profundity, contradiction and absurdity. We glimpse it in fleeting insights as often as in settled understanding. We name an enduring relationship with our dearest ones as a life of love. Yet not every moment of even the most intimate relationship bears the marks of love. We cannot live with such intensity. Likewise no one, not even the wisest, thinks and acts with unbroken wisdom. Just as we lapse into forgetfulness and thoughtlessness towards the ones we love most, even the wisest lapse into folly. Wisdom is disarmingly human: always within reach, yet somehow elusive.

(Strom, 2014, p. 5)

This definition provided in a textbook on leadership, places wisdom as a phenomenological concept. It cannot be anything else.

Transcending 'the Everyman'

While the application of wisdom can be described in the natural language or “mundanese” (Sokolowski, 2000), and a propositional reflection can be made which takes into account the context of the application of wisdom at a place, time and circumstance, the changing, evanescent nature of wisdom places it firmly in the phenomenological domain because wisdom requires more than a propositional distance. As Robert Sokolowski illustrates in *An Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000), when reflecting on a 50-year-old house, he describes propositional reflection as being based on one state of affairs,

... on the house being fifty years old. Everything else is left in place and not reflected on... the sounds we make, the trees, the lawn, the sky, the weather... (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 188)

On the other hand, suggests Sokolowski, when

I engage in philosophical reflection, when I exercise phenomenological reduction, I take distance toward everything in the natural attitude: not just the house's being fifty years old, but the whole house, the trees, the lawn, you and me as conversationalists, the weather, the earth, the sky... (2000, p. 188)

In my journey I describe events and circumstances in the natural attitude or in mundanese. I endeavour as much as the material allows, to adopt a transcendental attitude in trying to derive more enduring truths from my material.

The writing of this story is itself a journey of discovery and the process of writing down my experiences may have unintended results. It is the task of bringing a working life to account before it concludes and attempting to make sense of that life. I have discovered that many of the places so vividly remembered no longer exist and the work practices within these places have disappeared. The personal narrative must also attempt to serve as historical authenticity. I found some inspiration for the task ahead in the following quote from Karl Ove Knausgaard in *A Death in the Family* (2012), part of his six volume autobiography, *My Struggle*.

You know too little and it doesn't exist. You know too much and it doesn't exist.

Writing is drawing the essence of what we know out of the shadows. That is what writing is about. Not what happens there, not what actions are played out there, but the *there* itself. There, that is writing's location and aim.

(Loc. 3823 of 7791)

I am tracing the journey I make towards the '*there*'.

In this thesis I make a conscious decision to use the language of phenomenology where appropriate, and to make this accessible to the general reader. I would like to think that my adult children could read this thesis and understand the motivations and lifeworld of their father. However, in taking a phenomenological approach, I am conscious that there is a difficulty in using some of the terms associated with the discipline. Sokolowski alludes to this.

I would also say that its established terminology is a handicap for the phenomenological movement. Words like “noesis” and “noema,” “reduction,” “life world” and “transcendental ego” tend to become fossilized and provoke artificial problems... The very name “phenomenology” is misleading and clumsy. The terminology translates badly from the German and seems pompous...

(Sokowski, 2000, p. 226)

I found this quote after spending many hours struggling with the book and its sequels. It was then I found an ally in an entirely unexpected place. I was given a copy of *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* by Muriel Barberry. The heroine, Renée, is a 54-year-old concierge and a prolific reader. She is reading *Cartesian Meditations-Introduction to Phenomenology* by Edmund Husserl. She struggles to understand the work and embarks on exhaustive background reading. She concludes,

After a month of frenetic reading I come to the conclusion with immense relief that phenomenology is a fraud. In the same way that cathedrals have always aroused in me a sensation of extreme light-headedness one often feels in the presence of man-made tributes to the glory something that does not exist, phenomenology has tested to the extreme of my ability to believe that so much intelligence has gone to serve so futile an undertaking. (Barberry, 2006, p. 26)

While I have some sympathy with Renée, it is important that I demonstrate a command of the language of the transcendental.

When embarking on a journey, most travellers have some idea of their desired destination or purpose. I have commenced this journey many times and yet the destination and purpose becomes more distant and illusory. Where there had been clarity, it was a mirage that disappeared on approach. However, the time has come to make something of these faltering and tentative journeys and see what they offer. In doing so I must face the risk that my account may be entirely circular and that I have arrived back where I started, yet the need to make sense of our life is an essentially human quest.

This is an account of a journey, my personal journey from adolescence to impending retirement. It is a narrative focused on my working life, an attempt to understand the forces that have shaped that experience. It is a bringing to account of those 50 years but above all, it is an attempt to understand myself. While I understand that my experiences have been unique to my time and to me, there is a need to validate and authenticate my experiences against those of others in similar and divergent circumstances. In tracing this personal exploration in a tentative, inquisitive and non-judgmental way, I hope to offer my contribution to the body of knowledge about identity, work, experience and how this shapes our existence. I have chosen a phenomenological approach because it offers a means of separating myself from the experience to describe both the natural world as experienced and the transcendental world of pure experience. My intentionality is that of the observer not the participant. While I can describe the physical and mental experiences, they are subject to the essential flaws of memory. I am attempting to be an observer of the action, not the agent of the action. This allows my focus to be on the

larger world or themes that emerge from the experience rather than the experience itself. Colin Hunter in a web article, 'Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Research', describes how Husserl used the term *noesis* to

...describe bringing together all sensory data, previous experience and evaluation of similar phenomena which allows the individual to identify a range of possible meanings for the experience. (Hunter, 2011, p. 17)

The narrative is about my journey in the world of work and how that has shaped meaning and my existence as a person. It has made me the person I am, and formed my worldview and my basic beliefs about the nature of life and our responsibility for the decisions we make and avoid.

There are seven basic plots that underpin all stories according to Christopher Brooker in his book, *The Seven Basic Plots*, (2004) two of which could perhaps provide a framework for this narrative. These are the Quest, and Voyage and Return.

The Quest has a central protagonist who is required to undertake a search to find something that is missing. The Quest will take the hero to strange and foreign lands where they will face many dangers and hardship and forces of opposition intent on thwarting their quest. They will be aided in their quest by allies acting for them. Examples of the Quest are Homer's *Odyssey*, Richard Adam's *Watership Down* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Can I place my own humble, less than heroic journey as a quest? Can I make the case?

Alternatively, the story *Voyage and Return* involves a journey. Here, the central character has to undertake a journey where they travel to strange places and have many varied experiences that change them. Eventually, after many years they return to their home changed, wiser and content. Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* are examples of *Voyage and Return*. As an islander, a Tasmanian, I felt the call of foreign lands and experiences. The *Voyage and Return* seems an appropriate template to begin the narrative that begins in Chapter 2. A feature of these fictional journeys is that the protagonist is accompanied by some loyal companions—the band of rabbits in *Watership Down*, Frodo in *Lord of the Rings*. These companions assist the main character in understanding the true nature of their mission and provide critical support at the right time. I have companions for my journey and I have chosen them carefully. I have chosen selected works of art to assist and illuminate my path. These companions will attest to the authenticity of my mix of experiences. Have others shared my physical and mental journeys? Have they drawn the same conclusions about the meaning of their work and have they made similar choices when faced with the same dilemmas? Do my experiences amount to a getting of wisdom that others may benefit from?

My companions will be those who have travelled this way before. They may have experienced the pathway at a different time and under different circumstances, but what they have in common is a need to bring meaning to their experience and to leave a lasting record of those experiences. This record may take many forms—autobiography,

novel, poetry, painting or play. While my experiences may differ, the works of my companions will illuminate my path, provide insights and perspective.

Mirrors and shards

Over some time I have attempted to capture the memories of a working life of over 50 years. Initially, my focus was on the future—a contemplation of imminent retirement from the world of work. My initial approval was for a Masters thesis on Life Transitions in the 21st Century—Job, Career and Vocation. The methodology was to interview a selection of people contemplating a life after work and those who has already made this transition. I started the interviewing and writing process but found myself inexorably drawn to a consideration of the past rather than the future. I was looking in the rear-view mirror and trying to understand where I had been and come from rather than forward looking to an unknown future.

At this point it helps to introduce a metaphorical device that captures this thesis and explains the unifying methodology.

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful.
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.

Sylvia Plath, 'The Mirror' (1961)

The search for truth about the person the mirror reveals, in all of Plath's exactness, is the journey that this thesis represents. There is a complication in that the mirror is broken and lies in shards of varying size and shape. The glimpses of self in these shards are incomplete. An eye here, a portion of a chin there, is a more accurate representation of the thesis that follows. A key question is therefore whether the sum of the incomplete images represented by the shards is in anyway complete and representative of the totality.

An emerging methodology through phenomenological reflection

One of the essential features of phenomenological reflection is the difficult experience of the methodology emerging from the writing itself rather than being externally imposed prior to the writing commencing. The writing process itself is a process of discovery of recollecting a past. The process of writing itself has the effect of changing the past by the selective remembering of times, places and events. This is not a voluntary process where all memories are of equal rank and therefore of equal importance. The conscious and subconscious have provided an editorial blue pencil before the author's pen actually touches the paper. The unconscious mind on what it brings to the conscious mind and the conscious mind on what it chooses to include. The actions of the conscious mind are that of an editorial board selecting the most suitable content for a forthcoming publication. In choosing what to write and what inferences are to be drawn from those remembered experiences I am my own editorial board after the event. The questions of honesty and integrity require examination of my objectives and the intentionality with which I address those objectives. The translation of those remembered and the language

and imagery evoked through the writing process provide a focus and emphasis on those events and those ruminations that have for whatever reason survived the editorial processes described and progressed as far as the printed page.

One of the illuminating thoughts in this process was the concept of the person being revealed through shards or glimpses rather than the complete reflection in a mirror. Is the selection of this metaphorical device an attempt to present only those aspects of the life that may appeal to the reader or reflect well on the author? Or is the use of a shattered mirror that provides the shards an attempt to form a view of the self from selected elements, the shards, rather than a complete image? Does the existence of the shards force the viewer to concentrate harder on the limited image provided and therefore glean more from the sum of the elements than they ordinarily would from a consideration of the whole? Is the author forcing the reader to engage more actively with this work through this metaphorical device? Does a whole picture of a person emerge from the piecing together of the shards?

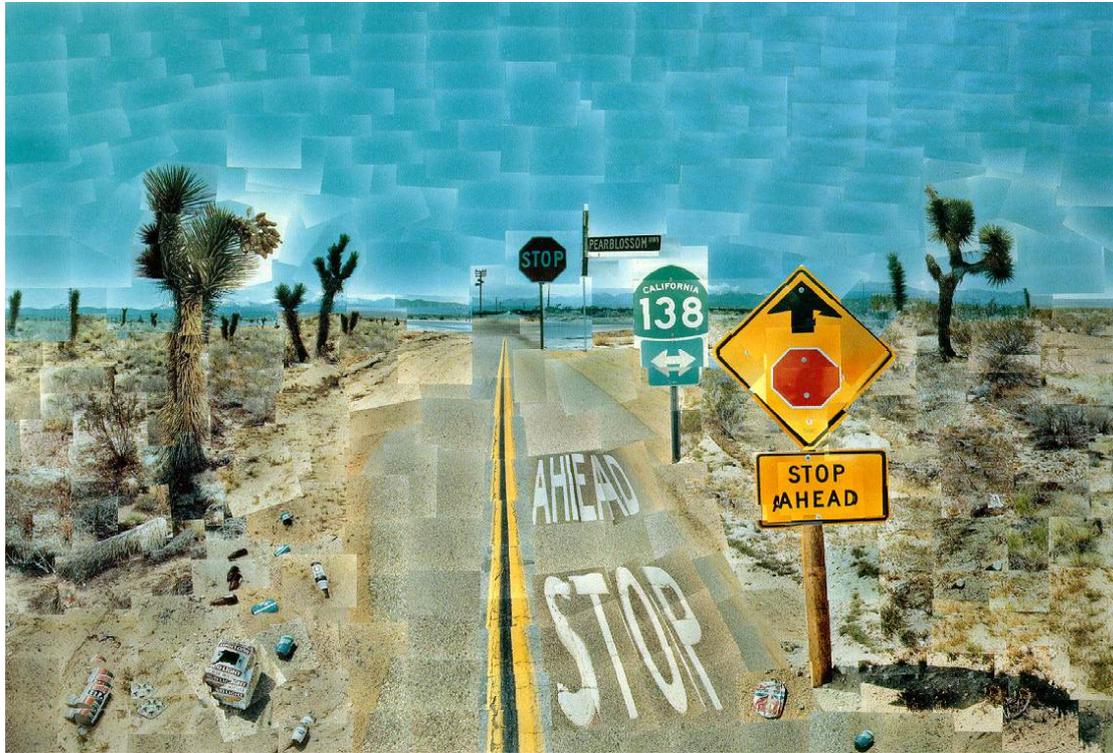
I am trying to accomplish an effect, not unlike the artist David Hockney, who used a joining process using multiple Polaroid prints, to explore the question of how we view the world and particularly space and time. Do we see the whole picture or do we make up a composite through focusing on the elements before we combine them to form a whole? Note that in this work below, Hockney has used regular spacing of the photos to break up the image into 24 regular components. If they were joined together they would

make up the whole. Hockney also explored the technique of overlapping the photographs, so while a whole image was presented, the effect is to slightly warp and therefore concentrate the image in the viewer's eye. He is bending space. His most famous overlapping image is Pearblossom Highway, April 11 to 18, 1986, No. 2, which as the name implies, required eight days to shoot and involved thousands of individual photographs. The scene presented comprises both spatial and temporal changes, as the pictures were shot from a variety of perspectives and heights over an extended period of time.

The Delights of Seeing



Pearblossom Highway 1986



The difference between the metaphor I am using and Hockney's 'Joiners' is that the images or glimpses that I am representing through the shards are by their nature, incomplete. The narrative record spans almost 50 years of a life and is necessarily incomplete. It is selected memories not a complete accounting of every aspect of a life. Such an undertaking is outside the scope of this thesis and Knausgaard has already completed his 6-volume autobiography *My Struggle* and taken 3, 500 pages to do so. I am presenting fragments of a working life and trust that it is representative of the life and has integrity as an honest account. In commencing this process I am trying to both give an account and reflect on the wider forces of society and the economy that form the essential environment in which the life occurs. The wider social and economic forces at

play are the essential frame and hard surface against which the shards are set. The gaps between the shards represent the glue or the grouting that holds the pieces together. It is the character of the life under consideration. The person at the end of that 50-year journey is the same one who commenced the journey in the jam factory. But of course they are not the same. They have the same identity but they have been inevitably and inextricably changed by the journey. The temporal nature of this writing is reinforced by the use of contemporary sources throughout this thesis to provide an understanding of the broader issues and forces at play at that time. This auto-ethnographic approach draws on a variety of contemporary sources. These sources are diverse and should be reflective of the sources available to a well-educated and curious person. These resources include the individuals with whom I have shared a dialogue and provide a wider perspective against which to examine this working life. They also provide a basis for ensuring the integrity of this thesis and a mechanism for examining my own experiences from an ethically sound basis. This thesis was never intended to be a hagiographic account nor a *mea culpa* for the various commissions and omissions that inevitably occur.

The distant view

A second consideration and a self-interested one is whether the attempt to view the development of an individual through their interactions with the world of work can provide a basis of the understanding of the formation of character and act as guide to better design of a future life. The question that arises from these considerations concerns the meaning, if any, of that working life as part of a whole life and whether the auto-

ethnographic account can be a useful starting point in considering life's transitions. The inescapable questions that I need to ponder are, what happened and what did it amount to? These simple questions lead inevitably to further questioning about the value of whatever the amount was and a consideration of worth. Was it a life worth living? Was it worth the trouble? The last question was posed by Albert Camus as a rationale for suicide.

One of the essential questions that emerges from this process is whether the past can be a reliable guide to the future. John Paul Lederach in *The Moral Imagination* (2005) explores the different way cultures view the passing of time and the relationship between past, present and future. It was explained by an African woman,

This morning I understand what we know, what we have seen is the past. So it lies before us. What we cannot see, what we cannot know is the future... So the past we see before us. But we walk backward into the future. (Lederach, 2005, p. 136)

While this construction makes more sense than our sense of 'looking forward to the future' as if we can actually divine some sense or vision of what it will be. The only certainty in the future is our own death. As Mark Rowlands illustrates in his paper 'The Immortal, the Intrinsic and the Quasi Meaning of Life' (2016) this is a complex question and has exercised the minds of many philosophers. Rowland asks a number of questions about the meaning of life. He asks, "What things in life should I regard as important" (Rowlands, 2016, p. 2)?

If a consideration of the forces that shaped the life and the decisions that provided guidance allows me to understand not only where I have arrived but also what I have become then I should be better placed to decide how the rest of my days should be spent. If this provides a template for others faced with the same apprehension about the leaving of the world of work then this thesis may serve a wider purpose than the narrower personal one described above.

The process that has guided this thesis has been a combination of propinquity and opportunism. Resources and inspirations have come from the most unexpected sources and my involvement in other areas of interest has produced some surprising results. Many years ago when I was Director of Adult Education I decided to lead by example and offer a series of public lectures on the esoteric topic, How To Tell a Joke. As part of my research for this thesis I came across Arthur Koestler's book, *The Act of Creation* (1964), in which he proposed that humour, artistic breakthroughs and scientific discoveries share a common process. Koestler describes this process as the intersection of two opposing thoughts or ideas. In telling a joke the dialogue sets up a mental model in the listener's mind, which is then interrupted by a new idea through the punch line. My epiphany this morning was exactly this process and for me it created a breakthrough in understanding what my future can become.

The great fear for those facing the end of their working lives is not the everyday question of, what will I do? But the existential question of, what will be the basis of my

new identity? The answers to those questions perhaps hold the key to a long and productive retirement. I have been aware for some time of the crowding out of other activities that a working life entails and had proposed a potential solution is the glide path to retirement where the workload progressively reduces over a number of years. The reduction of load will start at 70 per cent working, then 50 per cent and finally 30 per cent over as many years as the individual wishes to take.

Memory and temporality

This thesis consists of a series of stories about key events of my experience in the world of work and the most pressing memories I needed to record were the most vivid and the earliest. These absences, in the phenomenological sense were the subject of a great deal of wondering as they were as equally representative of a working life as the stories I had already recorded and that were in plain view. I have already found that a significant benefit of this process has been the forced recollection of those experiences I had initially chosen to ignore.

This thesis is a recollection of the significant memories of a working life. In recording these memories and experiences I am bearing witness to places and practices that no longer exist and which would be both strange and perplexing to a current observer. There is for example, an account of the last days of manual labour where human strength and persistence were a cheap and abundant resource and people spent their entire lives

pushing and pulling things. This unskilled work has largely disappeared from modern economies. I was also witness to the last days of clerical labour where columns of figures were handwritten and checked for mathematical accuracy—where office processes were a combination of handwritten and electro-mechanical processing which predated the introduction of the computer. It is historicity at one level and the formation of identity and character at another. The stories are an attempt to serve both purposes.

I became a knowledge worker by both design and preference and have attempted to capture the unique elements of this particular form of employment through keeping a diary to record the daily life of a knowledge worker. The aim of my daily rendering is to serve as recordings for understanding the historicity others and I inherit, and through memoir to demonstrate the all encompassing and pervading nature of the demands of modern workplace.

From my earliest thoughts about the work of this thesis I have known that I have occupied a privileged position over my working life in that it has encompassed the major economic, technological and social changes that have occurred since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in 1850. Not that that ages me! In the Henry Jones Jam Factory I worked on a machine that was manufactured in Liverpool, United Kingdom in 1863. I have programmed computers using paper tape with holes punched in to represent code. I have witnessed the move from manufacturing to the service economy and the feminisation of what was a male-dominated workforce. I have been part of the reduction

in government services and the collapse of lifetime job security, of outsourcing and the rise of self-employment and free agency. I have had the opportunity to be both a witness and a participant in such profound changes.

In this regard I have seen myself through the lens of ‘an Everyman’, witness to and actor in the changes that have shaped the modern world. I have attempted to reinforce the objective view of ‘the Everyman’ by referring to contemporary film and literature as a means of validating my experience as being shared by others so that the personal narrative becomes universal experience. There is another continuity that is woven through this thesis and it is an obscure publication, *Eupsychian Management* (1965) by Abraham Maslow that comes to represent a vital thread through this thesis. I first came across a reference to the work in Madeleine Bunting’s *Willing Slaves* (2005) where she details the project that improves the world through the management of people at work in a utopian and revolutionary way. While the book never became popular, unlike Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs, it has become incredibly influential in creating the modern workplace as a primary source of meaning for individuals. Many years after I first discovered the *Eupsychian Management* and had subsequently acquired a copy of the text, I found that Peter Drucker, once a most influential philosopher of modern management, had fundamental disagreements with Maslow’s position “but that he had tried to get Maslow’s work republished for years” (Beatty, 1998, p. 119).

There is a strong element of memoir in this thesis but I am conscious of the following quote used in my initial Master's submission. This is expressed by Martin Seligman's observation that "The self is a poor site for meaning" and that "...a necessary condition for meaning is to have an attachment to something larger than the self" (Eckersley, 1996, p. 20).

There is an ever-present danger that this thesis becomes an exercise in indulgent self-analysis and introspection rather than attempting to serve a wider purpose. In being conscious of this I am motivated by the need to provide an honest accounting of my working life and to reconcile what I have gained and become and the sacrifices in both a temporal and moral sense that I have had to make. I find it interesting that I am using the language of accounting, 'reconcile' and 'account' to describe this process. I would aspire to being able to draw some wider inferences and strategies to help others in bringing their working lives to account to achieve reconciliation with themselves before transitioning to retirement—to understand and be able to reconcile the elements of their own working lives and the bargains they have made with self and family.

A writer's burden

This period of reflection is at once a great privilege but also a burden, as I have to hide myself away from the many distractions of modern life. Friends are given short shrift as I need time and space to complete this work. I have become a hermit in many respects.

This equates to the third stage of the journey through human life according to Hindu philosophy. These stages are identified by Heinrich Zimmer, who is quoted by Frederic Gros in *A Philosophy of Walking* (2015). These stages are first, the student or disciple where the essential tasks are to “obey the master’s injunctions, absorb his lessons, submit to criticism and conform to the principles laid down” (Gros, 2015, p. 8). The second stage, the adult, family and work responsibilities take precedence and “he submits to social restraints and imposes them on others. He agrees to wear the social masks that define a role for him in family and in society” (p. 8). In the third stage, the

... man can abandon all social duties, family expenses and economic concerns, to become a hermit. This stage of ‘withdrawal to the forest’ is a stage in which, through contemplation and meditation, he familiarizes himself with what has always remained unchanged within us, waiting for us to awaken it: the eternal Self, transcending masks, functions identities, histories. (p. 8)

The final stage is where the pilgrim succeeds the hermit and what is described as the “glorious summer evening of our lives: a life henceforth dedicated to travel...” (Gros, 2015, p. 9). This account of the stages of existence has a particular resonance because the process of writing in a disciplined way does, as noted above, necessarily involve developing the hermit’s disposition. Only through withdrawal and distancing oneself from the daily rush of activities can the “masks”, “histories” and “identities” be examined.

The importance of personal experience and its value as a source of knowledge and understanding is often disparaged. Lederach in *The Moral Imagination* (2005) makes a spirited defence of the personal narrative.

Through *The Moral Imagination*, I want to address that tension. In some regards, perhaps more than in any other book I have written, I discovered that taking up a conversation with my colleagues in the broadly defined conflict resolution field was in fact the carrying on of a conversation with myself as a conflict professional. Carl Rogers suggested that those things that are most personal are shared universally. I believe there is great merit to the idea, though it tends not to be practiced in formal academic writing. In the professional world of writing, we view with caution, even suspicion, the appearance of the personal, and lend a higher accent of legitimacy to models and skills, theory, well-documented case studies, and the technical application of theory that leads toward what we feel is the objectivity of conclusion and proposal. In the process, we do a disservice to our professions, to the building of theory and practice, to the public, and ultimately to ourselves. The disservice is this: When we attempt to eliminate the personal, we lose sight of ourselves, our deeper intuition, and the source of our understandings — *who we are* and *how we are* in the world. In so doing we arrive at a paradoxical destination: We believe in the knowledge we generate but not in the inherently messy and personal process by which we acquired it. (Lederach, 2005, p. viii)

Theodore Zeldin in his book, *The Hidden Pleasures of Life* (2015) reflects,

... it is also possible to see every life as an experiment, which has questions to ask and something interesting to say to those who have not shut down their sense of wonder at the variety and unpredictability of human waywardness. In this

perspective, a life is wasted if what it discovers is never pondered over, never shared, and remains ignorant of how it appears in contrast to the lives of others, in different places and centuries. (Zeldin, 2015, Loc. 479 of 5426)

Some literary devices

Where I have re-collected a memory I have used where possible the first person and Avenir Book 10 to distinguish these passages from the body text of the thesis which appears in Garamond font 12 or in indented passages Garamond 11. The Diary of a Knowledge Worker, pages also appears in Avenir Book, though not a re-collection but a faithful reproduction of a contemporaneous record that I considered required a distinguishing font from the thesis body text.

My re-collections are re-presentations of a personal journey through a variety of occupational categories in an individual lifetime. These memories provide shards of experience that have been memorable enough for me to recall. I use the metaphor of shard and shards because it is not possible, of course, to record all experience. It might seem that in this thesis I have travelled through many lifetimes though I have only one. An historical reference for my lifetime's work may help convince my reader of this.

Chapter 2 discloses my life during 1965-67 as a labourer at Henry Jones Jam Factory in Hunter Street, Hobart's old waterfront, then at the Australian Newsprint Print Mills on the banks of the Derwent River that flows from the Tasmanian Highlands. I spent three years from 1968-1970 studying at the University of Tasmania (UTAS). Chapter 3 narrates my time working in the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Hobart as a junior clerk, and Chapter four as an audit clerk in Melbourne for Peat Marwick Mitchell

Chartered Accountants. In Chapter five my reader finds me as a full-time student and trainee teacher in the Diploma of Education at UTAS in 1973, and a teacher at Prospect High School in Launceston, northern Tasmania in 1974, and from 1975-85 teaching at Hobart Technical College. In this chapter I serve the educational bureaucracy as a senior manager and then become Director of Adult Education. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 find me working as a consultant for Scotwork Negotiating Skills (SNS) Australia wide and overseas.

My Everyman device illustrates that my experience may have been unique to me but it was one that could have been shared by countless others in similar situations. The drawing on literary sources, contemporary culture and management texts is an attempt to illustrate this generality.

What others see in my mirror

On two recent occasions I have received acknowledgement of my experience, empathy and skills. In the first, a senior executive sent me a card thanking me for rescuing his career when he was broken physically and mentally. I had been hired to provide mentoring for him during a period of crisis. The second was at lunch with an Associate Professor and friend of longstanding who stated that I knew more about management than the entire Department of Management at his university.

It is always gratifying to be acknowledged for a job well done, the desire for appreciation being universal. However it was a moment of perplexity for me, as in reality I could not think what I had done that would warrant praise. I have acted as Will's advisor and mentor in a professional capacity over three years. As a result, we have become firm friends and I now meet him and his family socially. Work, as it often does, has spilled over into the rest of my life.

The real issue however, was the thought that I was hardly deserving of praise having done, in my own analysis, very little to earn it. I had sat with Will in many meetings where he just talked, rapidly and with passion about the obstacles placed in his way in reforming a large bureaucracy. His health was suffering, his personal life, non-existent and he was in danger of losing the support of his organisation. I was witness to a monologue not dialogue. Eventually the tide of words receded and I was able to commence the dialogue. Together we made progress.

From this experience, questions arose which set me on a journey to understand what I have been able to source from that wisdom which forms the substance of this thesis. For what purposes am I involving myself in this phenomenological research? What are the purposes of this research for all those different people in some way involved in the research? What is my motivation for my research? What values and beliefs motivate me? For me, what ways of knowing will lead me through my inquiry? What account can I give of my ways of knowing? What traditions of mine are likely to shape my inquiry? What

consequences do my traditions have for the purposes of my inquiry? What personal resources do I bring to this inquiry? What are my ways of being scholarly in research and writing? In what ways am I becoming a researcher as an applied philosopher (Pugh, 2015)?

The importance of questions and questioning to the experience of being human is identified by Roger Scruton in an article titled 'What Makes us Human' in the *New Statesman*. He states,

What makes us human is that we ask questions. All animals have interests, instincts and conceptions. All animals frame for themselves an idea of the world in which they live. But we alone question our surroundings. We alone refuse to be defined by the world in which we live but instead try and define our nature for ourselves. (Scruton, 2013, p. 53)

The format for this thesis can be described as fragments drawn from a working life spanning almost 50 years. The fragments represent part of a whole, either substantial or a sliver, and when all placed back together do not constitute a coherent whole mirror in which a reflected self can be seen. The reason is that in writing these memories there were originally large parts missing. I had not kept a written record of them. There were ten years teaching in a technical college which were perhaps the most fulfilling and happiest of my working life. And yet in terms of this thesis the six weeks working in the jam factory looms much larger in this memory. Is the answer that it was actually really one year repeated ten times, with each succeeding year fading into the predecessor?

At many times during this journey I have struggled to make the time to do the reading, research and interviews in order to maintain the momentum required to complete this task, but at no stage has there been a flagging of my interest, curiosity and motivation for this thesis. When I look back on the questions that were posed for me as I commenced my inquiry, two questions are still poignantly relevant: “What personal qualities have shaped the decisions about the work I have done?” “How has this affected the friendships I have made” (Pugh & Yaxley, 2015)?

Once these initial questions are posed others are invited. What influence have I had on those with whom my work has brought me in contact? Is the person I am now and what I know, the culmination of all that I have learned or experienced? Or does it represent the slow petering out of the flame of hopes, aspirations and ambitions that were so important to me? What can I pass on to others at their stages of their journey? What advice can I offer to those starting a working life about the choices they will face, choices about the balance they may strike between reward and effort, career and family? What insights have I to share on the transition from work to retirement? If I decide that I have nothing to offer in guidance and advice then what wisdom is there in deciding that I do not have the answers? Any advice that I may offer would be hollow if I could demonstrate that I have learned and applied a fundamental truth. As I struggle to answer these questions the concepts of knowing and wisdom recur in my thoughts and although

the Richardson novel has popularised the phrase, the story and the journey are about ‘the getting of wisdom’.

This thesis re-presents a study of lived experience to understand self, to know what constitutes self and the forces that form self. The source materials are the interplay of recollections of memories of work and life. These interplays include a phenomenological account of intersubjectivity of re-collection, re-collection of others I interview, and interpretation of selected texts.

Ten years working in an educational bureaucracy similarly did not feature in my initial memories of work. The earliest working experiences were the first that sprang to mind, but after I started to reflect on these experiences memories of teaching and the bureaucracy became closer. My initial attention was drawn to the absence of those memories. They were there initially because they were not there! The sights, smells and sounds of a jam factory were initially the most powerful memories. Having recorded those memories, it soon became apparent that those other times and experiences need to be brought into the light. Once this was decided, they arrived unexpectedly with speed and clarity.

While it was a time of Sisyphean frustration, stagnation and boredom of files and office routines, there were some experiences that have had an indelible impact on my concept of self and the way I interact with organisations and individuals. I was not a

good bureaucrat, in fact I was temperamentally unsuited for administration of distant programs, of balancing ledgers and acquitting advances, but I learned. My subsequent experiences have been profoundly shaped by those times even though it seems that the beginning and the end of work life are the areas of immediate fascination and reflection.

The alternative to fragments of a working life is to use the well-worn metaphor of stepping-stones. They have the advantage of being sequential and are a set means of travelling to a pre-determined destination. This is not a suitable metaphor for this journey. It has not been sequential or measured and there has been no overall sense of a plan to arrive at a destination or a point in time. In my own working life, opportunities presented themselves and I either accepted them or rejected them. On that basis, fragments of a mirror in which to gain glimpses of self is a more apt metaphor and form the underlying structure of this work.

I will expand my own experiences by obtaining experiential descriptions from others. Max van Manen (1990) describes the process of phenomenological research as,

... to “borrow” other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience , in the context of the whole of human experience. (van Manen, 1990, p. 62)

In choosing the other experiences I have drawn on three sources. The recorded memories of colleagues and workmates throughout the years to provide a perspective from the workplace, commentators and authors with a focus on the bigger forces at work in society, and authors whose work reflects the zeitgeist of a particular era. By selecting these other sources of experience I am seeking a wider context for my own experiences and an amplification, since both the social commentators and the authors have based their works on the experiences of others.

Before commencing the journey it is appropriate to select a faithful companion who will act as a guide and whose task is to place my personal experiences in a wider context. In my consulting clients often comment on the need to feel a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves, whether it is a organisation or broader movement. I have realised through my recollection that I was witness to the last days of a jam industry in Tasmania and to the era where ‘many hands made light work’ and the majority of workers were classed as unskilled.

The first companion I have chosen is Drucker. He is described in Jack Beatty’s book, *The World According to Peter Drucker* (1998),

Peter Drucker’s influence is global: his twenty-nine books have sold over five million copies, and they have been translated into every language in the world. His views on management, industrial organization, business strategy, leadership development, and employee motivation have tutored not just companies but

countries - Drucker served as a guru to the postwar Japanese economic miracle-and he has earned a reputation for forecasting future social and economic trends. (Beatty, 1998, Foreword)

Drucker was a Viennese intellectual who grew up in a privileged family prior to the Second World War and Sigmund Freud was a regular dinner guest in Drucker's parent's house. He worked as a journalist and academic in Germany before fleeing Nazi persecution to London and then to the United States. Drucker's world-view is wide.

Drawing from history, philosophy, moral psychology, sociology, politics, science, literature — and, yes medicine — Drucker's pattern-seeking thinking models how to “identify the constellations of significance in the other wise chaotic flow of information.” (Beatty, 1998, p. 30)

He has a broader view of society and economics than most writers on business. His first book, *The End of Economic Man (1939)*, is described by Beatty as,

a proto-existentialist enquiry into the spiritual and social origins of fascism. More pertinently *Economic Man* limns a crisis of belief in capitalism (and socialism) whose causes have yet to be ameliorated. Ignoring the specifically German or Italian roots of fascism, Drucker emphasizes civilizational causes. We live in that same civilization. (1998, p. 34)

He developed his reputation in the field of business when he was commissioned to write a book about General Motors Corporation. The result was the *Concept of the Corporation* (1945). The book's sponsor within the corporation commissioned the work because they saw no widespread interest in a book about how a large company worked. Drucker's

publisher was equally skeptical. However, the book established his reputation and he has subsequently developed the most influential management ideas of the twentieth century.

The reason I have chosen Drucker as a companion is that he has a feel for the contribution of the common man going about their daily work and a belief that society should reflect, understand and reinforce this contribution. The following passage from *Frontiers of Management* (1986) illustrates this contribution,

We packed into every decade as much “history” as one usually finds in a century; and little if it was “benign”. Yet most of this world, and especially the developed world, somehow not only managed to recover from the catastrophes again and again but to regain direction and momentum — economic, social and even political. The main reason was that ordinary people, running the everyday concerns of business and institutions, took responsibility and kept on building for tomorrow while all round them the world came crashing down. (Beatty, 1998, p. 32)

Drucker was also ‘an Everyman’ as his autobiography *Adventures of a Bystander* (1979) discloses.

Bystanders have no history of their own. They are on stage but are not part of the action. They are not even the audience. The fortunes of the play and of every actor in it depend on the audience whereas the reaction of the bystander has no effect except on himself. But standing in the wings — much like the fireman in the theater — the bystander sees things neither the audience nor the actor notices. Above all,

he sees differently from the way actors or audience see. Bystanders reflect — the reflection is a prism rather than a mirror; it refracts. (Drucker, 1979, p. 1)

Why work?

Before commencing this narrative, the question of why I have chosen work and the workplace as the setting requires some consideration. Alain de Botton in *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* (2009) provides some of the reasons,

We spend most of our waking lives at work—in occupations chosen by our unthinking younger selves. And yet we rarely ask ourselves how we got there or what our occupations mean to us. (Frontispiece)

Work is described as an aspect of life “that is all too often ignored” (de Botton, 2009, Frontispiece). It may have been ignored by some but is the source of obvious fascination for others. Aaron Sorkin (Burbury, 2016), the scriptwriter responsible for the television series, *West Wing*, and more recently for the screenplays for *The Social Network* and *Steve Jobs*, told the Melbourne Age in an interview (Dalton, 2016) about his interest in work.

Steve Jobs is my seventh movie... I believe if you added them up there is not more than a total of 10 minutes that takes place in a person’s home. They are all in offices, courtrooms, laboratories, things like that. (Burbury, 2016)

Lars Svendsen in *Work* (2008), part of *The Art of Living Series*, examines work from both an etymological source and from his own perspective of working in a variety of occupations from cleaner to sports reporter. At the time the book was published he was

Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bergen. On one hand, work is a burden to be avoided on the other, a source of purpose and direction. Svendsen's book describes as unrealistic the expectations that we have of work.

Unlike previous generations, we now look to work to provide us with meaning and self-realisation, we expect work to be fulfilling, fun and full of people we like.

(Svendsen, 2008, Back Cover)

I grew up in a family and an era where the Protestant work ethic was still a powerful cultural influence. The fact that there is an equally strong Catholic work ethic seems to have been forgotten by sociologists. Work has been the subject of two papal encyclicals. Pope Leo XIII's 1891 paper, 'The Condition of Labor', and Pope John Paul II's 1981 paper, 'On Human Work'. Al Gini, in *Seeking the Truth of Things: Confessions of (catholic) philosopher* (2010) describes the Catholic Church's attitude as one that sees work as man's burden as he is not meant to be idle—but work is also his destiny.

Work is the divinely endowed mechanism by which humankind fulfills itself and establishes its stewardship over the world. In other words, work is the agency by which humanity completes itself and transforms the world.

(Gini, 2010, Loc. 1017 of 1592)

In Gini's analysis the nature of the work is an important dimension for the impact it has on the worker and not the output produced by the worker. It is not the work being done but the fact that it is being done by a person that is the "source of the dignity of work" (Gini, 2010, Loc. 1034 of 1952).

Pope John-Paul II's message is in Gini's words,

Work is that which forms us, gives us a focus, provides us a vehicle for personal expression, and offers a means for personal definition. Work makes us human precisely because we make something of ourselves through our work. We need work in order to finish and define our natures. (2010, Loc. 1045 of 1952)

It is little wonder, given this essential task of work, that both Popes saw work as a fundamental human right given the central role it plays in human development and dignity. Maslow and his self-actualising individuals would have been in agreement with these Catholic teachings. The question becomes whether there can be too much of a good thing. Have we witnessed the exploitation of Maslow and the Protestant and Catholic reverence for work to create the “willing slaves” that Bunting so decries?

Gini's Italian heritage is displayed when he talks of his father and uncles working in the traditional concreting trade. There was an honour in

... earning your own way and providing for your family. They taught me that an honest man should never be too proud to do whatever was necessary — no matter how humbling or backbreaking the effort — in order to earn an honest dollar.
(Gini, 2010, Loc. 930/1952)

This instrumental value of work that I explore later, as described by Mark Rowlands in Chapter 8 has strong resonance for my background in a variety of labouring jobs where the prevailing ethic was expressed, as “I would shovel shit for money.” Given that I have not had the personal experience of unemployment I had initially thought that any

mention of the opposite of work was unnecessary in this thesis. I acknowledge with Sokolowski in that

Subjectively, my perception, my viewing, is a blend made up of filled and empty intentions. My activity of perceiving... is also a mixture; parts of it intend to what is present, and other parts intend what is absent... (2000, p. 17)

However, the centrality of work to our existence and our society's fixation with work do not allow me to bypass the thought that the absence of work exacts a terrible price, particularly on those who are denied the opportunity. Svendsen (2008) summarises the price as lower self-esteem and poorer health. The unemployed have fewer social interactions and report lower subjective wellbeing. He points out that because of the safety net in most advanced economies it is the psychological damage that is most severe.

People take unemployment personally. They experience it as something that affects them as individuals, not only as members of the group "the unemployed". Given how much emphasis we place on work as a source of identity, it should come as no surprise that people are often devastated when they lose their jobs and fail to find a new one. (Svendsen, 2008, p. 63)

There were two boys in my high school years that to my knowledge never worked in their entire lives. They were not mentally or physically impaired and I see them occasionally in the suburb where I grew up. Interestingly neither has moved from the family home of 50 years ago. Every time I see them I am forced to wonder about their experiences of the world and their place in it. What has sustained them all these years, whilst work has sustained me? While their experience was exceptional, as they grew up

during the long period of prosperity in the last half of the twentieth century, their fate and choice may be shared by many more who grew up in the first half of this century.

The following analysis is from the Wall Street Journal,

Work and marriage have been central to the American civic culture since the founding, and this held true for the white working class into the 1960's. Almost all of the adult men were working or looking for work, and almost all of them were married.

Then things started to change. For white working class men in their 30's and 40's — what should be the prime decades for working and raising a family — participation in the labour force dropped from 90 per cent in 1968 to 79 per cent in 2015. Over that period the proportion of these men who were married dropped from 86 per cent to 52 per cent.

While the immediate cost is born by the individuals concerned the impact this decline will be felt for generations to come. While contemplating this impact, it is time in Chapter 2, to commence my journey in the Jam factory where I enter the world of work for the first time.

Chapter 2 Making Jam at Henry Jones (1965)

My earliest memory of work is perhaps the most vivid—the sights, sounds and smells of the factory, the faces of some of my workmates, recalled just by closing my eyes. One explanation of this deep imprint is that I was 16 years of age and had been the beneficiary of a sheltered existence and this was my first exposure to a new world. In recording these experiences, I am using the distance of memory to act as an observer upon my own life. As van Manen states,

Close observation involves assuming a relation that is as close as possible while retaining a hermeneutic alertness to the situations that allow us to constantly step back and reflect on the meaning of those situations. (van Manen, 2014, Loc.7829 of 11093)

van Manen goes on to explain the importance of the development of themes resulting from the needfulness or desire to make sense. He uses the word *eidōs* to describe the essence of what the experience of the lifeworld is. The interesting insight I have gained already is that the themes will emerge from this act of creation—they cannot be imposed on the situation in an *a priori* manner. In Chapter 1 I recounted two different work experiences that represent the ‘bookends’ of my working life. In the first, I experience a working environment for the first time and attempt to make sense of experiences hitherto beyond my consciousness. I am a blank canvas.

My initial perspective is from the lowest rung in the workplace, namely a junior casual employed for the fruit season working in a factory that dated from the Industrial Revolution. The historical connection and sense of continuity of this is evidenced by a wonderful machine of almost ‘Heath Robinson complexity’ that removed the pits from cherries using a large indented cylinder and a phalanx of steel rods. When working on this machine, I could not help but notice that it was manufactured in Liverpool, in the United Kingdom in 1863. I have remembered the machine and the date with great clarity, yet the significance of this brief interaction with a machine from another age was not apparent then. Only from the perspective of the present can this experience be appreciated.

The following narrative written from the perspective of 50 years of continuous working life is an attempt to understand what it is about work that so shapes our character and identity. My attempt to understand this is part of the process of my realisation that my working life is coming to an end. I am neither famous nor rich and have only just been reconciled to this. This thesis has ebbed and flowed as my natural interests and curiosity have taken me on a journey from the contemplation of retirement and the inevitable transition to that often misunderstood state, to a wider and deeper consideration of the forces that have shaped my working life and, as a result, my character and identity.

Was it a logical progression from point A to point B? Was it complete with a plan, a series of guideposts and destinations—if not known fully at commencement, then at least imagined, even if somewhat vaguely? Has my life been subject to some intelligent design or has it been a drunkard's walk? The latter may seem a strange descriptor but comes from a book called *The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives* (2009) by Leonard Mlodinow. In the context of my life's journey I am going to use a phenomenological approach to this thesis to position myself at some distance from the narrative from where I hope to draw some broader conclusions than the 'drunkard's walk' would suggest. The year is 1965 and I have entered the world of work.

The steel wheels clunk as the trolley traverses the cobblestone floor. A regular rhythm of clunk, clunk—not unlike that of a train approaching a station—regular and even, like the cobblestones themselves. The motive power for this particular trolley is me. I bend forward with my arms straight out behind me holding a yoke handle attached to the front wheels of the trolley. The handle is of burnished steel, wide enough for both hands to grasp. I remember similar scenes depicting children working in coalmines during the Industrial Revolution. Fortunately it is 1965 not 1865 and I am not a malnourished waif sold by the workhouse to a coal baron. I also doubt that it was foremost in the mind of those who designed and built it. Even empty it is heavy. Four solid, flat steel wheels, an iron frame and steel draw bar provide the platform for a planked hardwood tray. I am on my way to pick up cargo. The trolley contains six empty oak barrels. The barrels come up to my chest when on the trolley. Given the trolley is four inches off the ground, the barrels are five feet tall.

Being empty and secured only by their own weight, the barrels move gently to and fro as the trolley navigates the uneven floor, occasionally banging together with a soft drum-like tone. The journey soon ends as a shaft of light indicates an open door leading on to Hunter Street in Hobart, Tasmania. A flat bed truck is backed up to the loading dock. It is loaded with row upon row of kerosene tins, each with a wire handle. The tins are filled with freshly picked small fruits from the Huon Valley—blackberries, raspberries, apricots and strawberries. I position the trolley alongside the truck, while factory hands empty the tins from the truck into my barrels. I assist in this process and I feel the weight of the kerosene tins and the stickiness of the wire handle. The journey from the valley and the amount of time the fruit has been in the tins has combined to begin the manufacturing process as we pour almost as much liquid as solid fruit. I learn an early lesson in commercial morality while emptying these tins.

Every now and then a large splash occurs as we pour the contents. The cause is a large stone that has somehow found its way into a tin of fruit. Fruit pickers are of course paid by weight, so some have included stones in the fruits of their labours. This is a regular occurrence and my introduction to people trying to use the system to get something for nothing. In a whimsical sense at least the farmer ended up with a relatively stone free orchard. The stones are retrieved when the barrels were unloaded. The fruit has already been weighed when I arrived, so it is up to me to drag the now heavily-laden trolley to the other end of the factory where the boilers are. Backward and forward, load after load, laden and empty,

the trolley traverses this ancient building. As I was to learn many times, each job has its own unique mix of skills and experiences. The weight of the trolley and the full barrels mean that it is difficult to overcome the initial inertia and I have to use all my weight, leaning forward at 45 degrees to get the whole thing moving. However, once underway, the whole conveyance has enormous rolling momentum and I then have to regulate the speed by applying more force on the inclines and act as a brake on the similar number of declines.

The Henry Jones IXL Factory occupies an entire block on Hobart's waterfront. My route is a central road running down the spine of the building. This road is traversed by a number of side roads with inevitable intersections. This results in the barrels being banged and jostled together as the trolley moves noisily towards the loading dock. I have a wonderful view of the entire production process. While dark and filled with people and machinery, boilers discharge steam and vast cauldrons of hot jam bubble away. I never feel at risk or unsafe. The atmosphere is rather pleasant, and cool because of the thick sandstone walls and many doorways allowing a breeze to enter the building. The air is thick with the comforting smell of jam and every surface retains a residual stickiness from the large quantities of sugar needed to sweeten the jam.

I now wonder whether this rather rose-coloured rendering of recollection was influenced by my later reading of Upton Sinclair's account of the working conditions for immigrant workers in Chicago slaughterhouses in his searing expose, *The Jungle* (1906).

I am fortunate to be offered a variety of work experiences in this factory, including time on a production line. The first involves standing next to a moving belt conveying large square tins of jam that have been recently filled. The task of the workers is to wipe any excess jam from the top of the tin, place a lid in the hole in the tin and press the lid shut. My companions on this line are a mixed bunch including some elderly ladies with their hair in nets and wearing aprons, a number of old men in boiler suits, and a ragtag mix of casuals. The work is not difficult. My task is to make sure the area around the lid is clear of jam residue by wiping it with a cloth. I do this for hour after hour. The man next to me places the lid in the hole on top of the tin. And so the job is divided into discrete components. There are two things that I found strange and remarkable — the little group of workers do not talk during this process and there is no interest in sharing or rotating the allotted tasks.

The absence of conversation could be explained by the fact that the group consisted of a mixture of regular employees and casuals, but I think the impression I had at the time was that the group was passive, almost docile in the way they related to their work. They stood in mute acceptance that the task at hand was not going to be easier or be over sooner, whether they talked or not. They had been given their allotted positions on the line and it is not their job to change them.

The man next to me is typical of the "old hands". He appears old to my young eyes, late fifties or early sixties, grey hair parted near the middle and the area above the ears shaved close to the head. He wears a boiler suit that is both

well-worn and immaculately presented. He has the bearing and reserve of a gentleman. He is of an age to have seen military service in either World War I or II.

The lack of interest in rotating tasks, of trying to provide some variety was an example of a simpler time when, if workers were asked to do something, they just did it. They did not question the wisdom or authority of those who allocated the task. Work was not a way to achieve personal fulfillment or make a difference to those around. Work was something to be endured in order to put food on the table and a roof overhead. This perhaps explains how a large, almost archaic workplace with ancient machinery and a large, seasonal, unskilled workforce appeared to work so efficiently.

The fruit arrives from the farms and is transferred to large copper cookers, copious quantities of sugar are added, the jam is decanted into tins, labeled and stored. There appears to be very little direct supervision of the operations and I understand this was due to the experience of the older workers.

The older workers did not need to be closely supervised. This factory had been making jam for 130 years on the same site. There was an enormous amount of organisational 'knowhow' that was probably not written down in formal procedures and manuals but carried around in the memories of individual workers. There was a collective intelligence in operation. As a result, the experienced workers could have done their allotted tasks in their sleep. There was a minimum of effort and fuss as a result. Of course, for someone new there would have been challenges.

There is little to distinguish one worker from another in the factory. There are no different coloured uniforms; a collar and tie are rarely in evidence, however, I notice that some workers stand out as more important to the operation of the factory. One of these is the head jam-maker. He is the one who directs the ingredients into the large boilers. These are heated by simple gas flames directed at the base of the copper vessel. He wears a large leather apron that stretches from chest to mid-calf. The apron has the sheen of many seasons of jam-making and is like patent leather where it covered his stomach. While the apron is a symbol of authority, it is also worn to protect the head jam-maker from splashes of boiling jam. It is his job to climb a wooden ladder that has a small platform at the top that overlooks the boiling jam. Once at the top he leans forward, sniffs the steam and uses a large wooden spoon to lift some jam into the air and tips it slowly back into the boiler. He is checking viscosity, presence of seeds and other factors beyond my knowledge. Occasionally he tastes the jam and based on these various observations, either orders more sugar to be added or for the gas to be increased. I had observed these exact processes every year in my mother's kitchen albeit on a much smaller scale.

Another worker who stands out is "The Wraith". He is tall, so tall that his overalls do not come close to the top of his boots. I imagine they are the largest size available so he must be six feet six inches tall. He also has a large head for the size of his body. It is long and angular with jutting cheekbones and prominent jaw. He has an emaciated look of someone who has not been fed properly for a long time. His eyes are his most striking feature. Red-rimmed,

staring and with yellow whites—they have a haunted quality. I do not know who told me The Wraith's history but it was certainly soon after I commenced work. This was just as well, because encountering this strange figure within the factory without any foreknowledge would have been alarming. The tale was at once both touching and deeply saddening.

The Wraith had commenced work at the factory as a teenager in the years just before World War II. Once war commenced, he joined up and after basic training, fought the Japanese in the South Pacific. He was captured in the fall of Singapore and endured deprivation and torture during his confinement. I am familiar with the newsreel footage of our soldiers on release from Japanese Prisoner of War camps and it takes no stretch of my imagination to understand the suffering The Wraith had endured. On his return, when he was broken physically and mentally deranged, he was re-employed at Henry Jones where he is now universally respected, treated with both deference and gentleness by all around him—he has made a great sacrifice and his employer and his workmates repay their gratitude on a daily basis.

The recounting of this memory thus brought to me for the first time the insight that the workplace such as the Henry Jones IXL Jam Factory was a highly evolved social system with a set of values and codes that mirrored, and in many ways reinforced, the culture of a broader society. Given this was the 1960s, only 15 years since the Japanese surrender—xenophobia was still widespread. With living testimony to their brutality like The Wraith, this was not surprising.

So these are the memories of a 16-year-old boy, not yet shaving but having a curiosity about the world and what made it work. I have described in some detail my impressions of that workplace and I have done so in mundanese. I am writing these memories down as a 65-year-old consultant. I have worked hard in every one of those 50 years since the Henry Jones experience and that experience must overlay, influence and mediate these memories. I need to state my intentionality to properly frame a legitimate purpose for my inquiry. To this end some of the concepts of phenomenological inquiry will provide some illuminating perspectives. The concept of presences and absences may be applied to my memories and the recollections that flow from them. To what extent are they authentic to the experience as it happened? The preceding passage of my brief time at Henry Jones is striking on re-reading for the absence of negative experiences. It's as if the distant lens of time has diminished what was unpleasant and difficult, and therefore highlighted the positive. Is this a universal experience or is it a matter of personal choice? The phrase that constantly recurs to me as I write this is "These are the best days of your life" which I should attribute to the 80s singer Rick Springfield. What determines the hue or perspective that is applied to these past experiences?

If I transport myself back by deep imagining I can list a number of negative experiences that would, should or may have occurred. One of the reasons I am able to do this is other experience of similar jobs that may not have had the same romantic overlays as the first job at Henry Jones. This may have been the vocational equivalent of first love or first kiss. The negative aspects could and should have included the mind-numbing nature of process work, where you have no control over the process that you

take part in. While engaged in these activities it is easy to think that if the owners of the business could have invented a machine to complete your part of the process faster, more reliably and more economically, they would have. Your value was your cheapness! As many were to find out in subsequent years, such machines were invented and human labour displaced. This relentless process continues without abatement today. The drive for increased productivity is central to political debate in modern economies.

The other important consequence of being reduced to a machine-like presence is the absence of any requirement for the workers to exercise their full range of abilities and potentialities. These were workplaces where you hung your hat in the crib room and checked in your brains at the main gate. As a result of this industrial lobotomy, both the workers and ultimately, the enterprise, suffered.

The sheer physical effort of keeping pace with a machine was a challenge. Because the worker had no control of any part of the process it meant that you were bent to the machine's needs and not the reverse. This experience was a common feature of the working lives of most people throughout the industrial revolution and into the 20th and 21st centuries. Even today, some workers in modern economies endure this mind-numbing experience.

On the waterfront

My fascination with the physical aspects of work started at Henry Jones where I was struck by the complete absence of mental demands made by the job other than staying awake and not bumping into things. There were other jobs that though physical in essence, needed a high level of judgment and dexterity to perform them well and away from physical harm. These experiences shaped my view that the distinction between the exercise of physical and mental abilities is entirely artificial. The implications of this division for society in general and education in particular have been problematic. My time in Technical Education, sometimes regarded as the poor relation of universities, reinforced the arbitrary and unfounded division. The purpose of the following passage is to re-visit the final days of manual labour where many jobs were still the province of manpower. I can use that masculine term because the mothers of my generation had left the workforce on becoming pregnant and were expected to be content to be housewives from that point on. I remember that in my matriculation classes there was only one friend with a working mother. This made him a highly sought after friend as his house was empty for most of the day.

The following summer of 1967 I was fortunate to obtain another holiday job with a local newsprint company. This experience enabled me to develop a particular grace and skill on the job that were essential to my being a productive member of a close-knit team. After working as a trades assistant in the annual mill maintenance period, I was rewarded with a job of unloading rolls of newsprint that were towed down river by tugs during the

day and unloaded into a giant wooden warehouse on the outskirts of the port of Hobart. A lighter is a flat-bottomed barge used for transporting cargo. If there is a single reason why the long-term unemployment of the unskilled is an entrenched problem in the western world since the 1970s it is illustrated by the decline of manual handling and the advent of the shipping container. The mill had world best practice in manual handling for the 60s. By best practice I mean that they used a minimum of machinery and as many “hands” as they could muster. The mill employed at least two hundred men in the manual handling of rolls of newsprint. In order to illustrate this system I need to describe it in some detail.

In order for the lighters to be unloaded they first had to be loaded at the mill wharf. The rolls of paper were lowered into the lighter by a crane using a single loop of rope with a noose on the end. The lighters were stacked four rows deep. At the start of a shift three men would be waiting in the bottom of the steel lighter. There would be a crane driver and a team of three on the wharf. Two men would push a roll of paper to the loading bay where the third man would throw the rope stop underneath the roll, stop it moving with a large pick-handle, which I come to describe in more detail later. He would then attach the loop of the rope to the crane hook. The crane driver would lower the roll of paper and the first man in the lighter would detach the rope and the other two would push it to the end of the lighter and walk back in time to receive another roll. The process would be repeated for an eight-hour shift to load two lighters. As well as pushing, the men had to carry and position wooden planks on which the rolls were stacked. These were four metres long and 20 centimetres wide by

two centimetres thick. They were heavy and were carried two at a time by the person laying them—you had to judge the exact centre of the board before lifting them up. Once the first layer of rolls were in place another set of boards were laid on top of them to provide a base on which to push the next layer. The crew was required to lay a lot of boards in a 30 metre lighter. The boards did not run the entire length of the lighter and therefore had to be butted against each other. They were not laid in perfectly straight lines. When full, the lighter was four rows deep and four rows wide. The paper rolls were in two sizes, half a tonne and one tonne—meaning they were not to be trifled with. The irregular placing of these boards meant that in pushing a roll of paper along them at a steady pace I had to anticipate where the join was and step to the side by a boot width when a new plank was reached. When new to the job this was accomplished by looking down at your feet and seeing the join. This method had a fatal flaw because looking down made walking harder and the joins came so fast that they could be missed. This would result in one leg disappearing between the paper rolls and an immediate fall. In the worst case it could result in a broken leg. I soon noticed that my more experienced coworkers always looked forward, where they could see the join approaching and use the speed of the roll as their guide to calculate, with precision, when to step aside, which almost always coincided with the join. It was both skillful and graceful to behold.

Once full, the lighters had their hatches secured and they were towed by a tug to the warehouse 18 kilometres downstream. They were painted a dark oxide colour and in the summer would arrive at the warehouse at 4pm having

been in the sun all day. I worked on the downstream crew and when we rolled back the covers, the heat was fierce. To unload the lighters the process was reversed with three men inside the lighter and a crew on the wharf to remove the rope strop and push the rolls into the warehouse. Inside they were then stacked eight high using similar planks and wooden chocks to secure the ends of rows. While the work was repetitive, there were a number of specific skills needed for this work. After some time in the warehouse six rolls would be placed on a flatbed truck and driven a kilometre to the port where no doubt a similar process filled the ship's hold.

I have described some of the challenges that faced the workers in performing their part of the journey from mill to newspaper. Today the mill still produces newsprint. The warehouse is long dismantled—the tugs and lighters now disbursed to other functions and all those handling jobs have disappeared. Let us count the number of times the rolls were handled—end of paper machine to wharf, wharf to lighter, lighter to wharf, wharf to warehouse, warehouse to truck, truck to wharf, wharf to ship, ship to wharf at destination and wharf to truck, truck to newspaper warehouse, warehouse to print room. I may have missed some but I think it adds up to eleven. Today the same rolls are placed in a shipping container, taken by rail to a northern port and then using just-in-time inventory management probably delivered straight to the print room in the same container. Is it any wonder that the use of a simple steel box has become one of the catalysts for an explosion in global trade and wealth in the last 50 years? As de Botton puts it in *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* (2009),

Critical to our imaginative impoverishment and practical enrichment is the field of endeavour known as logistics, a name rooted in the Ancient Greek military figure of the *logistikos*, or quarter master who was once responsible for supplying an army with food and weaponry. Today the word is used to refer collectively to the arts of warehousing, inventory, packaging and transport... (p. 35)

In the 1960s there was ten times the opportunities for damage to the paper roll in all those interactions, there was also ten times the chance of accidents occurring to those performing all that manual handling. The weight of the rolls and the fact that they were stacked on splintered boards and secured by wooden chocks would cause a current occupational health and safety officer to have a nervous breakdown. There were risks everywhere in recollection. The single rope strop securing the roll was probably first invented by the Phoenicians. In a wooden building full of paper the risk of fire was obviously a concern to management but was not shared by the workforce as almost everyone smoked.

This brings me to the hazards of the pick handle, which was the principal tool used to overcome the natural inertia of a roll of newsprint and to position the roll when traversing the warehouse. The foot of the pick handle had a large piece of tyre-tread nailed to it to provide traction and cushioning. The rolls entered the warehouse by means of gravity, rolling gently down a slight incline from the wharf. One of the jobs was to stand at the end of the runway with the handle at the ready and place it under one corner of the roll to position it correctly for the chain conveyor that ran along the floor. The danger was that precision in positioning was critical and on a number of occasions, when

learning the subtleties of the art, I placed it too far under the roll only to have it to flatten the whole shaft against the concrete floor—unfortunately with my hand still exposed on the underside. It was an incentive to learn quickly.

As I recollect these experiences I can see the beginning of a personal belief in the value of work and the important role it has in shaping identity. The work was ‘unskilled’ by any definition and required no numeracy or literacy skills. I grew to understand that so-called ‘unskilled’ work in fact required a range of skills, some of them high-level. The natural rhythms and rewards of physical labour and the cooperation and coordination needed in those small teams were necessary to maintain your own and other’s safety and create a conflict-free environment. My memory is of a happy and harmonious time in that warehouse. We went out of our way to pull our weight, as being accused of being a “bludger” was to be avoided. Nobody was nakedly ambitious as there was only one boss on site, a foreman, who seemed burdened by his responsibilities. Everyone was equal and there was no pretension or bullying. People seemed to know that their job was just that, a job.

My experiences unloading these lighters contributed towards the notion of my self in work. I understood the satisfaction of working in harmony with others, sharing challenging physical tasks, looking out for other’s safety and knowing others were looking out for mine. That unique set of circumstances for a young man about to enter university had set the standard for the workplaces I subsequently inhabited.

The Gladstone bag and feminism

Today the Gladstone bag is rarely seen except in antique shops. The Gladstone bag was a portmanteau popular among workingmen to carry their lunch to and from work. It was leather, square in construction and would hold half a dozen longneck ales within its clasp. It was also known as the 'doctor's bag' because so much could be fitted securely inside it. The reason for its inclusion in this story is to illustrate the social habits of a workingman that have long disappeared into the mists of time. The story illustrates how the roles of men and women have changed in a relatively short time.

On the wharf there was a worker, solid citizen, boiler suit matched with Akubra hat, and he always carried a Gladstone bag. Throughout the working day the bag would be opened to provide nourishment for its owner. Over the course of a day it provided morning-tea wrapped neatly in rainbow hued, waxed paper parcels. Within the neat wrapping were cakes and biscuits. At lunch some sandwiches were revealed along with a thermos, in fact two, one for coffee the other for tea. The process was repeated for afternoon tea. The bag also contained a rolled copy of the daily paper. This was an ordinary and oft-repeated scene hardly worthy of comment.

A colleague revealed the real story behind this bag. At the end of the day the bag travelled home sitting on the passenger's seat of the worker's car. When he arrived home the worker would leave the bag in the car and enter his house where no doubt his wife had a mug of tea or a cold beer waiting for him. Next day when he climbed into his car the Gladstone bag would be on the seat where

he left it. It had been miraculously replenished with another day's supply of food and drink and the newspaper! Such was the specialisation in this household of the late 60s that he did not have to carry the bag from the car and to the house and make same the arduous journey the next morning.

The passage of 40 years has made this scene incomprehensible for the two-career families of the modern workforce.

On the line

The physical nature of my first two jobs and the social system they supported had been unchanged since the building of the Pyramids. The two jobs described could have been easily performed by an ancient Egyptian transported through time, with suitable adjustments for clothing. What changed the relationship between worker and machine was the production line where the individual worker became subservient to the machine, to the line. The following passages are drawn from a remarkable book, *Work* (1975), by Studs Terkel. The testimony of Phil, a spot welder on a Ford assembly plant in Chicago is poignant,

I don't understand how more guys don't flip. Because you are nothing more than a machine when you hit this type of thing. They give better care to a machine than they will to you. They'll have more respect, give more attention to that machine than they will to you. And you *know* this. Some how you get the feeling that the machine is better than you.

You really begin to wonder. What price do they put on me? Look at the price they put on machine. If that machine breaks down, there's somebody out there to fix it right away. If I break down, I am just pushed over to the other side till another man takes my place. The only thing they have on their mind is to keep that line running... (Terkel, 1972, p. 160)

A striking feature of the accounts of the production workers is their pride in being able to survive in this unforgiving, relentless environment, a pride in surviving, a pride in mastering the task at hand.

I started out on truck tires. I made sixty to eighty jobs a day, and this is all times six. We put in six days a week. A job's a whole truck. And six tires a truck, plus spare. There was a trick to putting the rim in, so it had a little click. You had to be very fine to know. So you would put the clip around and then you would stand over it, and it would just kick over-boom! - in there. This I had to learn on my own. Didn't nobody teach me this. I'd take this tire, roll it up, I'll lay it right beside. I'd come back, get another tire, put it on, get another tire, put it on... (Terkel, 1972, p. 174)

This worker asks the question, "Is the automobile worth it?" And receives this response,

What it drains out of the human being, the car ain't worth it. But I think of a certain proudness. You see them on the highway, you don't look and see what model it is or whose car it is. I put my labor in it. And some body just like me put their area of work in it. It's got to be an area of proudness. (Terkel, 1972, p. 177)

The need to be part of something bigger than yourself and the need to have made a worthwhile contribution to the wider world are basic human needs. While it is probably true that a more basic motivation was involved in getting the job in the first place,

spending 22 years on the production line must yield something more than a weekly paycheck. This search for meaning is evident in many of the testimonies in Terkel's book.

It is illuminating to consider this from the perspective of Levine, the poet and social critic introduced in Chapter 1. In a radio interview Levine recounted the time he queued for an hour and a half for one of these production line jobs at an auto plant. The applicants were asked to line up at 8am outside the plant gates. They turned up and patiently waited in the cold and drizzling rain before the gates were opened and they could proceed to the interview stage. Why the wait? In Levine's view it was to make sure that the applicants were docile, unlikely to ask questions, challenge authority or be troublemakers if hired. 'Docile'—what sort of descriptor for a human being is that? Man did not become the dominant species on the planet by being docile.

I have my own experience of this quiet acceptance of the industrial order at Henry Jones IXL Jam Factory in 1966. It parallels the man as machine or more correctly man as but a cog in the machine in the workplace. Before relating this experience, it is necessary to understand that I was 17 years old at the time and obviously at an impressionable age. I was also passing through on my way to higher education. Mine is the perspective born of innocence and wonder, not economic necessity or lack of other options. This would be my one experience in the factory. I would not have to come back, day in, day out, as a permanent worker, or year after year, as the casual workers did. I was a tourist in an

exotic, hitherto hidden and mysterious world. Try as I might, I cannot imagine this world through the eyes of a permanent inhabitant. I have already described the Dickensian atmosphere and scale of the factory and my introduction to the world of work, dragging carts across the cobbled floor. That was only one part of my experience.

After some time on the carts, I am told to report to the production line where the shiny tins of jam were filled, sealed and packed in cartons. I was given a grey lab coat as a symbol of perhaps a more important role. The tins of jam progress along the steel rollers in front of us at hip height. They are still hot from the jam and the person next to me wipes any excess jam from the tip of the tin, the next person places a lid in position over the opening in the top, which is pressed down by the next person to seal the tin. A label is then attached. The next group of people lift the tins off the line and place them in cartons ready to be shipped to customers.

We all stand in the same position for some hours as the tins roll through. No one talks. No one has instructed us not to either. We just stand and wipe and place and label until the line stops or a whistle sounds to signify a break. The work is not demanding. It is not physically difficult and the pace of the tins allows more than sufficient time to complete the allotted task.

On reflection, this seeming inefficient process was a means of coping with periods when the factory was overstaffed. Rather than let workers stand around and do nothing, it was better to keep them occupied. The pervading sense was that my fellow workers on the line had just switched off and did the little that was asked of them without enthusiasm or

complaint. Later that day I was truly to experience the loss of autonomy that the production line symbolises. The subservience of man to machine was about to be demonstrated. Again I need to speak of the perspective I bring to this recollection. From my current viewpoint the experience is almost reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin's battle with the machine in the masterpiece, *Modern Times*, described by Jerome Larcher as "a grim contemplation of the automisation of the individual" (p. 64) in *Masters of Cinema: Charlie Chaplin* (2011). Chaplin often portrayed 'the Everyman' in conflict with the machine and the state.

I am told by the foreman to report upstairs to where the filled cans are placed on pallets. On arriving, I find myself in a large airy room, with wooden floors and a spidery conveyer entering the room at ceiling height and sweeping in a gracious curve to an end point near the wall below where it enters. It was like a miniature roller coaster. I have a supply of pallets and a manual forklift. I am to work alone loading pallets with hot tins of jam which clatter across the roof of the factory before rolling down the spiral conveyer and coming to rest in front of me. I have a special tool to lift the tins from the conveyer and stack them on the pallet. It is like a small hand fork except that it has five tines not three. By placing this fork between the tins at the end of the conveyer, four tins can be lifted at once on to the pallet behind me. The task is explained and I am given a quick demonstration of the use of the fork. I soon discover that the trick is to hold the fork at an angle of about 15 degrees to stop the tins falling out while I turn to stack them. My supervisor soon departs and there I stand, fork in hand, waiting in expectation for the clatter of tins over the roof.

While this recollection focuses on the slapstick nature of the experience, the actual experience was not funny at all. The emotions I experienced in the next two hours included trepidation, confusion, panic, fear, dread, stupidity, clumsiness and resignation.

The clattering tins march like silvery soldiers over the roof, enter my room and come to rest at the end of the conveyer. I insert the fork, lift and turn. By the time I face the conveyer, the weight of the tins behind push another four into place. Insert, lift and turn, repeat, repeat. First layer complete and reasonably even. Start on the second. Repeat the process again and again. The pallet is loaded, so I lift the pallet with the forklift trolley and place it at the entrance to the lift. I get a new pallet and put it in place.

Meanwhile, the soldiers keep marching across the roof. There are now so many of them on the conveyer that the room temperature rises considerably. I am getting the hang of the process and to clear the backlog, I start to move faster. I make some headway on the backlog but every time I think I am gaining, another row of cans marches across the roof.

By now, a combination of speed and fatigue start to take their toll. I drop a can from the fork, it rolls away across the floor. I run to pick it up. It is on its side so it is impossible to pick up with the fork. I pick it up with bare hands—it's too hot to touch, so I drop it. I run back to loading station, sweating, out of breath. I try to recover my rhythm, but fail. I drop more cans. The rows and pallet are not complete. I shift the pallet. Sigh. Anyway, I'll catch up later. Cans now stretch

from my loading bay across the roof and out of sight. I am falling further behind.

Panic.

Relief finally arrives. My supervisor returns to find a red-faced sweating wreck, cans strewn across the floor, higgledy, piggeldy, pallets not loaded and a state of general confusion. The two of us take an hour to restore order.

The days of jobs that are entirely physical have gone as machines and robots replace human energy. Unskilled work, where it still exists, consists of work like security guard duty, where a sheer physical presence is all that is required. Such jobs, particularly those in the public face at the entrance to a busy shop, must make it very difficult mentally to maintain good humor and concentration while, effectively, just standing there. I wonder about the decline in physical skills and hard labour and the rise of obesity in modern economies. I see the decline in the ability of my friends and colleagues to complete the most basic of household tasks such as changing a fuse or fixing a leaking tap. I remember the conversation I had with a careers advisor at university who observed that his greatest satisfaction in life came from working like a peasant, clearing blackberries on his hobby farm on Bruny Island. I still relish physical labour and recently hand-cleaned 3000 bricks for a building project. The following section is written as a reflection on the capacity to do useful hard work and the satisfactions derived.

Two worlds of work

My time in these factory settings resulted in a lifelong fascination with the two worlds of work—one where the work was physical and people worked with their bodies, principally their hands, and, the other, work where people worked with their minds. This division has always seemed an artificial distinction and to the detriment of the former group of workers. It is not by accident that workers were often called ‘hands’ as in factory-hand or farm hand. It is only now that I am aware of how important this division has been in philosophical circles. Richard Sennett in his book *The Craftsman* (2008) outlines the distinction between *Animal laborans* and *Homo faber* using Hannah Arendt as his guide.

Animal laborans is, as the name implies, the human akin to the beast of burden, a drudge condemned to routine. Arendt enriched this image by imagining him or her absorbed in a task that shuts out the world...

By contrast Homo faber is her image of men and women engaged in another kind of work, making a life in common. (Sennett, 2008, p. 6)

In the first, Arendt includes Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atom bomb and Adolf Eichmann, the war criminal. They focused on their work, seeming unconcerned with the wider issues of what they were doing. Sennett goes on to explain,

Thus, in her view, we humans live in two dimensions. In one we make things; in this condition we are amoral, absorbed in the task. We also harbor another, higher way of life in which we stop producing and start discussing and judging together.

Whereas Animal laborans is fixated in the question “How?” Homo faber “Why?”

(Sennett, 2008, p. 7)

Sennett disputes this division because “it slights the practical man or woman at work. The human animal who is Animal laborans is capable of thinking...” (Sennett, 2008, p. 7).

The kind of artificial separation of thinking from doing is discussed by Matthew B. Crawford in his book *Shop Class as Soul Craft* (2009). Crawford, who gained a doctorate in political philosophy from the University of Chicago after working as an executive director of a think tank, becomes a motorbike mechanic. He writes that the dichotomy was not accidental.

Rather, the twentieth century saw concerted efforts to separate thinking from doing. Those efforts achieved a good deal of success in ordering our economic life, and it is this success that perhaps explains the plausibility the distinction now enjoys. Yet to call this “success” is deeply perverse, for wherever the separation of thinking from doing has been achieved, it has been responsible for the degradation of work.
(Crawford, 2009, p. 37)

The responsibility for this process is often attributed to Frederick Winslow Taylor the author of *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) and the founder of scientific management and time and motion studies. Taylor converted work into processes and reduced these processes to those that could be discretely performed. Workers trained in these narrow specialised tasks were trained and monitored, and proved to be highly

productive. This process was the logical extension of Adam Smith's 'specialisation of labour in the pin factory' that is known to every student of economics. The cognitive aspects of the job were removed from the shop floor and became the exclusive province of management. The focus on this initiative was to reduce the costs of production but while the system worked as planned throughout most of the twentieth century, it was vulnerable to the globalisation and the relocation of work to low wage countries, which started with Japan post World War II. This process has been accelerating in the 21st century with the emergence of China as the world's factory. Narrow, limited skills were easily exported. The workers left behind had a limited skill base on which to build and struggled as western economies transitioned to knowledge work.

Management was impoverished by the creation of this divide between them and the workers on the shop floor. Managers were denied much of the practical knowledge required to improve productivity. A colleague, Mike Flanagan, captures this in the wonderfully titled book *Because No Bastard Ever Asked Me* (1993), which he co-authored. The book charts the work of a team of consultants attempting to save the Newcastle steel mills operated by BHP. They worked in the 1970s as part of a government funded rescue team. The improvements were not sufficient to save the mills. The mills employed a peak of 22, 000 people in the 1980s to 8, 500 a decade later. Today the figure is zero. The book details the alienation that was suffusing the workplace and the lack of trust between management and the workforce. The book's title comes from the following anecdote,

Ken stood at precisely at the same place on the production line every working day for 15 years. He had watched the pressed stainless steel bowls that would go into locally made washing machines onto the start of the line to his left and then rumble away along it to the end of a rubber belt, far away to the left. (Flanagan, McGinn, & Thornhill, 1993, p. 109)

The story describes a serious quality issue with out-of-round bowls causing washing machines to vibrate. Engineers were conducting all sorts of tests to determine how they could detect the problem bowls before they reached the next stage of production. All their complex attempts failed until finally Ken suggested they improve the lighting and he could visually detect the faulty bowls. The lighting was improved and the problem was resolved. When asked by his manager why he had not mentioned this simple solution before his response was “Because no bastard ever asked me” (Flanagan, McGinn, & Thornhill, 1993, p. 109).

The stories I have related above help to illustrate the artificiality of distinguishing *Animal laborans* from *Homo faber* that Sennett, Crawford and Flanagan highlight. It seems to be a distinction that was awarded belief in workplaces, yet in the light of the stories, such a belief might not have been warranted, or copied, as fundamentally in order, in wider society. Ian McEwan gives a sharp focus to the relationship between ‘mind work’ and ‘body work’ in his novel, *Saturday* (2006).

...Perowne studied closely the decisive jab of the surgical blade and saw the dark clot and ochre tumour, the consistency of porridge, disappearing into the tip of

Whaley's sucker. At the sudden appearance of clear liquid—the surgeon decided to take an abdominal fat graft to seal the leak...

With great delicacy, the graft was passed through the nose and set into the remains of the sphenoid sinus...

The elegance of the whole procedure seemed to embody a brilliant contradiction: the remedy as simple as plumbing, as elemental as a blocked drain—the optic nerves we decompressed and the threat to Rosalind's vision vanished. And yet the making of a safe route to this remote and buried place in the head was a feat of technical mastery and concentration. (McEwan, 2006, p. 44)

In his Foreword, McEwan explains that he had much assistance from brain surgeons in helping him understand their work and that he was able to observe a number of operations for this purpose. The work of a brain surgeon is probably valued as highly as any occupation and yet the above description is essentially one of manual dexterity and precision. The surgeon is a tradesperson using tools familiar to trades with the obvious difference that the subject matter of their work is the human brain. Is it context not skill that provides brain surgeons with much of their occupational status?

Man and his tools

The bank is steep and dry, slippery underfoot. The man stoops and leans into the bank to position a large log on his shoulder. He has calculated that the weight is about at his limit. He pushes uphill and balances the log on his

shoulder. He can bear the weight. He now traverses the hillside to drop the log in the back of his truck. His boots search for a firm footing in the long grass and he worries about the armies of spiders he sees when the trees have been felled. With much care and some close shaves, he reaches the truck and drops the load inside. He makes it. Immediately he heads off down the bank for another load. The process is repeated and he gradually gains confidence in his strength and agility. His body does not let him down.

The morning passes and a winter's firewood is gathered for his son. The backbreaking work has been worth it. The feeling of satisfaction occurs on a number of levels. First, he knows that he is still capable of hard physical work; this reinforces his concept of himself as a man. He has been part of a team with a joint purpose and he has played his part as a member of that team. Others have brought their skills too—a skilled chainsaw operator and someone who remembers how to make cordial and sandwiches for a thirsty work crew. He brought leather gloves to preserve his soft hands and a spare pair for others. He has helped his son, always a good feeling for a father. He has been true to his word. He hadn't been asked to help but he had offered. He has turned up and stayed. In fact he has accomplished Woody Allen's recipe for success "showing up". He is tired. He is happy—a good day for a knowledge worker unused to the immediacy and simplicity of the satisfaction that manual work provides.

I have written this piece in the third person to provide some emotional distance from the narrative, but later in the act of writing it, I am struck by the real insight from the experience of writing it—the importance of tools and how they define the people who use them.

When I arrived at the site that morning, I saw several dead eucalypts on the steep bank, their grey limbs no longer supporting leaves, but arching towards the sun. Three men and a chain saw, axe and splitter had transformed a dead tree into warming for a house for the duration of the winter. Collectively, man and tool had created utility from entropy. If we had not intervened and transformed the tree, it would have eventually rotted and fallen to the ground where the decomposition would have continued for decades. The tree would have been a habitat for spiders and ants, and the rotten heart would have provided food for grubs. But we have created something far more valuable for us, fuel. Facility with these simple tools has been the mechanism for the transformation. ‘Facility’ is the important word here because possession without skill is not enough. A native of the Amazon rainforest would be nonplussed by the chainsaw but would probably understand the axe and the splitter, though their tools would be of the stone variety.

The phenomenological perspective on this simple task can be broken down to the universal experience of transforming a raw material into something useful—to exercise autonomy, judgment and skill in a group with a common goal or objective. I could see a

universality in this simple experience that transcends the millennia of human existence and the diversity of cultures on the planet. From an environmental perspective I have interacted with the natural landscape and had an impact in removing some trees from a discrete ecosystem. I remind myself to plant an equivalent number of trees on my own block to replace those I have taken. The perspectives of depletion and renewal are played out in my imagination—I am interacting with my world. I am a participant in reflective modes and as such, experience a deeper and therefore perhaps a more satisfying experience than my companions. Of course the danger of this experience is that my internal dialogue is solipsistic rather than reflective of a universal experience.

van Manen introduces four fundamental existentials of spatiality, corporeality, temporality and relationality about how human beings experience the world. In his book, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (1990) van Manen sees these existentials as belonging to the fundamental structure of the lifeworld. They “are productive categories for the process of phenomenological question posing, reflection and writing” (van Manen, 1990, p. 102). For this thesis the themes that naturally emerge are those of temporality and relationality experienced through the lifeworld of work. van Manen explains,

Lived time is also our temporal way of being in the world—as a young person oriented to an opening and beckoning future, or as an elderly person recollecting the past, etc. Here again, when we want to get to know about a person we ask about his or her personal life history and where they feel they are going—what is their

project in life. The temporal dimensions of past present and future constitute the horizons of a person's temporal landscape. (van Manen, 1990, p. 104)

I have previously described myself as a 'blank canvas' on my first day at work in the jam factory. van Manen sees our past sticking to us "as memories or as (near) forgotten experiences that somehow leave traces on [our] being" (1990, p. 104). The portrait of self is developed through the accumulation of these marks and traces in the same way as a painter builds up surfaces and textures to complete a representation of a scene, object or person. van Manen further enriches this discussion by describing how the past is not fixed but "changes under the pressures and influences of the present" (1990, p. 104).

Reflecting on this marking process recalled to me a memory of an advertising pitch to 'make wrinkles sexy' shown on the television series *Gruen Transfer* in 2015. I have transcribed the narrative below and while it loses the power of the advertisement because of the absence here of music, powerful visual images and a narration, the sentiment that 'age might show but might also tell', is strongly conveyed in the lyric.

Every wrinkle tells a story.

There are happy wrinkles and sad wrinkles.

There are I have broken a few hearts wrinkles.

And I have had my heart broken wrinkles.

There are I like to party wrinkles.

And I'll try anything once wrinkles.

There are I wish I hadn't done that wrinkles.

And I haven't wasted a minute wrinkles.

There are naughty wrinkles.

There are nice wrinkles.

Yes, every wrinkle tells a story of a life well lived.

May you have many wrinkles.

(Episode 10, 2015)

The sentiment expressed can also apply to inanimate objects. For instance, I have been attempting to source a new workbench at auction. The demand is highest for the well-used carpenter's bench complete with woodworker's vice. A myriad of nicks and cuts, indentations and the residue of countless paints, varnishes and glues mark these benches. Not only do they have the patina of age but evidence of utility. They have been the base on which many useful things have been constructed.

As human beings we live with both our memories (past) and hope (future) but we share our physical space with others and this is the existential of relatedness. As the past is recalled so are the individuals who shared that temporal space. Some were the subject of awe, pity and fear. Some appear in memory as background, others as important sources of the learning and wisdom they passed on either by example or by sharing stories. van Manen explains,

As we meet the other we are able to develop a conversational relation, which allows us to transcend our *selves*. In a larger existential sense human beings have searched in this experience of the other, the communal, the social for a sense of purpose in life, meaningfulness, grounds for living, as in the religious experience of the absolute Other, God. (1990, p. 105)

Others as a source of wisdom is shown by the following illustration of advice imparted by an older worker to someone they observed struggling.

“Let the shovel do the work”

As a student I worked in summer on a council road maintenance gang. The work was arduous for someone unused to physical labour and I still have the calluses hard earned from those days. I also learned some valuable life lessons.

One day, under a blazing sun, I am shoveling gravel into the back of a truck. I am using a long-handle shovel and I struggle to make much of a dent in the pile while straining and sweating with every effort. I am only 20 minutes into the job that would probably have lasted all day, given my work rate. An older workmate notices my struggle and offers the following advice, “Let the shovel do the work, son.” He then demonstrates with a languid motion that seems to gather more gravel with less effort than I had been expending. The shovel seems to have just the right amount in it for him to swivel using his hip as a pivot point to deposit the gravel in the truck. All the time a half-smoked roll-your-own dangled from his

bottom lip. I watch and learn not to push and struggle but to use the weight and balance of the shovel as an ally rather than an adversary.

Of course I didn't immediately attain the graceful skill of my older adviser, because his skills were developed over many years of using his shovel, pick, crowbar and other tools. He had also developed muscle memory from repeated use of those tools in a variety of conditions. Fifty years later that memory remains and serves as the inspiration for me to return the favour to someone else. At the time of writing this piece, I am conducting a course in commercial negotiating skills. A key message is that good negotiating requires the adoption of a disciplined process. Good negotiators develop the equivalent of muscle memory by consciously practising and refining good process whenever the opportunity arises.

I have carried that lesson on how to use a shovel into many situations over the years but particularly into negotiating. Many people search for the brilliant strategy, the compelling argument or the winning tactic in their negotiations rather than letting the process (the negotiator's shovel) do the work. As participants struggle with these new skills I recount my days using the shovel and the advice I received. My way of imparting this advice is to tell the group, "Let the process do the work."

Postscript

I had just finished writing this when Chef Pierre Marco White, appearing on the Australian television series *Masterchef*, advised one of the contestants to “Let the stove do the work!”

My days of physical labour are about to end as I enter the world of the office.

Chapter 3 A Career in Prospect

The narrative in this chapter features the commencement of my real working life. Of course, by 'real' I mean the proper work that a highly educated young man would engage in—the commencement of a career, something that would transcend time, place and context. I could travel the world, work for many organisations, and perform many different tasks over an entire working life, whether paid or voluntary. This makes my early decisions about where my journey in the world of work is to start so important. What becomes difficult for me in this narrative is that I am confronted with the limitations of both memoir and language, as Chris Lawn explains in *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2006),

Language brings aspects of being into light, that is, makes it comprehensible to human consciousness, but even as Heraclitus realised, being constantly outmaneuvers our ability to express it. Being is always going to go beyond our ability to express it, not only is language limited but also because being is both disclosed and concealed by language... Even a proposition, as a statement about the world contains elements of the *said* and the *unsaid*. The said is obviously what the proposition is about but the unsaid motivates it, what question to which the proposition is an answer. Every utterance is surrounded by this element of the unsaid. (p. 84)

Given these shortcomings of the narrative form that follows I will attempt to say the unsaid, to enunciate the missing. I will attempt to reveal the truth about my motivations and actions in these stories. I am not the passive onlooker in my life. I am at the centre of the decisions that frame and constrain it. As van Manen states, “lived experience is at the starting point and end point of phenomenological research” (1990, p. 36).

The circumstances of my joining the Commonwealth Bank at its head office in Hobart in 1970 are forgotten. I think there may have been a holiday job for undergraduates that I applied for over the long summer vacation. When it was time to return to university I was offered a full-time job and was able to study part-time. I accepted and joined the Bill and Overseas Department in the bank’s imposing office in central Hobart. Economic historians have referred to banks as ‘the cathedrals of capitalism’ as they represented the institutions with the greatest resources and the ambition to dominate the society in which they existed. I have sat in awe in cathedrals around the world and wondered about how they expressed both infinite power and wealth to a visitor in the 21st century, this is in spite of being exposed to the secular wonders of the modern age from the Empire State Building to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The effect on someone in the seventeenth century must have been wonder and reverence of a different magnitude.

The banking chamber of impressive size and wealth reflected this vaulting ambition of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia—it’s solidity and the system that supported it. The

building on the outside is square with almost Soviet austerity in its style. Inside though, it glows with walls and floors lined with pink Coles Bay granite mined from what is now a Tasmanian National Park. It has a ceiling of vaulting height and impressive frescoes of agriculture and industry decorating its walls in relief. Within this huge chamber the staff were fenced in a central office workspace lined with counters and teller's cages. Most people worked in an open plan environment in full view of the bank's customers. Against one wall were the manager's glass-fronted offices to add to the 'openness', which was perhaps a valued managerial philosophy at the time.

I was about to enter an office environment for the first time, an environment that would become my home for the next 40 years. I had left the factory and physical labour behind and had entered into the world of the white-collar worker. In this environment the white collar predominated, as did the tie. Even in summer when some of the male staff wore shorts teamed with long socks, they still wore a tie drawn tight at the neck of their short-sleeved shirt. Of course, the shorts were the preserve of relatively junior staff, as the senior managers always wore conservative suits and only removed their coats when seated behind their desks.

When I worked in the paper warehouse, I had seen the massive, almost profligate use of human labour to get the job done—here in the bank it was clerical effort that was required. Numeracy and literacy rather than brawn, physical skill and patience were the basic requirement. This era I was entering was the highpoint of electro-mechanical

processing of transactions. Manual typewriters were still in widespread use and the ledger machines that processed the cheques still dominated the work of the bank. These machines were so impressive that it is worth taking some time to describe them.

Three people were required to operate the ledger machine. A machinist—always a woman—sat either side of a ledger examiner. Each machinist sat beside bins of yellow cards that recorded the customer's transactions. The machinist would process cheques which customers had written against their accounts and balance the ledger. If the customer had a positive balance it would be processed in black ink, or, if they owed the bank and had overdrawn their account the transaction would be posted in red. When statements were mailed out to customers the same inks were used. The terms 'in the black' and 'in the red' remain in common usage long after the different colours were phased out. I recall that the ledger examiner possessed a position of some importance and authority. He had to authorise payment of the cheques that were presented to the bank in order to be paid against the customer's account. If there were insufficient funds the cheque would be dishonoured and a person's or business' reputation would be damaged, perhaps forever. The term 'dishonour' indicates the importance placed upon 'trust' and 'reputation' in a modern, free enterprise economy. Before electronic processing came into being, these large and complex machines were at the heart of the bank's operation. It was the golden era of business machines and most retailers still had large cash registers on their counters—highpoints of modern industrial design. Similarly this was the era of manual typewriters with their rhythmical clatter of keys and cheerful

'ching' when the carriage reached line end. While the jam factory was powered by steam and gas, and was perhaps unchanged since the mid-eighteenth century, the bank was at the forefront of modernity, adopting the latest in technology. In that time IBM stood for International Business Machines not yet the computers they became synonymous with.

During my vacation job I was asked to write a paper about the future of the Tasmanian apple industry, a copy of which I retain today. My predictions were gloomy based on the effect of the United Kingdom joining the European Union. Gloom for the apple industry subsequently did happen in 1973 with devastating impact on exports and the inevitable decline of the island's apple and pear orchards. Many farmers were paid to grub out their trees and exit the industry. Almost 50 years later orchards are being replanted with apples and cherries for export to China or as feedstock for the rapidly growing cider market. In my work at the bank I was experiencing for the first time the inevitable rise and fall of industries and regions. Of course, cycles of growth and decline of communities continue today but if the long view is taken, there are always opportunities to harness natural advantages when new markets are developed. The Austrian economist, Joseph Schumpeter first used the term 'creative destruction' to describe this process of which I was becoming gradually aware. I was to learn some important lessons at the bank that were to shape my subsequent decisions about work and career.

The anecdotes that have preceded this section and those that are to come do not fit within the genre of autobiography. I continue to position myself as ‘an Everyman’—a witness to events. ‘I’ am present as an observer, not at the centre. I continue to position the reader as a fellow observer. The anecdotes that follow have been selected on the basis that they were the most memorable. That is, when I reflect on the past this is what I remember most amongst very much more boring memorabilia. The events ‘the Everyman’ witnesses are neither dramatic nor exceptional—it is the everyday nature of these experiences that make them a rich source of phenomenological reflection. I have asked another person who was present at the same time whether she had a similar memory of the events. She could not recall any aspect of what had happened and was somewhat bemused that I could give such a vivid account. Why have I remembered them with such clarity? I have remembered these events because they have been instrumental in shaping my early understandings of how the world of work, in fact, operated.

Anecdotes are the basis for my reflections and van Manen explains their significance for a researcher,

The researcher who is involved closely observing situations for their lived meaning is a gatherer of anecdotes. (And, of course, personal experience and the interview are also sources for anecdotes.) What is important in collecting anecdotes is that one develops a keen sense of the *point* or *cogency* that the anecdote carries within itself. Without this *point* an anecdote is merely loose sand in a hand that disperses upon gathering it. (1990, p. 69)

As I recall and recount my lessons I make use of the present tense to bring them into immediacy and bestow them with a sense of presence that makes them still alive for me, and the readers, as I write.

The cash count

The natural resource of the bank was once cash. The credit card and related economy had not yet developed and most people carried out their transactions in cash. People were paid in cash and of course this represented a considerable risk of robbery. Today the term 'payroll robbery' is never heard but in the 70s it was an ever-present risk. At regular intervals the bank would conduct a cash count where all the cash on the premises was counted at the same time and reconciled against the book entries. This was done after the bank was closed for customers at 3pm. All staff were summoned to the main banking chamber and, under the supervision of security guards armed with shotguns, counted all the cash on the premises.

"Cash count, report to the banking chamber at 3.15pm" is the instruction. I am intrigued and imagine being ushered into a large vault and scooping up coins from a large pile as I had seen Scrooge McDuck do in Disney comics. The thought of piles of money is exciting. I report to the chamber and the place is humming with activity. We line up along the counters where the customers had previously been. I am handed a bundle of notes secured with a rubber band. The bundle should contain 100 notes. The idea is for you to physically count them and report how many you count to a supervisor. Soon I find that counting

banknotes quickly and accurately are high-order skills, and that the two requirements—speed and accuracy—are mutually exclusive. The idea is to hold the bundle flat on the counter with the left hand and using the index finger shuffle through the notes so the counted ones are bent under the thumb of your left hand. The two hands need to work in unison. We are facing the counter, while behind us are the security guards with shotguns held across their chests. I quipped to my colleagues that they are there to shoot people who miscount but they fail to see the joke. The count begins and I am suddenly aware of my total lack of dexterity in this task. There had been no training for me in this important task and I watch my more experienced colleagues to my left and right to glean an appropriate technique. What I see is studied concentration and a blur of finger caressing the notes as they are somehow separated and are held secure under the thumb of the left hand. I try to copy the hand positions and the finger technique to no avail. I feel clumsy and nervous and reach for the small ball of rubber containing water. With moistened fingers I return to the task — again to no avail as my fingers now slip across the surface of the notes.

My colleagues have now counted three bundles while I languish on my first. Eventually I finish and, having counted 98 notes hand the bundle to my supervisor along with this important information. He takes the bundle, places it on the counter and with a practised technique rapidly counts 100 notes. Embarrassed I return to my station, am given another bundle to count and with my collar damp with perspiration begin to count. This time with no better technique I arrive at 102 notes. The two extras are obviously the ones missing

from my previous bundle. I duly report the discrepancy to my supervisor who again counts the bundle in a trice and arrives at 100 and gives me a disdainful look that says, "Stop wasting my time."

I return to my place on the counter and terrified of making another error continue at a snail's pace and manage to accurately complete a count. My shoulders ache with the effort and my fingers are stiff with tension. I feel totally uncoordinated and embarrassed at my subsequent efforts. Eventually I realise that no one has reported an under or over count accurately. The bundles all contain the right number of notes. I suddenly understand that the cash count is a theatrical production designed to instill in all staff the need for accuracy at all times. Having realised the true purpose of the exercise, my speed dramatically improves as the notes suddenly become malleable in my hands. The fact that I have ceased to count is not obvious to those around me particularly since I conclude each wad with an audible 98, 99, 100 before handing the completed bundle over.

The questions, "Why are we doing this?" "What is really going on here?" and "What is the underlying purpose of this activity?" are ones I still use today. The ability to appear to comply with an instruction without exposing oneself to ritual humiliation is a lesson always registered for the future.

On display

My usual place of work was the Bill and Overseas Department on the first floor of the bank. This floor replicated the ground floor in that the staff was enclosed in a large central coral surrounded by counters where the general public would wait to be served. The principal work of the department was the preparation of documents to support overseas trade transactions, such as bills of lading that were proof that a cargo had been delivered to a ship. These were critical in ensuring the release of funds to the party sending the cargo. The department also handled foreign currency and travellers' cheques. This was a whole new world for me and I was unprepared for the rigour and precision required in the documentation and form completion. I have never had an 'eye for detail' and prefer to operate in the framework of 'the big picture' rather than the small print. As a result the work was both tedious and mind-numbingly boring. Little did I realise that this introduction was not an outlier of administrative complexity but an exemplar of the world of clerical effort. The highlight of my time in this department was the frequent appearance of an old man of military bearing with a head of magnificent white hair, a striking figure. He was thus instantly recognisable, which was just as well because it gave time to alert the manager of the area of his approach. The manager would dash from his office and take up position behind the counter. The old man would produce a pile of currency from a battered valise and it would be pushed across the counter for the manager to examine. A long discussion would ensue. Eventually the manager would return from the counter, the old man having departed with his notes. It was not until the second time this little drama was played out that the manager explained to me that the currency was the Reichmark issued by the Nazi Government in Germany during World

War II and that the currency was worthless. The old man returned in hope every few months to see if the currency had been miraculously reinstated. I wondered at the time how he came to be in possession of the notes and what role he had played in the war. At that time it was only 25 years since the war had ended and many of the participants were just approaching middle age.

The obvious downside of being in an open area serving the public was that you were constantly on display. This had a number of disadvantages. Principal among them was that you had to appear to be working when there was nothing to do. This was particularly difficult when there was queue at the counter waiting for travellers' cheques. I was not allowed to issue them because of my inexperience and would have to sit staring into an empty file while you could feel angry eyes boring into you as a line of customers waited for the one staff member available to attend to them. I knew I would respond in a similar manner if I were on the other side of the counter. I felt shame at my failure to be able to assist rather than a sense of smug power of making customers wait while I was engaged in far more important tasks. I remember a similar situation from the customer's perspective when I look back to the Tasmanian Motor Registration Office. There, behind the counter was a row of desks seven wide by ten deep of clerks processing various pieces of paper. Serving at the counter were one or two junior staff yet to achieve the status of having a desk. Occasionally they would need to consult one of these clerks who would raise their head from the file on the desk, ponder for a moment and issue an instruction. No privacy and your entire day in the view of a restive and impatient

clientele was not an easy way to earn a living. Being on view provided an early lesson on the impact of alcohol on workplace efficiency. I cannot recall what I ate that day or whether I ate at all on the day when some of my co-workers invited me to lunch at the hotel next door to the bank.

I don't think to refuse and see the invitation as a sign of my acceptance among my older colleagues. I feel very adult standing alongside my newfound friends at the bar. I enjoy the conviviality and listen respectfully to their stories about bank life and particularly the shortcomings of their bosses. At the end of 'lunch' I had consumed six ten-ounce beers and was in desperate need of an afternoon nap. I am not drunk in the staggering or slurring my words way but I am definitely under the influence. I spend the afternoon in purgatory as I decide I should not complete any complex tasks, should not attend the counter for enquiries but should remain sitting at my desk pretending to be completely immersed in some meaningful task. Time passes agonisingly slowly as I have to maintain this charade of work for four hours. I survive the afternoon but vow never again to drink during a working day.

Even a normal lunchtime was fraught with potential dangers of social misadventure and exclusion at the bank. In my first week, I went to the cafeteria and having not yet developed any friendships, sat by myself at the only vacant table in the room.

I did not notice that it is dressed with a tablecloth and serviettes unlike the other tables. One of the waitresses comes over and politely informs me that I am sitting at the table reserved for senior management and that would I move

immediately as they are about to arrive. Acutely embarrassed I scuttled to a nearby table, cheeks aflame with embarrassment.

I never again entered that cafeteria, the scene of my humiliation. I chose to always leave the bank and sit in a park eating my lunch, even in the depths of winter.

My sense of exclusion and the entitlement of others has stayed with me. To this day I rankle when one group in society holds itself apart from the rest and confers upon itself special privileges. The current controversy about the abuse of parliamentary travel allowances in Australia is an indicator that this sense of outrage against inequality is widespread in the community and has some basis in our collective culture as Australians. It may be the result of our convict heritage that has imbued our national character. There is always a healthy disrespect for authority in Australia. Respect has to be earned by actions not inferred by office.

It was apparent early in my time at the bank that it did not hold the prospect of a long-term career for me. The only form of recreation available during lunchtime was a solitary table tennis table. Again there was rigid hierarchy of players determined entirely by seniority. During my time, there were several prominent sportsmen who were employed at the bank who commandeered the table and held marathon matches and series. In my year at the bank I did not have a single match on the table—it was monopolised by the selected few. An early and profound insight that this experience

informed me about was that organisations often have formal and informal hierarchies simultaneously competing for scarce internal resources—promotion and status, travel and the size and furnishing of offices in the formal organisation, and parking, uniform, lockers and membership of small groups in the informal organisation. At the bank I felt excluded from achieving any rank and status in any of these hierarchies.

A parting shot

Another eidetic experience was the farewell of a long serving staff member that I can recall with intense clarity.

It is Friday afternoon and we are instructed to assemble in the main banking chamber at 4pm to celebrate the retirement of one of the ledger examiners. There is a big turn out because the person is well-liked but there is the additional incentive of some free drinks and food provided by the bank. The retiree is the living embodiment of a now lost Australia. He is short, dressed in a three-piece tweed suit, white shirt and tie. He has the proud bearing and immaculate presentation of a man who had served in the military in both the Middle East and New Guinea in the most important battles of World War II. He has served the bank long and well, having joined in the early 1930s. His hair is parted in the middle and precisely set with hair oil, as is the fashion of his generation. He wears gold-rimmed glasses set on a large nose that is the centre of a rugged kindly face. There are laughter lines around his eyes that are bright and intense.

The state manager delivers the farewell speech. He wears a blue double-breasted suit and has a clipped mustache that along with his bearing, places him in the officer class. The speech is well-delivered, sincere and eloquent. The loyal servant is spoken of in generous terms, his diligence and his capacity to help others is lauded. His history of positions in the bank is recalled. His military service and the fact he returned to the bank after the war is mentioned. A gift of travelling luggage is presented amid general applause.

Throughout the speech the retiree has stood stock still, arms clasped in front of him. He was biding his time. The assembled gathering did not know it but the loyal servant has a surprise up his sleeve.

It is now time for his response. "I would like to thank you all for your kind thoughts and good wishes," he says. "Thank you for the luggage which Mavis and I hope to put to good use. I would also like to thank Mr. Gray for his kind words." He pauses and looks around us all. "I am however curious to understand that with all those qualities of hard work, loyalty and diligence that have been attested to today, why I have only been promoted twice in 38 years?"

There is a sharp intake of breath as the audience processes what has been said. You could hear a pin drop. There is silence. The speech is at an end. Applause follows as a career ends with a bang. I stand with the others who have been shocked by this final display of courage and truth-telling. My thoughts were for all those years of frustration, of being passed over for advancement, of being

taken for granted, treated like part of the furniture. A brave man and yet what was the promise unfulfilled?

My own father had died at age 62, three years younger than I am today, after 45 years of service for one company. He died from cancer but I always suspect that it was stress that lowered his immunity and reduced his ability to fight the cancer. No rest nor respite and certainly no retirement for him.

More bank notes

The bank had a staff magazine detailing the exploits of staff around the country. Of course, it was called *Bank Notes*. It seemed to the new reader that the features were usually of a branch and staff in a distant, remote location such as the highlands of New Guinea or the Outback. Men in shorts stood in front of a modest building flanked by women in uniform. The location was described as beautiful but challenging and a wonderful opportunity to develop management skills. Other articles featured the sporting prowess of individuals or bank teams.

I often read the magazine from cover to cover and took particular note of the career trajectory of featured staff. They appeared to move from branch to branch at two to three year intervals and were rewarded with a modest promotion either in job classification or size or importance of the branch. I spoke to a number of the older staff

about this process and they freely admitted that it was a way of making staff dependent on the bank for both their economic wellbeing and in large part, their social life. Being transferred on a regular basis did not allow for lasting relationships in their host communities and family and friends from their hometown had long been left behind. No wonder they became dependent on their colleagues for social interaction outside working hours. I also imagine that the regular shifts was a form of risk management so that staff with responsibility for lending did not get too close to their business customers.

Once this cycle had been repeated a number of times employees were then committed to this process for their rest of their career. Of course, you could refuse the transfer on any number of personal reasons. However, two refusals effectively meant the end of your career, as you would not be asked again. The manger of my department, a man in his early 40s had twice refused a transfer to Queenstown, an isolated mining town on the West Coast of Tasmania. He had done this for family reasons. He was now resigned to the fact that there would be no more offers and that his career was at an end. He knew the rules and was content with his decision. This dependence was also reinforced by the salary regime. Bank employees were poorly paid in the 1970s. This was perhaps a hangover from the Depression where the banks became synonymous with job security because they did not fire anyone during that period when millions were out of work. I can remember my mother being thrilled at my being hired by the bank because of the status and the security. The bank made up for the poor pay with another benefit—after a qualifying period, employees were eligible for subsidised housing loans. This encouraged them to take out a larger loan and buy a more expansive and expensive dwelling. If you

were transferred, the house could then be rented out to provide an income supplement. The bank often provided housing outside the capital cities so that staff did not have to buy a home every time they were transferred.

If you could feel the bonds tightening, there was more to come. The next restriction would be illegal today—and probably was then. There was a gentleman's agreement that the banks would not employ staff who had been employees of another bank. There was no headhunting and therefore there was no salary competition between the banks. The skills of the bank employee were specialised and not freely transferable to non-financial institutions. Bound by cheap loans, poor job prospects and the siren song of security, the bank had a committed and malleable core of staff that had signed on for a lifetime journey, irrespective of where it took them.

One surprise to me was that the bank would re-employ its former staff. It was quickly revealed to me that one staff member has left to sell life insurance. He had not succeeded and was welcomed back after some years and given a relatively junior job, in which he was to remain. In retrospect, even this magnanimous act had the effect of acting as a warning to others contemplating departure. As a farmer hangs a dead crow on a fence as a warning, the bank had allowed the failed life insurer to return as a practical illustration to those contemplating departure, reminding them the world outside the bank was harsh and unforgiving. Far better to stay and toe the line as the bank would look after you. It would even welcome you back if you erred and left. The bank was forgiving.

There was one area to which forgiveness did not extend and that was losing the bank's money. There was a senior gentleman of almost professorial mien who worked at the Head Office. He dressed in tweed suits and had a detached, almost bemused demeanour. He performed some specialised checking function that few understood. He had been a branch manager at a young age and was destined for senior positions in the future. Unfortunately there were some losses on a loan account reported at his branch and it transpired that he had not followed the correct procedure. This was a death sentence for his career and he was returned to Head Office to serve a penance of a low status job with no prospects of any remission.

The status of women

In the 1970s office environment the treatment of men differed from the treatment of women. The women, and banks employed a lot of them, wore uniforms provided by the bank. The men wore their own suits. The women were almost exclusively involved in processing transactions, repetitive work requiring accuracy and concentration. There were no women tellers, telling being an exclusive male preserve. There were no women managers at all. The most senior woman at my bank was a spinster in her late 50s and was always referred to as Miss Jones. I find myself embarrassed using the word 'spinster' as it seems long fallen into disuse. She was senior in years but not in the hierarchy, her work was to assess the stamp duties on a variety of legal documents before taking them to the Commissioner of Duties where they were assessed and then stamped, as having the fee paid and were then legally binding.

It is important to remember that the first principle of equal pay for equal work was not adopted until 1969 and later expanded by Commonwealth legislation in 1972. Although it seems unbelievable from today's viewpoint it was possible up until 1969 to pay women 25 per cent less than their male colleagues who were doing identical work. Was the rationale for this to keep men from feeling disempowered and resentful? They were supposed to be the 'breadwinner' and a woman's primary role was to keep house and raise children. Today these arguments would be seen as laughable but in 1971 I was the son of a stay-at-home mother who never worked after she married. My sister, 12 years my senior had never worked after the birth of her first child at age 23. The obvious discrimination in practice at the bank was entirely normal to a person of that era. The question that I ask myself now is whether key institutions, like the largest bank in the country, were in the forefront of the movement to address this obvious wrong or whether they were laggards in the movement for social change. I suspect the latter, though even this conservative approach has been subject to change in recent times as companies, through their CEO's, lend their weight to the movement for marriage equality. The recent intervention of the CEO of Qantas in this area is one example. This was an era where the roles and responsibilities of men and women were much more differentiated domestically and in the workforce.

Sectarian discrimination

It did not take me long to become acquainted with the inner workings of the bank's culture. My workmates were open about their interpretation of the informal social system

and how it worked alongside the formal organisation. The most surprising was an early question about my religious affiliation. When I responded “Church of England”, the questioner shook their head and said, “Well you won’t go far in the bank as all the senior positions are reserved for Roman Catholics and they look after their own.” Even as someone not contemplating a career path at that point I was shocked. If I recount this story to people from later generations they look at me as though I am mad. The word ‘sectarian’ is hardly used to describe Australian institutions and processes today. It is commonly used to describe the violence in the Middle East as Shia and Sunni battle for supremacy. From a contemporary perspective this seems puzzling in the extreme and a common response is to say, “They are all Muslims so why can’t they get on?” Those who ask this question have conveniently forgotten that the violence still occurs in Northern Ireland and the ancient hatreds between Protestants and Catholics continue today.

In his article ‘What Happened to Australian Sectarianism?’ Michael Hogan explains,

Of longer life and ultimately of greater intensity was the hostility between Catholics and other denominations - a rivalry that permeated colonial politics in the second half of the nineteenth century and lasted well into the twentieth century. (Hogan, 1984, p. 83)

I have no way of proving the assertion that only Roman Catholics would attain prime posts in the bank but the person who asked the question about my affiliation, went on to list a series of organisations and their dominant religious affiliation. The Education

Department was linked to the Masonic Lodge, the Police Department to Catholicism, and on the list went.

Many years later when working in the Education Department and pondering how a particular individual had prospered over many years without exhibiting a particular talent or application, I was informed that he was protected by the Masons. Again an assertion only but the meritocratic environment we have developed surely is a reaction to those uses and abuses of affiliations.

I had cause to remember these incidents about religion when once I was discussing distribution centres with a supermarket executive. These vast, strategically placed warehouses service supermarket chains, and operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The executive was telling me that his company had just started employing the first wave of African refugees from Sierra Leone and the Sudan. The company thought that it would be a good idea to balance the ethnic diversity of the night shift. For some years it had been staffed almost exclusively by a previous wave of immigrants from the Middle East. After only a few nights the Africans begged to be released from the night shift. When pressed for reasons, they said they had been constantly harassed and threatened by their workmates who resented their intrusion into the closed ethnic shop. So great was their fear that the company was forced to abandon this initiative.

Groups who suffer any real or perceived disadvantage seize any opportunity for advancement and guard their foothold on the ladder of social advancement. There is also the related issue of kin favoritism where people try to advance family interests and seek opportunities for close relatives and members of the same clan. Nepotism is still common, as reported scandals in many fields attest. There is also the trust associated with dealing within a small community. These ancient drives continue to exist and flourish within the complexity of a modern economy.

Drucker was surprised at the level of overt anti-Semitism when he arrived in America prior to World War II. He was also surprised at the discrimination against Catholics. Again the discrimination became entrenched in organisations. Drucker reveals this in his biography, *Adventures of a Bystander* (1979),

Catholics were totally absent in the upper reaches of the Department of Agriculture. Yet only a few blocks away, at the Department of Justice, there were plenty of Catholics but practically no Jews. And the FBI under Hoover was, of course, the original “Irish Mafia”. (Drucker, 1979, p. 304)

In my reminiscent narratives it is apparent that I saw everything but understood nothing. If I have a reflection of any depth it comes from a perspective of now, not remembered from a perspective of then. I was like a piece of raw clay before the sculptor began her work. My experience of the wider world was limited to home and school where I had been untouched by trauma, tragedy or hardship of any kind. I was to declare myself in choices I made. Sokolowski explains the way this happens,

We can also declare ourselves in regard to our choices as opposed to our wishes. When we do so, we manifest ourselves in our active practical rationality. Wishing by itself does not make us practical agents; by itself, it is rather passive: we want some thing to happen but we can't do anything about it. Only when a wish becomes an intention, and only when the wish effectively determines actions that we perform and choices that we make have we become truly active. (2008, p. 256)

I did make a choice, I did declare myself because on graduation at the end of the year, I resigned. The bank held no interest for me as a career. I did not see the connection between the mundane processing of transactions and managing savings and the glittering heights of high finance that dominate modern economies in the twentieth century and today. I instinctively knew that I did not fit into this environment. For me it was constrained, conservative, disciplined, repetitive and unimaginative. If you followed the rules, you had a position for life, and the bargain was that your life was over. All the key decisions about what you did, where you lived, or who you would befriend were not going to be yours. There is a wonderful passage in *Watership Down* (1972) where the band of rabbits, having commenced their perilous journey to escape the destruction of their warren are welcomed by a group of sleek, large, handsome rabbits living in a vast warren in a verdant field. The new rabbits are friendly and generous, and implore the newcomers to stay in the warren rather than continue their hazardous journey. Some of the new rabbits want to stay, while others are uncertain, until they notice that some of the members of the warren go missing, regularly. The newcomers later discover a snare, and the true horror of their situation unfolds. The warren enjoys its food and luxury because they are being fattened up by the farmer who regularly snares some of them for his table.

They grew big and strong and healthy, for he saw to it that they had all the best, particularly in winter, and nothing to fear—except the running knot in the hedge-gap and the wood-path. So they live as he wanted them to live and all the time there were a few who disappeared. The rabbits became strange in many ways different from other rabbits. They knew well enough what was happening. But even to themselves they pretended that all was well, for the food was good, they were protected, they had nothing to fear but the one fear; and that struck here and there, never enough to drive them away. They forgot the ways of wild rabbits. (Adams, 1972, p. 113)

The luxury and ease of their rabbit lives does indeed have a terrible price. It may not be a physical life that is sacrificed for comfort and security but the full autonomy of being an agent of your own future is, for many, the equivalent. A full life with all the attendant risks rather than one half-lived. Many times during my working life this passage has resonated with relevance. When I worked in the public service there were many people who constantly complained about their lack of opportunity and how their talents were unrecognised and therefore not utilised. Any mentions of the opportunities outside the public service were dismissed as the virtues of job security and the pension scheme were extolled.

The fat contented rabbit lives among us still. Similarly, in highly paid environments, I have experienced equal amounts of dissatisfaction from people who constantly bemoan their lot, while steadfastly refusing to do anything to change their situation. Some people do have a choice of occupation. This choice is denied to many. In exercising that choice

the futures that are manifold might be yet to reveal themselves. One implication of this choice is the way it would make a significant contribution to our identity, as de Botton illustrates,

All societies have had work at their centre; ours is the first to suggest that it could be more than a punishment or a penance. Ours is the first to imply that we should seek work in the absence of a financial imperative. Our choice of occupation is held to define our identity to the extent that the most insistent question we ask of new acquaintances is not where they come from or who their parents were but what they *do*, the assumption being that the route to a meaningful existence must invariably pass through the gate of remunerative employment. (de Botton, 2009, p. 106)

de Botton explains how Aristotle saw a basic incompatibility between satisfaction and a paid position and that the resulting financial need places one on a “par with slaves and animals” (2009, p. 106). I had sought the guidance of others but the best my career counselor at university could offer was that he gained his greatest satisfactions from “working like a peasant on his hobby farm at weekends.” Later chapters will explore how such a dichotomy of attitudes towards paid work continues to this day. In chapter 4, I graduate as a Bachelor of Economics at the end of my year at the bank and make a conscious decision to commence a career, leave home for the first time and move to another state. My career is about to start.

Chapter 4 Into the counting house

'The Everyman' runs the risk of making mistakes in his choice of career. This chapter takes 'the Everyman' into the field of accounting and illustrates how mistakes can sometimes lead in unexpected directions. It weaves back and forward between anecdote and autoethnographic description and interpreting meanings and understandings about choice.

Four years to become an accountant, the rest of my life to deny being one. Such is the curious nature of this 'fascinating' profession. I would like to say that I regret the decision or that my success—or lack of it—in my chosen profession was mild dyslexia but I take an almost perverse pride in the designation. To introduce myself to each new group I teach I ask, "Are there any accountants in the room?" There is usually a lone hand held embarrassingly low by a participant. Such is the power of the popular culture depiction of the repetitive and boring nature of the profession. I once asked, "Why are there no television shows with accountants as the heroes? Doctors, lawyers and policemen monopolise popular drama characters." No one proffered an answer. The answer to this question was not revealed to me until some years later when I accidentally watched the pilot of an Australian drama series about a team of forensic accountants. The highlight of this drama occurred when the hero explained the method of fraud perpetrated by the villains by drawing a network

of companies and related transactions on a whiteboard to finally solve the mystery. The effect was totally underwhelming, lacking the polish and sophistication of a denouement featuring Hercule Poirot!

In my initial writings about the world of work I did not consider writing anything about my time as an accountant. This is worthy of note in itself as I must have seen myself as just passing through en route to somewhere more exciting. Retrospectively this period is formative in terms of my working life. It was my first 'real job'. It was the start of my 'career'. I have been a member of a professional accounting body for over 40 years. I sometimes refer to my profession as 'accountant'. And yet, when I look back to the decisions that lead to this end I am mystified as to why I chose that profession.

In my final years of school prior to university I had studied economics and found it interesting but no more so than ancient history or english. My science results were strong but calculus had been my nemesis in mathematics. Still engineering and the sciences never appealed though there was a passing flirtation with geology. My decision to study economics and accounting at university was a process of elimination. I had no strong preference in the professions and therefore this area was the last one standing after the alternatives had been eliminated. It also had the advantage of leaving my options open because there was any number of occupational streams that flowed from a commerce degree. My family had no strong connections to the profession, though my older brother and father were both successful businessmen. Commerce was about business and

combined the theoretical aspects of economics with the practical aspects of accounting. Would 'the Everyman' have seen this as a rational decision?

Arthur Andersen and Peat, Marwick and Mitchell, two of the top six Chartered Accounting partnerships in Australia at the time, held interviews at a recruitment week at the university. After an initial interview, I was flown to Melbourne for final selection by the partnerships. Andersen was later disgraced by the Enron scandal and no longer exists. Peat, Marwick was folded into the international firm KPMG that later became a significant client of Scotwork, my current employer. The top six firms are now the top four thanks to the demise of Andersen and mergers. These firms now dominate the profession and supply a steady stream of retired partners to directorships of major public companies. I remember being wined and dined by the firms on my visit and I was offered a graduate position at Peat, Marwick, and Mitchell. This involved leaving home and my recently widowed mother in Tasmania. I was independent for the first time—an adult making adult decisions. My real journey had begun, or so I thought.

It does not start well. I am one of KPMG's 50 graduate recruits and we were sent to Monash University for our formal induction into the firm's audit methodology. The lectures were by a senior partner who had written the textbook on the subject. I am in a lecture theatre after thinking I had escaped this environment forever. How naïve I was. The only difference from my student days is that we are all in suits. The subject matter is tedious and boring, I sleep through most of the lectures. I start my time in the profession without a clue as

to what we are trying to do, and what my part in this process is. Is my lack of interest and motivation at the beginning a prescient understanding that I am not suited for this, that the work that we are all to embark on felt essentially useless? It may just be that I have overestimated my maturity and succumbed to the fast and easy life of the adolescent away from home for the first time.

It is unfortunate that I fail to take advantage of the induction program as my university studies have left me unprepared for the technical aspects of my work. I do not understand either accounting, as a discrete discipline, or the auditing process. My ignorance and confusion is compounded by my year in the bank. I have learned to view all transactions from a bank's perspective. So while the depositor would record money in the bank as an asset and debit the account in their books, the banks treated it as a liability to repay the money and recorded it as a credit. I have learned to reverse all my previous knowledge of debits and credits and unfortunately have to reverse it again. In this process I become hopelessly confused. This confusion is never really resolved until I have to teach the subject of accounting some years later. In preparing my first lecture I have to re-learn the subject, and suddenly as if a dark veil has been lifted, the inner logic and structure of accounting is revealed. I am amazed at how simple it actually is and angry that I have not understood this much earlier. Subsequently, as a teacher I take pains to express this simplicity to my students. There are perhaps six definitions and eight rules that govern the way transactions were recorded and how accounts are structured.

I look back at the year of auditing embarrassed at this gross deficiency. Perhaps like many others, I learned that if you pretend you knew then others have a tendency to believe you, particularly if you were warmed by the 'halo effect' of a great firm and the generations of experts that precede you. It did help to have status. Auditors had access to all areas in the performance of their work and therefore mixed with the senior executives of the company as a matter of course. In the hierarchical organisations of the 1970s this gave us a status that the clerks and middle managers did not have.

I bumble and stumble through the year and I am regarded as a diligent and productive employee. This meant that I would be promoted at the end of the first year. My climb up the ladder of success would have commenced had I not resigned. My logic for doing so convinced me that it is the best thing to do and I share my reasoning later in this chapter.

The pyramid

As a consultant I often work with professional services firms and their structure has changed little in the last 40 years.

The firm structure is a pyramid with a partner at the top. The partner has a number of managers reporting to them, between four and five. These auditors have a minimum of ten years experience. Each manager has a number of supervisors, who in turn have a number of seniors who have a number of graduates. I calculated the numbers in this pyramid and there are 90 people in

the partner's total team. Each person in that team has a charge-out rate based on experience and what the market will bear. The rate has a significant profit component. If you sit on the top of the pyramid you have 90 people delivering you a profit every hour of the day that they work. In fact it is every 15 minutes because this is the unit of time that each person has to record their activity on a fortnightly basis. The total units per week, is 165, and you have to account for every one of them. This is indeed an onerous task as some hours are not productive, such as standing outside a partner's office waiting for a signature for two hours. Because we always work at client's premises we never have an office or desk of our own at the home office. If we have to work in the main office we would just grab a desk. On some days there would be proof-reading to be done and a senior would come around and ask if anyone has time to proof read a set of accounts. The cry would then go up "How many units are you offering?" as people calculate whether they need some units for their time sheet.

This discipline of the time sheet underpins all professional services and the unit in most firms is now six minutes not 15 making it even more onerous.

One of the consequences of this time sheet charging is that a lot of hours are not charged to the client and another lot of hours is not recorded at all, as senior managers attempt to bring their job in on or under the budget for the job. All firms have an 'upwards or out policy' and if you do not advance to the next level in the designated time then the firm will find you a job elsewhere, often with a client. This creates a lot of internal pressure and wastage, as there is not much

space at the top of the pyramid. If you have not achieved partner status at the end of ten years then you have no future there. This policy assumes that everyone aspires to partner status with the attendant long hours and significant legal responsibilities. The rewards in the large firms are significant, with very high incomes and status. The high turnover rate of staff, particularly in their first three years, is extremely wasteful, as much of the benefits of the training and supervision are lost to the firm before the employee starts to become productive. I am about to become part of that 'churn' at the end of my first year. Only recently have I received a validation of this decision made as an immature man—yet to be wise in the ways of the world.

At the end of my first year I made the decision to resign. I thought through the consequences of my lack of enthusiasm for the work I was performing and I could not see a role model or mentor who could paint the bigger picture of where my grounding in accounting could lead. My feeling at the time was that I was not going to excel in the chartered firm and would probably leave to become the divisional accountant for a large company. Given the lack of engagement with the field of work that was unlikely to end well either. I could actually picture myself as middle-aged, overweight and unfulfilled. The decision to leave was therefore easy.

I make a prediction

Before I leave the accounting firm I have an exit interview with a senior partner. He expresses disappointment at my decision and asks, "What do you want to become?" This is the question that I have struggled with my entire life, but on this occasion the answer is clear and concise. I am surprised at how quickly I respond, "I want to become an expert, a person who others seek out for help." I could not recall from where these words sprang and there is no certainty about the field of endeavour but I am clear that I want to help people. What is difficult is what to do next. The decision about my career path is also complicated by my decision to return home to Tasmania to live. The option I chose is to become a teacher. The reasoning behind my decision will be explored later.

As I decide to leave the auditing profession I need to confront a deeper existential void. That void appears in the experience of doing work that is essentially futile. Those who do the work for its purported beneficiaries find in it no perceived value. My experience of mind-numbing routines with little relationship to a wider objective is perhaps shared with others around the world. Whether or not I experienced this absence of meaning as forcefully as those I am about to quote, there is a certainty that my sense of *ennui* was part of my motivation to leave. It is necessary to introduce this section with an understanding of the purpose of the auditing profession.

The function of the auditing profession is to attest to the truth and fairness of a company's accounts. As de Botton explains,

At the close of the process, the senior partner would sign off on six hundred forms which legally underwrite the accuracy of the stated accounts—thereby enabling potential investors to let their money sail off on lengthy and intangible digital journeys in the companies' direction. (2009, p. 241)

I had the good fortune to be given the book, *f**k you and goodbye* (2014) by Matt Potter as a present. It has the subtitle *the dark and hilarious history of the resignation letter*. The title should not be off-putting because it sounds as though the marketing department dreamed it up. Their creativity worked because my son purchased the book for me as a present. Potter presents a list of famous resignation letters. These range from King Edward VI to John Profumo. He provides a context for the resignation and a follow up discussion of the impact of the letter on the individual, the organisation and the wider community. I had not realised that many of these letters have become famous through the Internet and have been subsequently used as templates by countless others wanting to resign.

Nothing, it seems, is more accurate in providing an account of the regard an individual has for their work than the words they use to describe it in their resignation letter. This letter from a young accountant has a particularly powerful impact,

As many of you know this Friday will be my last day at PwC so I wanted to say good-bye and thank you for everything.

My decision to leave was not a snap decision as it may have seemed but a well thought out process. It started out in the audit room one night when I was helplessly trying to focus on some inane, completely irrelevant task so I could leave while the green card carrying cleaning lady came into my cage to empty my garbage that my decision was made. I realised I was actually jealous of her job. I would have gladly emptied the garbage cans in the whole building over any of the nonsense I was doing on my computer. (in Potter, 2014, p. 66)

Now the anonymous author really addresses the perceived value of so much knowledge work by the people who perform the work. While some have had to endure the monotony and powerlessness of the production line, others have had to perform tasks that they see as having no or limited value. The letter goes on to say,

At the end of her shift she has made a difference, she has added value, be it minimal, of removing the refuse from the employees' cubes. At the end of the day she sees the empty garbage cans and knows she has accomplished something. When trying to apply this mindset to my own work I found it impossible. At the end of my shift, I will have documented a control, that was only created for the sake of having a control, and my work will be picked apart by anal retentive managers, but ultimately find a home in a cabinet somewhere, only to see that light of day in seven years when it is deemed to be irrelevant.

I have added zero value to the client, zero to my own company, and it has made me routinely dream of ways to off myself. I find it very difficult to be motivated when I know the end result of my work will have no impact on anything but simply must be completed because PwC audit guide says it must be completed. (in Potter, 2014, p. 67)

So this heartfelt lament of work not worthy of doing, not worthy of the effort can be dismissed as the musings of a misfit who really didn't understand the processes of system audits and controls. The reason that this resignation letter became famous is that it reflected the thoughts and feelings of many engaged in the audit profession.

There is also the sense for 'the Everyman' that if you add together lots of work of little or no value together what do you get? Zero plus zero will always equal zero. Therefore it came as no surprise to read the following critique of the audit profession in *The Economist* after detailing a number of infamous accounting scandals.

Of course, no police force can hope to prevent every crime. But such frequent scandals call into question whether this is the best that the Big Four can do—and if so, whether it is worth the \$50 billion a year in audit fees. In popular imagination, auditors are there to sniff out fraud. But because the profession was historically allowed to self-regulate despite enjoying a government guaranteed franchise, it has set the bar so low — formally, auditors merely opine on whether financial statements meet accounting standards — that it is all but impossible for them to fail at their jobs. (January 28, 2015)

So at the individual level we see the torment of one who perceives their work as adding no value and at the enterprise or global economy level we see a whole industry with an exalted status as the gatekeepers of capitalism falling well short of their important charter.

The whole concept of purpose and meaning is illustrated by Rowlands in *The Philosopher and the Wolf* (2008). Rowlands uses the Greek myth of the punishment of Sisyphus who had offended the Gods in some way. Sisyphus' punishment was to roll a large rock up a hill. After Sisyphus had struggled mightily to get the rock to the top of the hill it would roll back down to the bottom again. Sisyphus would have to return to his labours only for the whole process to be repeated again and again.

Rowlands examines the myth and asks the question, "So what is the punishment?" Is it the sheer physical strain that Sisyphus has to endure to complete the task? Would the task be just as hard to endure if the Gods had replaced the boulder with a pebble that could be carried in his pocket? Again at the top of the hill the pebble would roll back to the bottom. The punishment is therefore undiminished. Rowlands then proposes that the Gods are merciful and implant in Sisyphus an intense desire to roll large rocks up hills. Sisyphus is now fulfilled by his task and eternally happy. Now Rowlands sees him as even more pitiful than before, a poor individual who has been deluded into thinking he is doing something valuable. Rowlands points out, "The real horror of Sisyphus' punishment lies neither in its difficulty or the fact that it makes Sisyphus so desperately unhappy. The horror lies in its sheer futility. His labour is futile" (2008, p. 227). I return to this analysis in my final chapter when I further explore the notion of searching for meaning.

Patrick Lencioni author of *The Three Signs of a Miserable Job* (2007) illustrates the importance of meaning as the source of satisfaction for the employee and the source of productivity and engagement for the employer. Lencioni has written extensively about the modern workplace. He uses the fable technique to illustrate what some would call common sense. The three signs of miserable job are ‘Anonymity’, ‘Irrelevance’ and ‘Immeasurement’. I have not been able to find a dictionary definition of the last term and will rely on Lencioni to explain.

Employees need to be able to gauge their progress and level of contribution for themselves. They cannot be successful in their work if their success depends on the opinions or whims of another person, no matter how benevolent that person may be. (2007, p. 222)

Lencioni details the need for recognition and the desire to contribute to something larger as also essential to satisfying work.

We are about to enter an era where work becomes a primary source of identity and meaning for many—the era of Eupyschian Management, both a movement and a book. It is both curious and ironic that a set of ideas that have had such a profound impact on working lives has such an obscure title. It has been out of print for many years, while the author Abraham Maslow, remains famous for his earlier work on the hierarchy of human needs and human potential. In 1962 he travelled to California where he worked for a technology company. During his time there he kept a journal that was later published as *Eupyschian Management*.

Eupsychian management

In this section I introduce the notion of Eupsychian management. Though obscure, this work, quietly invoked by Abraham Maslow, has profoundly shaped the personnel policies of the worlds' largest companies and has therefore influenced the working lives of the Baby-boomer generation of which I am part. Maslow's work has promoted policies that have placed work at the centre of human existence to the exclusion of all other activities. The movement has installed work as the source of all growth and challenge for the individual in return for a life-long commitment to a corporation. It is a bargain many have willingly made. The question is for all—at what cost to family, community and notions of self? Eupsychian management is included here because I am about to embark on a conscious choice of career.

As Professor Warren Bennis states in his Preface to Maslow's book it has an unpronounceable title, "which may, but I hope won't scare off readers." Unfortunately Bennis might have been clairvoyant—at least, in my extensive studies of management and work, I had not been attracted to it until I came across a reference to it in Madeleine Bunting's *Willing Slaves* (2005). Bunting describes how Maslow had

...left his university post and headed west to a company in Del Mar, in southern California, in a radical departure in his career. He had pioneered concepts such as self-actualisation and the hierarchy of needs, and radically redrawn a framework of human motivation and human potential. (Bunting, 2005, p. 89)

Bunting describes how Maslow now turned his attention to a new territory—business management. He kept a journal and published it under the title *Euspsychian Management* (1965).

Not surprisingly with a title like that, it never reached any bestseller list, nor did it make Maslow the millions acquired by subsequent business gurus who have adopted and popularized his ideas, which are now commonplace in corporate boardrooms all over the United States and Britain. (Bunting, 2005, p. 89)

Maslow himself describes how the how his interest developed, “I came there [Del Mar] for no specific task or purpose, but I became very much interested in what was going on there for reasons which will be apparent in the journal itself” (1965, Preface).

The unusual nature of this assignment is captured by Bennis’ description of Maslow in the Preface as “... approaching his material like a swashbuckling Candide, that is with a powerful innocence that is both threatening and receptive to widely held beliefs” (Bennis, 1965). The field to which Bennis was referring was. Maslow cites two seminal texts that his patron at Non-Linear Systems, Andrew Kay, gave to him — Drucker’s *Practice of Management* (1954) and Douglas McGregor’s *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960). These books were a revelation to Maslow had no previous contact with industrial or managerial psychology “so the possibilities for general psychological theory hit me with great force” (Maslow, 1965, Preface). During his six months at the plant, Maslow says, he kept a journal dictated on a tape recorder. This was later transcribed for corrections in grammar and then edited into publishable form. This unusual method of writing a book

may have contributed to the book's limited appeal because it lacks the usual coherent structure of a textbook or novel. Many of the chapters have simple headings like "Notes On..." or "Additional Notes On...". Others are more alluring, like "The Superior Person", "The Very Superior Boss", "Syndrome Dynamics and Holistic, Organismic Thinking".

In his introduction, Maslow describes how he has coined the word 'eupsychian' to describe the culture that would be generated by one thousand self-actualising people on some sheltered island where they would not be interfered with. A eupsychian culture contrasts with the classical utopian and dystopian dreams of fantasies. In a eupsychian culture, the questions become quite real, for example, "How good a society does human nature permit? How good a human nature does society permit? How good a society does the nature of society permit" (Maslow, 1965, p. xi)? He also goes on to explain that eupsychia can mean moving towards psychological health or healthward.

Maslow's motivation for embedding himself in a workplace is apparent in the first chapter. He explains how he had long abandoned the possibility of improving the world or the whole human species through individual psychotherapy. He had moved then to eupsychian improvement of educational institutions so that they could make people better en masse until it dawned on him that "as important as education, perhaps even more important, is the work life of the individual, since everybody works" (Maslow, 1965, p. 2). If the lessons of psychology and individual psychotherapy are applied to the

workplace then “this too can be given a eupsychian direction, therefore tending to influence in principle, all human beings” (p. 2).

His first sentence in the book proper sets forth his held premise in that

...we can learn from self-actualising people what the ideal attitude to work will be under the most favourable conditions. These highly evolved individuals assimilate their work into their identity, into the self, i.e., work becomes part of the self, part of the individual’s definition of himself. (Maslow, 1965, p. 1)

He then goes on to describe a virtuous circle wherein ‘good ok’ people in a good organisation will improve. This in turn will improve the industry, which in turn will improve the people involved and so on.

Maslow remains famous for his explanation of a hierarchy of needs of which self-actualisation was the pinnacle. The hierarchy starts with physiological needs at the base and as lower levels are satisfied, people move upward to the next level in the hierarchy. I have always understood that self-actualisation arrives when you achieve your full potential as a human being. Maslow believed that self-actualisation is best achieved in the workplace. His promotion of self-actualisation in the workplace is layered on quite a number of assumptions that are easily made sense of but Maslow sets them out in a confused, random manner. Without wishing to alter the choices he makes in listing his assumptions, the following is as it appears in *Eupsychian Management*. This too seems an illustration of the way Maslow put the book together rather haphazardly. Perhaps if he

had not died at 62 he might have had time to revise and develop the theory for a wider audience. Quoting the list in full illustrates the ambition in Maslow's assumptions and raw nature of the work, which remain richly relevant. In the list Maslow encourages managers to assume that

everyone is to be trusted,

everyone is to be informed as completely as possible of as many truths and facts as possible,

the impulse to achieve in all their people,

there is no dominance- subordination hierarchy in the jungle sense, and

everyone has the same ultimate management objectives and will identify with them

no matter where he or she is in the management hierarchy. (Maslow, 1965, p. 18)

Eupsychian economics must assume goodwill among all members of the organisation rather than rivalry or jealousy, since according to Maslow the following further assumptions are essential.

Synergy is also assumed.

Assume the individuals involved are healthy enough.

Assume the organisation is healthy enough whatever this means.

Assume the "Ability to Admire".

We must assume people in eupsyhian plants are not fixated at the safety-level need.

Assume an active trend to self-actualisation.

Assume that everyone can enjoy good teamwork, friendship, good group spirit, good group homonymy, good belongingness, and group love.

Assume hostility to be primarily reactive rather than character-based.

Assume that most people can take it, that they are tough, stronger than most people give them credit for.

Eupsychian management assumes that people are improvable.

Assume that everyone prefers to feel important, needed, useful, successful, proud, respected, rather than unimportant, interchangeable, anonymous, wasted, unused, expendable, disrespected.

That everyone prefers or perhaps needs to love his boss (rather than hate him), and that everyone prefers to respect his boss (rather than disrespect) is an assumption that Drucker overlooks.

Assume everyone dislikes fearing anyone (more than he likes fearing anyone), but he prefers fearing the boss to despising the boss.

Eupsychian management assumes that everyone prefers to be a prime mover rather than a passive helper, a tool, a cork tossed about on the waves.

Assume a tendency to improve things, to straighten the crooked picture on the wall, to clean up the dirty mess, to put things right, to make things better, to do things better.

Assume that growth occurs through delight and through boredom.

Assume a preference for being a whole person and not a part, not a thing or an implement, or tool or “hand”.

Assume a preference for working rather than being idle.

All human beings not only Eupsychian ones, prefer meaningful work to meaningless work.

Assume a preference for personhood, uniqueness as a person, identity (in contrast to being anonymous or interchangeable.)

We must assume the person is courageous enough for Eupsychian processes.

We must make the specific assumption of nonpsychopathy.

We must assume the wisdom and efficacy of self-choice.

We must assume that everyone likes to be justly and fairly appreciated, preferably in public.

We must assume the strength and growth dialectic for all those positive trends that we have listed above.

Assume everyone but especially the more developed persons prefer responsibility to dependency and passivity most of the time.

The general assumption is that people will get more pleasure out of loving than hating.

Assume that fairly well developed people would rather create than destroy.

Assume that fairly well developed people would rather be interested than bored.

We must ultimately assume at the highest theoretical levels of eupsychian theory a preference or tendency to identify with more and more of the world, moving towards the ultimate mysticism, a fusion with the world, or peak experience, cosmic consciousness

Finally we shall have to work out the assumption of the metamotives and metapathologies, of the yearning for the “B-values”, i.e. truth, justice, beauty, perfection and so on. (Maslow, 1965, p. 33)

My original interest in Maslow’s work in California was sparked by Bunting (2005)—outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Towards the end of working on this thesis I came across Theodore Zeldin’s book, *The Hidden Pleasures of Life* (2015) and fortuitously, in his last chapter he provides a valuable insight into Maslow’s own doubts about his work, as well as the inferences others have drawn from it. Zeldin concludes his chapter with a reference to Drucker as providing the validation for Maslow’s work and its adoption by a new generation of management gurus,

A new wave of management experts, led by Douglas McGregor of MIT and Peter Drucker gave this universal panacea their blessing, and it is now embedded in every human resources training programme that claims to turn ordinary people into exemplary leaders. (Zeldin, 2015, Loc. 5321 of 5426)

Zeldin reminds us that Maslow is an excellent example of how a writer’s message, as so often happens, is vastly oversimplified by disciples (2015, Loc. 5295 of 5426). Zeldin then makes the claim that

Maslow was unusual because he knew how ‘shaky’ his own conclusions were, the empirical foundations of his own theories, which were based on a study of only three or four dozen people carefully and perhaps a hundred or two but not as carefully or as in depth. Maslow is quoted as reporting that this was “bad or poor or inadequate experiment. I am quite willing to concede this - as a matter of fact I am

eager to concede it, because I am a little worried about this stuff which I consider to be tentative being swallowed whole by all sorts of enthusiastic people”.

(Loc. 5310 of 5426)

Zeldin supports Bunting’s assessment of the influence of Maslow on modern management.

Not least, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs gave captains of industry a ready formula that could convince employees that their jobs were helping them in ‘self-development’. Feeling good about oneself, and being oneself became the ultimate goal of life. (Zeldin, 2015, Loc. 5333 of 5426)

Maslow saw work as the site where people could achieve the highest state of development previously outlined in his hierarchy of needs. This state of self-actualisation was where an individual’s potential was developed to its fullest and they became a better human being. In order to do so they needed to see their work as central to their identity and their life. Work of this nature takes on a new dimension outside the time and physical effort that was previously required. Workers are now required to commit emotional labour to the task. Not only to align themselves to the values of the company they work for but to devote emotional intelligence to their work. They need to develop empathy with their customers and truly understand their underlying needs. They need to motivate their direct reports and work with disparate individuals within the organisation in cross-functional teams. They need to ‘make a difference’. The term ‘EQ’ for emotional intelligence has supplanted ‘IQ’, or intelligence, as the defining skill of knowledge workers whose physical output cannot be measured. Maslow would be gratified to see

the widespread adoption of engagement surveys that test the alignment of employees with an organisation's values and objectives. If I glance at my bookshelf I can see many titles that promote this wholehearted commitment to work and organisation. I draw a number from the shelves and find a centrality of echoing themes that I risk quoting at length. I begin with two popular books *Meaning Inc.* (2007) by Gurnek Bains and *The Way We're Working Isn't Working* (2010) by Tony Schwartz, to illustrate the impact of Maslow. According to Bains' publisher in the frontispiece to his book.

One thing is clear: the themes that drove business success in the 1980's and 1990's are not the ones that will drive business success in the future. Having carried out in depth interviews with thousands of executives and worked with a large number of companies around the world, Gurnek Bains and his colleagues have come to the conclusion that the future of organisations lies above all in the creation of meaning. (Bains, 2007, Frontispiece)

Schwartz's publisher is even more persuasive,

By integrating multidisciplinary findings from the science of high performance Tony Schwartz, coauthor of the number 1 bestselling, *The Power of Full Engagement*, makes a persuasive case for that we are neglecting the four core needs that energize great performance: sustainability (physical); security (emotional); self-expression (mental) and significance (spiritual). Rather than running like computers at high speeds for long periods we're at our best when we pulse rhythmically between expanding and regularly renewing energy across each of our four needs. (Schwartz, 2010, Frontispiece)

In *Willing Slaves* (2005), I am drawn by Bunting's subtitle *How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives*. She describes how for many workers in call centres and customer service roles there is a chronic and growing tendency to work longer hours than mandated. How combined with commuting to work and travel for work personal life is squeezed of both time and energy. For a fortunate few however things are different. Bunting describes how for a fortunate few

... the boundaries between work and play have been eroded: work is play work is your hobby. Work becomes the organizing principle of life. David Brooks describes this in his cult book *Bobos in Paradise* (2000), on the new American bourgeoisie: Work... is a vocation, a calling... employees start thinking like artists and activists, they actually work harder for the company... if work is a form of self-expression... then you never want it to stop... Business is not about making money; it's about doing something you love. Life should be an extended hobby... in this way business nourishes the whole person. (Bunting, 2005, p. 166)

Still in Bunting, I recognise the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's presciently echoed theme, quoted from his book *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (1998).

The trick is to no longer limit work time to the bare minimum, so vacating more time for leisure, but on the contrary to efface altogether the line dividing vocation from avocation, job from hobby, work from recreation: to lift work to the rank of supreme and most satisfying entertainment. An entertaining job is a highly coveted privilege. And those privileged by it jump headlong into the opportunities of strong sensations and thrilling experiences that such jobs offer. 'Workaholics' with no fixed hours of work, preoccupied with the challenges of their jobs twenty-four hours a

day, seven days a week, may be found today not among the slaves, but among the elite of the lucky and successful.

Work that is rich in gratifying experience, work as self-fulfillment, work as the meaning of life, work as the core or axis of every thing that counts, as the source of pride, self-esteem, honour and deference or notoriety, in short, work as vocation has become the privilege of a few, a distinctive mark of the elite, a way of life the rest may watch in awe, admire and contemplate at a distance. (Bunting, 2005, p. 166)

Next I turn to a book about Drucker written by Beatty. Drucker foresaw the challenges created by the growth of knowledge work as being social and economic. Beatty quotes Drucker,

This society in which knowledge workers dominate is in danger of a new “class conflict” between the large minority of knowledge workers and the majority of people who still make their living through traditional ways, either by manual work... or by service work. The productivity of knowledge work-still abysmally low- will become the *economic* challenge of the knowledge society... The productivity of the non-knowledge worker will increasingly become the *social* challenge of the knowledge society. On it will depend the ability of the knowledge society to give decent incomes, and with them dignity and status, to non-knowledge people. (Beatty, 1998, p. 177)

I count myself as one of the fortunate few who have managed both a decent income and rewarding work life. It did not happen by chance however and there is definitely a price

to pay for the knowledge worker, as I alluded to in the search for meaning earlier in this chapter. This will be more fully explored in the next stages of this thesis.

Bunting outlines how concerns about the domination of lives by work were earlier identified by Sloan Wilson in *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955) and William Whyte in *The Organisation Man* (1956). He quotes two passages from these works: "... bright young men in gray flannel suits rushing around... pursuing neither ideals or happiness — they were pursuing a routine" (Wilson in Bunting, 2005, p. 167). And "A man so completely involved in his work that he cannot distinguish between work and the rest of his life — and he is happy he cannot" (Whyte in Bunting, 2005,p.167).

The questions about choice that have surfaced in this chapter recall some writing I completed in 2007. I return to this piece now because it evokes my earlier fascination with choices, decisions and their consequences, and the concept of a life well-lived. It is reproduced below.

Walking to work

An image had been firmly fixed in my memory for many years. It resonates with meaning, much of which is of recent origin. It is strange how past events, seeming trivial at the time, lodge in our consciousness only to surface when stimulated by current

events. Back to my memory—I will do my best to describe it in plain terms because it is clearly not strange, not unusual and not exceptional. Thousands would have seen the same sight and I am drawn to wonder whether they have attached any significance or meaning to it. Or even, if they remember it.

A man, tall and gaunt, beautifully dressed in a gray flannel suit complete with an Akubra hat walks to work along a Hobart thoroughfare. His bearing is military with ramrod back and purposeful gaze. His pace is measured and brisk, he carries an umbrella folded under one arm that is balanced by a folded newspaper in the other hand.

Unremarkable indeed, a scene played out countless times across the world but why does it lodge so strongly in my consciousness? First, a confession, the man is not a complete stranger. I know his name through a friend of the family and I know his son. If the significance of this solitary figure is realised much later in my life, what curious instinct guided me find to find out more about him at the time? This man, Trevor and his background reappeared much later in my life.

What held my attention on this seeming trivial everyday scene? To answer this question is to explore many themes implicit in the concept of work and the centrality of work to human existence. For me, there is the strong sense of purpose in the walk itself. This is not an aimless amble to fill in some time but an act of deliberate intention. Trevor is not going somewhere important, his act seemed to be saying. This is the focus of his endeavour and he has gone to the trouble of dressing in a special uniform, the suit

complete with hat. Not only does the simple walk indicate a purpose but the act seems a part of a larger enterprise, the act of work itself. Until now, work had sustained Trevor, it gave meaning to his life. In so many ways it defined him and his life. He does not perform the walk as a random act—he performs it every day of the working week. Every week of the year, less holidays, he follows this pattern. While the walk continues to define Trevor it maintains for him a certain status as a worker, living in a desirable, leafy suburb close enough to work to allow him to walk. These facts are available to the most casual observer. And yet this simple scene is subject to many possible interpretations. Some authors would see Trevor as a cipher, ‘The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit’. Some might see him in class terms—senior executive, middle manager or professional. Whyte might perceive him as an archetype of ‘the Organisation Man’.

Whyte wrote in his book, *The Organisation Man* (1956), that some groups of employees are different, “... they are not workers, nor are they white-collar people in the usual clerk sense of the word. These people only work for the organization. The ones I am talking about belong to it as well” (2002, p. 3). Whyte uses the term ‘collective’ to describe their state and points out that this very term would cause workers difficulty if they knew it was being used. According to him, they often think of themselves as exercising a sort of romantic freedom and independence long associated with the freewheeling American culture. And yet, they have willingly joined an organisation that values the group and its collective need above that of the individual. If indeed Trevor had been ‘the Organisation Man’ then this would have been his ethic, his contract with society as a whole.

Whyte defines the social ethic as a body of thought which makes legitimate the pressures of society against the individual. He listed these beliefs as “a belief in the group as the source of creativity; a belief in ‘belongingness’ as the ultimate need of the individual; and a belief in the application of science to achieve the belongingness” (2002, p. 7). Has Trevor made a bargain whereby he has traded his autonomy and freedom for the manifold benefits of organisation life? In making this bargain has some of Trevor’s unique potential been sacrificed? Although Thomas Gray (1751) had an entirely different set of social conditions in mind when he wrote his ‘Elegy in a Country Churchyard’,

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear
Full many a flower is borne
To waste its perfume on the desert air

Although Gray’s poem is primarily concerned with the contemplation of death, the sense of potential unrealised, wasted talent and loss is resonant. While we ponder on the multiple interpretations of Trevor’s walk there is another scenario to examine.

Chris, of working class background, of humble personal circumstance is currently in his 59th year travelling the world as a senior consultant for an organisational development project. His trajectory has been forever onward and upward. Accepting new roles and responsibilities, retraining several times over, moving from close-knit local communities to major capitals and then back again. With opportunity has come responsibility, demands on his intellect, his emotions and his personal life. He has had the experience that David Whyte alludes to in

the *Heart Aroused* (1994)—of staring from a motel window in early morning and seeing landscape to which you would not have willingly travelled.

In remembering these different life trajectories I am drawn to questions about choice and individual agency. Has Chris made a better bargain than Trevor—variety, experiences, stimulation and growth? Or did Trevor choose or community, closeness and certainty? Did either make conscious choices at all? What sense would they make of each other's lives? Would they consider the alternative path as a lost opportunity?

I first observed Trevor when I drove to university in the 1970s. There is an amusing and tragic postscript to my musings about his walking.

Forty years later I am visiting my mother in an aged care facility. It is a secure place because she has dementia, as do many of the other residents. At the entrance is a buzzer which when pressed alerts the staff to open the sliding door. On this particular day I follow the normal procedure and walk through the door. Out of the corner of my eye I recognise Trevor standing in the doorway wearing a dressing gown over pajamas and slippers. I enter and Trevor exits, fast. I am waiting for the lift when two nurses rush up the corridor and ask "Have you seen an old man in a blue dressing gown?" Trevor has escaped and is heading towards town. The habit of a lifetime has not abated with age and infirmity.

It is quite a chase but Trevor is eventually caught and returned to the safety of the nursing home. The nurse tells me that his escapes are a regular

occurrence. I do see him on subsequent visits but his escapes have decreased and he seems more subdued, possibly from medications. The tale does not end there because some weeks later I bump into his son and recall the incident with him. He tells me that the staff moved Trevor to the second floor. There he fell from a balcony while trying to escape again. He broke his hip and he died not long after. His son remembers his father's morning ritual of walking fondly. By contrast, he lives a life far removed from his father's, with long periods overseas and an interest in raising cattle. The one thing he continues to share is a smoking habit!

I recognise so much of my father in re-telling Trevor's story. My father started work at 15 and worked for the next 47 years for the one company. He moved three times in his life—each one to follow his career. He died before he could enjoy a well-earned retirement. He was 'an Organisation Man'—loyal, attentive to detail, honest and hard working. He took all his responsibilities seriously and worried about his workforce and the impact of decisions he made on their lives. But above all he was loyal to the company and had no hesitation in placing himself in danger of a massive explosion when his company was involved in a major fuel leak that killed two workers. I believe the strain of that experience and the subsequent inquest were factors in his fatal disease. It may be his experience and my observation of Trevor that guided me away from the commitment to becoming 'an Organisation Man'.

Options

What surprises me when I recall these critical decisions in my life is the absence of a father figure or mentor to guide and point the way. This then leads me to observe that, while a mentor may have been valuable, there is no reason to believe that his advice would have been both sage and appropriate, and even if his advice had been good there is no guarantee that I would have followed it. In recalling these times both my lack of ambition and lack of adventure are obvious. I was young, 22 years of age, and the whole world lay before me—unexplored and beckoning. Why was I deaf to the siren song of adventure and romance? Why did I not seek out areas of growth and opportunity, such as the computer industry that was only in the early stages of development?

The prosaic nature of my decisions at that time contrasted with those of contemporaries that are worth recalling. A close friend, Richard, took advantage of an offer to sail to America on a yacht that was in Hobart at the finish of the famous Sydney to Hobart yacht race. I even remember the name of the boat, “Kialoa”. He asked me if I wanted to join him as they were looking for crew with experience like mine. He went, I stayed and joined the accounting firm. He never returned from the United States where he runs a successful construction business. What would I have made of a life in Los Angeles? I don’t know and never will, though I often ask that question.

Another friend, Keith, who graduated at the same time, became Australia’s leading tax accountant after a brief stint at Arthur Andersen in Sydney. He pioneered a technique

called 'bottom of the harbour' which saved millions of dollars of tax for wealthy clients. He drove expensive cars and lived on a large country estate. Unfortunately for Keith, his work became so successful that it became a threat to government revenues and, after crippling litigation with the relevant authorities, his business was destroyed and he went to jail for fraud. He had always been an entrepreneur and at university had promoted a number of get-rich schemes while working part-time to support his family. I have no doubt that he left his time in jail undiminished in his ambition and has probably succeeded in another field of endeavour. He would certainly still be out there pushing the boundaries.

Peter, who graduated in engineering, joined a computer company on graduation. We still keep in touch and in the over the past 50 years has racked up perhaps 20 different employers in that constantly evolving and restructuring industry. He has always held a highly paid job, he has travelled extensively overseas, and he has benefitted from large bonus and share option schemes. He has become moderately wealthy in spite of or because of his limited tenure in any of his jobs. If you do the maths, it is less than two years per employer. I look back over the same period and see two employers in 20 years. How can I even contemplate how I may have progressed in the information technology and communications industries?

In recollecting these initial experiences and recalling the choices made by my contemporaries, I look for patterns and themes that may act as guides for myself and

others, to make future decisions about my options in work and where I might locate it in my world. I understand that this involves risk. As van Manen discusses such a question of faith in the method in his book *The Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning Giving Methods in Phenomenology* (2014), the phenomenologist takes a risk. There are no tried and tested methodologies that support a scientific inquiry, which is both repeatable and logical. In van Manen's view, phenomenology is

... not a method for answering or discovering or drawing determinate conclusions.

But in the questioning there exist the possibilities and the potentialities for experiencing openings, understandings, insights — producing cognitive and noncognitive or pathic perceptions of existentialities, giving us glances of the meaning of phenomena and events in their singularity. (2014, Loc. 811 of 11903)

van Manen says, “Within a phenomenological context, method is not just an engine that will unerringly produce insightful outcomes” (2014, Loc. 806 of 11093). The method chosen requires a trust in the faithfulness of recollection, of memoir, of vocative memories. It requires the practitioner to trust the process of questioning that may not necessarily give us the insights and the answers that we hope for. It involves attempts and perhaps stumbles, on the way to hermeneutic understanding. But it is the attempt that is important, the attempt that shows, throughout this thesis, in the shards of experience I have used to illuminate wider understandings.

An account of a recent lunch might provide further insight into the decision-making process that others may adopt. It provides a contrast with the one I adopted when leaving accounting.

On a recent lunch I have the opportunity to sit with the wealthiest man in Tasmania. His fortune is notable for being self-made. He started his working life as a filing clerk at a large insurance company. He is both charming and interesting, displaying an acute understanding of potential business opportunities and assessments of other people he has dealings with. I am fascinated to understand what lay at the core of his success as he continued to invest and grow new enterprises.

Another guest and former work colleague of the tycoon recalled the days when they were 'cold calling' in a working class community in a country town. 'Cold calling' is door knocking to generate sales leads. It is the principal technique used by legions of encyclopedia and vacuum cleaner salespeople. It is hard and dispiriting work when you face rejection after rejection. It is harder still when you are selling an intangible, life assurance. It is the place where many a sales careers flounder. Even in this environment Bruce used method to maximise his chances of success. His secret was to look for the houses with the nappies on the washing line; they represented the best chance of sales success, as parents want to secure their child's future.

After he departed I asked his former colleagues whether he had demonstrated his current drive and desire for success from his early days. They

answered in the affirmative and said that the thing that made him stand out then was that he always demonstrated strategic thinking. He never accepted the *status quo* and the boundaries and rules that may restrict his progress. He asked to join a sales team when it became apparent that substantially higher earnings were possible in sales. Once in sales and a proven success, he wanted a change in status from employee to independent agent where the rewards were greater (as were the risks). He achieved this change in status and then recognised an opportunity in a then small market niche not being serviced by the larger companies. His company became a leading provider of financial services both locally and nationally before being sold for hundreds of millions of dollars to a public company. He has always sought the main chance, happy to accept greater risk for greater return but above all he never seeks the security of the *status quo* but always seeks out new opportunities.

In recalling these friends and charting their very different trajectories I have come to the phenomenological insight that I am a person who accepts the *status quo* and does not push the boundaries. I seek stability and security over adventure and risk. I do not question what is or ask myself “What could be?” Instead I opt for a safe choice. I decide to return to my home state, go back to university to commence study to become a teacher

Chapter 5 On Becoming a Teacher

A hermeneutic understanding

I am attempting to tell a story of ‘the Everyman’ who has worked in a similar task or in a similar environment to me. I have not used ‘at the same time’ because physical labour has not changed for thousands of years and bureaucracies have existed for hundreds of years. In presenting the shards of my recollection of the early experience of work I am telling a story—my story in the light of ‘the Everyman’. Others, millennia before my experience, have toiled long and hard to the limit of their physical capacity. The narratives represent the vivid memories of experiences, which were novel, alien and troubling. While the events may have not had an immediate impact on the formation of self, the memory has stored them for a purpose. It is through hermeneutic reflection that the memory’s purpose may be re-examined in order to glean possible understandings. In attempting to derive some guidance for understanding in the narratives presented the researcher-interpretor can adopt a perspective of ‘faith’ or one of ‘suspicion’. Ruthellen Josselson uses these terms in her paper, ‘The Hermeneutics of Faith and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion’ (2004). Josselson sees people as ordering their lives through narrative, “Hopes, desires, memories, fantasies, intentions, representations of others and time are all interwoven, through narrative, into a fabric that people can experience—and can tell—as a life history” (2004, p. 2).

My narratives are best understood as shards of a mirror affording a glimpse of a life as a work in progress. In writing about these events I have attempted to present a ‘thick description’. This is a term used by anthropologists to “Interpret an alien culture through precise and concrete description of particular practices and events — and to write thick narratives that seamlessly integrate story and context”. Cambridge historian Peter Burke is credited in the Nieman Reports article, ‘Historical Writing and the Revival of Narrative’, as describing a technique which,

... makes the narrative thick enough to deal not only with the sequence of events and the conscious intentions of the actors in these events, but also the structures, institutions, modes of thought, whether these structures act as a break on the events or as an accelerator. (2002, p. 3)

In the same article the Nieman Reports (2002) details the term ‘micro-histories’ as being “... stories about a single, usually very ordinary person, place or event, that seek to reveal the society’s broader structures” (p. 3). There are dangers in this process of producing small stories or micro-histories, as Burke pointed out that the “reduction in scale does not thicken narrative by itself” (Nieman Reports, 2002, p. 3).

The selection of narratives in this thesis has been mine alone. I have not chosen the ones I have included from a broad list of stories, they are the ones that emerged from my memory when I recalled the different stages of my career. In recounting them I have compressed a year of life into three small stories or a decade into slightly more. I have not recalled the hours of boredom staring out a window to the countryside beyond

waiting for a class to end, the supervision of exams, the marking of columns of figures with the auditor's special green tick, the commuting and the myriad of other events that have been my working life over the past 50 years. These re-collections are sufficient for reflection to commence.

Josselson states, "Because meanings cannot be grasped directly and all meanings are essentially indeterminate in any unshakeable way, interpretation is necessary, and this is the work of the hermeneutic enterprise" (2004, p. 3). Josselson introduces the concept of the shifting planes of self-experience and the concepts of 'restoration' and 'demystification' to distinguish the hermeneutics of faith from the hermeneutics of suspicion. In 'restoration' the reader is attempting to uncover the message(s) embedded in the text as the author intended. The reader is animated by a faith in the interpreter in respecting the symbols presented. In 'demystification' the suspicion relates to what may have been omitted or hidden in the narrative of what is unsaid and unsayable. In this thesis I have attempted to make my perspective that of 'an Everyman'. While I am the author of the narratives and anecdotes, I am attempting to represent the experience of many. I say "many" as a qualifier, as others in the same time and place may have recollected and written entirely different accounts. The Jam Factory could easily be represented as a dark satanic mill, entrenching low skill and low pay for the workforce. I am both a person of my time and place, and the narrative can only be understood in an ethnographic plane. In writing of these experiences it has become apparent that some meanings are hidden in the text, not as a deliberate and conscious attempt to hide understanding, but because the real meaning was not even apparent to me, as the writer,

at the time of writing. I have had a lifetime of antipathy to large organisations and their ‘ownership’ of their employees in Whyte’s term of ‘the Organisation Man’. Were those early experiences as an outsider in the bank a stark warning of committing so much of your identity to a single organisation? The unfairness of the treatment of some and the rewarding of the unworthy is the experience of ‘the Everyman’. The common saying that “In this organisation/workplace no good deed goes unpunished” reflects the corrosive cynicism of many workplaces. I hope that the reader has faith in my account of these experiences. If knowledge of my past represents a starting point for me to make decisions about how to spend the rest of my life then the past should be a truthful account. It would be against my interest to attempt to conceal experiences that may have a bearing on my future direction.

Josselson describes the term ‘suspicion’ as “something of an unfortunate choice” as the term indicates motives of concealment or dissembling rather than the areas of meaning that “operate outside the participants awareness” (2004, p. 15). The difficulty of writing the recollections in the natural attitude is that the events are clear and sharp but the sense of presence in the temporal space is muted. The description of an emotional state can never be the same as experiencing that state as a person and operating in the world in that state. The dryness of the mouth, the trembling, the slight but obvious quaver in the voice present at the time can be described but not re-experienced in their enlivening or debilitating fullness.

Josselson proposes a combining of the approaches of demystification and restoration in an attempt to integrate the past experiences of the person and their future hopes.

Demystification thus may serve the analysis of the structuralization of the past while the hermeneutics of restoration captures the representation of the future. Both forms of interpretation tenuously meet in an effort to understand the ever-shifting present. (2004, p. 21)

In the following passages I am attempting to demystify my experiences as I begin to take the first faltering steps towards a life-long vocation.

Leaving the corporate world

The easy part of my decision to leave the accounting profession is actually deciding to do so. I am both unhappy and unfulfilled in Melbourne and after peering into the future, I do not like what I see as the likely outcome of remaining there another year. The difficult part of the process is deciding what to do next. In this decision I follow the same process of elimination that began with my decision to become an accountant. With the considerable benefit of hindsight this is an error—having made an initial poor choice of career, I decide to repeat the mistake.

I will outline the logic of my thinking. I decide to return to my island home, Tasmania. With a population of 450, 000 people in 1973 this represents slightly less than three per cent of Australia's population. Tasmania has limited

employment opportunities in the private sector, as Tasmanian owned companies are largely family operations with sons ready to assume ownership and management. I could never become chief executive in these circumstances. Joining a national company in Tasmania will eventually lead to pressure to move interstate again at some point in the future. I am reluctant to remain in the accounting profession so that leaves the government as my only potential employer.

I eliminate the Commonwealth Government because there could be pressure to move to Canberra. I am left with the State Government, but am reluctant to become a public servant. There is no family connection with the public service and the thought of working in an office for the rest of my life is not attractive—I have no ambition to become a bureaucrat. That leaves the Education Department, which is offering graduate studentships with a reasonable salary for for the year it takes to complete a Diploma of Education and pass three practice teaching assignments. I apply and am successful.

I was only interested in joining large organisations. Today, I find my lack of ambition and avoidance of risk of any sort to be striking. To explore this absence I need to consider the historicity of the era and the traditions of my family. What was the influence of my parents and upbringing that made me so conservative? Was it the fact that my parents had lived through the Great Depression and World War II and had inculcated in me a desire for security in my formative years? My father's family experience was perhaps

as great an influence as the Depression. His father was a serial entrepreneur who started a number of successful enterprises and exhibited a restless energy throughout his life. The family endured a catastrophic fall from fortune when a paint manufacturing enterprise failed. The family was forced to move from a large home with domestic staff to living in a tent on the outskirts of Melbourne. My father and his two siblings lived there for six months while his father travelled to the goldfields in Western Australia to remake his fortune. He was partially successful and on his return he purchased a licensed grocer that the family ran for many years. As previously disclosed, my father worked for the same employer for the next 47 years and died while still working. Although he never talked about the desire for security, his experiences as a boy would have had a profound impact.

Was my lack of interest generally in entrepreneurship and enterprise creation reflective of the era? It was an era characterised by dominance of large organisations — many of them monopolies. The government in Australia was the only provider of telephone services, it owned the largest bank and an airline. The victory of the allies in World War II, through mobilising productive capacity and superior management, was a triumph of large organisations and their managers. Drucker explains this triumph in, *The New Realities* (1989),

The United States, with one-fifth of the population of all the other belligerents together, had almost the same proportion of men in uniform. Yet it produced more war *materiel* than all the others taken together. It managed to transport the stuff to

fighting fronts as far apart as China, Russia, India, Africa, and Western Europe. (p. 217)

Such was the predominance of business and the confluence of state and business that a politician could say without ridicule “What is good for General Motors is good for the United States.” My analysis at the time did not even consider working for a small business. Having eliminated so many options I was left with the State Public Service. I rejected that too for reasons of personal prejudice, not only in my own tradition but also in the wider Tasmanian cultural view at the time. The only profession left was teaching.

During my years at university, teaching seemed never chosen as a first choice of study by aspiring students. To encourage a supply of new teachers, the State Education Department offered 4-year-long scholarships for completing an undergraduate degree and a teaching diploma. In return, students were bonded to the department for the same number of years and sent to school postings at the department’s discretion. Teaching attracted those who could not afford to fund their own education, those who had no other scholarships, or those who lacked the prerequisites to get into other faculties, such as science and engineering. Such was the stigma attached to the scholarships and bonds, that my fellow students, who had earlier accepted scholarships and were therefore bonded for four years, were amazed that having obtained my first degree without assistance, I was now preparing to enter the teaching profession. Note that I had not given any thought about whether I was temperamentally suited to the profession, could bring something to it and grow and develop as an individual within it. In fact, as I will

soon explain, I had a quite unrealistic view of the requirements of the profession and, had I any inkling of what awaited me—I would not have made that choice.

I have yet to mention that there may have been a mercenary influence in that the Education Department was offering a graduate studentship to undertake a Diploma of Education, full-time for one year, on a salary equivalent to my current one. This inducement, combined with a desire to return home and the absence of a compelling alternative, led me to the profession which was to be the base on which I was to build a 40-year career.

While it seemed logical and sensible in an economic sense with a continuity of income and another qualification, it did not place me at the centre of my decision-making. Did I ask myself what I wanted to do with my life? What were my passions, my interests and motivations? What did I aspire to become? What were the opportunities on offer? Forty years later I am still shocked at the passionless way in which I approached that decision. If I were to search for an answer, it would be that I really didn't know myself at that age. But that leads to the question of what that knowing would entail. I can state what I didn't consider. If the self was not apparently present at that point in my life, at what stage does it emerge and what would constitute evidence of that emergence?

All my life I have loved the sea. I am a Piscean, the sign of the fish, and had a grandfather who captained passenger ships. I love the sight, the sound, the smell and the

feel of cold salt water on my body. Each summer I relish the first swim in the surf where the force and tumult of the waves tear from my body the cares and concerns of daily life. I have always lived by the sea and have sailed across oceans in small boats as recreation. Given I knew all those things at the time of deciding, why did I not consider going to sea as a career?

I have always shown a high level of creativity in my thinking in working on others' problems and yet when it came to my own, I have examined the rational domain but have not addressed the many other considerations that I have listed above that may have provided joy and inspiration in my life. I certainly don't want to speculate about what may have been the outcome "if only I had a mentor..." or "if only I had a more entrepreneurial background..." and "if only I had been more ambitious..." These speculations can only ever be precisely that—speculations. What is more important is to be able to look back on a range of working experiences that have been both fulfilling and a source of growth and learning. While I can be bemused by the apparent shallowness of my considerations and complete absence of a wider, whole-of-life perspective, the outcome has not been a cause of regret. It was some years later that I heard the definition of a mistake that is perhaps appropriate to repeat in this context, though I do not remember the source, "A mistake is an event, the benefits of which are not immediately apparent."

Doing something useful

I have been a beneficiary of a state education system all my life. I believe it has enabled me to earn above average incomes, complete interesting work and engage critically in a democratic society. I have been proof of the Human Capital Theory of education. This theory simply portrays a direct correlation between more education and greater lifetime earnings. Alexander M. Sidorkin provides a critique of this theory in his paper, 'Human Capital and the Labor of Learning: A Case of Mistaken Identity' (2007). He outlines some of the major attempts to demolish "screening theory" which maintains "that schooling is just an expensive screening mechanism for screening students into groups of less or more able" (Sidorkin, 2007, p. 159).

Sidorkin then examines the view expressed by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Ginnis that school does not make people smarter but that it creates "incentive-enhancing preferences" and describes these as "making us more obedient" (Sidorkin, 2007, p. 159). Obedience is then classed as a social skill, part of a wider human intelligence, "One may suppose that schooling makes students "smarter" and more socially adept" (p. 160).

He uses the concept of student labour—the work that students actually do in a school—as the factor that is not considered in human capital analysis. He believes that this explains the reason for compulsory education laws, "Compulsory laws exist because primary and secondary school does not appear to be such a good deal for most students" (Sidorkin, 2007, p. 165).

These interpretations of the school experience were quite different from my own understandings at the time I entered the profession. I saw the school as a place where young people learned the skills, knowledge and attitudes to make their way in the world and participate in a democratic society. The school was essential to social mobility, allowing individuals to overcome the disadvantages of birth and socio-economic status through hard work and application. Equality of opportunity was the philosophy underpinning the provision of state education. I had not been exposed to any radical views about the transformative power of education or that it could be a subversive activity. The works of Ivan Illich, author of *Deschooling Society* (1971) and Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969) were not part of the teacher training curriculum even though both books were published years before. If I had been exposed to these radical views (for their time) I would have dismissed them. My worldview has been formed by the age of television and the motion picture where *Goodbye Mr. Chips* (1939) and *To Sir, with Love* (1967) would have already influenced my conception of teaching. Both films feature the teacher as a dedicated professional committed to the transformation of the lives of young people, however troubled. Both films have been remade a number of times and continue sharing the same message.

Another diploma

The course to complete my Diploma of Education had both theoretical and practical teaching components. The quality of the lectures was poor and lacked inspiration for those in search of it. The student body, quite paradoxically for potential teachers, was

badly behaved in lectures—inattentive and rowdy with apparent little interest in the subject matter. I was unused to this in my previous faculty of economics where the struggle with the content made for a more focused student body.

I had some sympathy for my fellow students. I was taking notes in a lecture when I noticed the person sitting next to me was running a pencil along a page of already handwritten notes, which seemed to be a verbatim account of what was being said. After I expressed my interest, she explained that her sister had completed the course four years earlier and had compiled the comprehensive set of notes she was following. The lecturer droned on, slumped against the lectern reading the same material delivered years earlier. There was no eye contact with the students, nor engagement, and the message was clear—I am paid to deliver this unit and I will do so with the minimum of personal energy and commitment. This desultory performance has remained with me as the benchmark of the reciprocal nature of engagement.

Another lecturer had enthusiasm for education through film in an extended course in film appreciation, particularly of the works of Ken Loach. Through others, I absorbed the learning theories of Jean Piaget and John Dewey but nothing of the practice of teaching or the survival skills necessary for the contemporary classroom. As well, I had to successfully complete three teaching practice sessions, each of three weeks duration. I was assigned to an experienced teacher in my subject area at a suburban high school. It

was there that I gained an appreciation of being a teacher when I came face-to-face with my future audience.

As I was to quickly learn, the theories of the lecture hall had not prepared me for the reality of 28 bored and aggressive teenagers when I entered my first real class. I was 23 years old and only seven years out of secondary school myself. What had changed? Why was this so different, or had I just remembered the good bits? The first thing I needed to consider was that the perspective of a teacher is totally different from that of a student. My memories of high school had been from the perspective of a well-behaved, high achieving student in a new high school with a predominantly middle class student cohort. I was privileged to have good teachers and classmates who were interested in learning and who saw that good results at school were an important step in getting a good job. My school days were remembered as recent past, which further reinforced the view that I had little idea of what the profession of teaching really involved.

My teacher training, with one notable exception, was uninspiring. I was also ill equipped for the constant behaviour management issues faced by beginning teachers. More disappointingly, I was uninspired. How differently would I have approached the practice of teaching if it had been explained by van Manen in his article, 'Pedagogy, Virtue, and Narrative Identity in Teaching?' We might, as learning teachers, assume models and practices shown to us by other teachers and aspire to improving our practice.

In teaching young people, as I have come to appreciate in reflection, what is important is the “pedagogical interaction” we would have with them. As van Manen says,

Teaching... requires not only a complex knowledge base but also an improvisational immediacy, a virtue like normativity, and a pedagogical thoughtfulness that differs from the reflective wisdom (phronesis) of other practitioners. The classroom life of teachers is difficult especially because it is virtue like, improvisational, and pedagogical. (1994, p. 4)

Perhaps it was the tradition of teaching in which I was brought up that I was unable to appreciate van Manen’s pedagogy until now. From a phenomenological distance I see that I have been inside the classroom looking out, rather than in the front of the classroom, from the teacher’s vantage, looking in.

My school days remembered

One of the contributing factors in my decision to become a teacher was my remembrance of my own school days. My school days were good such that I believe my memories come back through rose-coloured lenses. I remember my school days as almost universally productive—full of interest and reward. I was a good student and also excelled at a number of sports and so my school days should have been happy. I enjoyed learning. I was well-behaved and malleable. I won numerous prizes and was among the first picked for sports teams. My state schools provided sufficient good teaching and

opportunities for me to excel. Before deciding to take up teaching as a salaried position I had no reason to question my suitability for it, or its worthiness.

Yet in my memories there were some things that were lurking quietly to make me suspect that my choice might waver later on. My school days did not start well.

I still remember my first day distinctly. After an hour of copious weeping on the departure of my mother, I spend the rest of the day plotting never to return. I even hatch a plan to go to the local police station and explain that I would kill myself the following day if I have to return to school. I am far too attached to my mother to take our first separation in my stride. It is truly traumatic, but when I explain my plan to my mother at the end of the day, she calms me down and my anguish at separation is soon forgotten and the next day passes without trauma. I really excel at primary school and love mathematics and reading. I remember of happily laying on the lounge room floor completing some mathematics problems when my mother tells me to stop working and go outside and play with the local children. I am reluctant to leave my books—I am really enjoying this work. My mother obviously wants me to be popular with the neighborhood children and I reluctantly comply.

I have always wondered why this memory is so powerful? Why does it remain vivid while hundreds of other afternoons have faded? Was it the beginning of the need to fit in with the norms of behaviour of my age group rather than excel? Was there a subconscious message from my mother that play and social contact was more important than learning?

“Better to be popular than clever” may have been the wisdom behind her innocent action. It may have been coincidence but the momentum to master and excel to be ahead of the rest was somewhat diminished after this event. Was I beginning to learn something of the Australian culture bias against intellectual achievement so that mediocrity can excel in all aspects of life? In Australia, for instance, the only area in which you are allowed to use the term ‘elite’, is in sports. The importance of fitting in was also reinforced by the fact that older and tougher boys bullied me in my early school years. I cannot remember being physically abused more than a few times, but I was often threatened and chased home. The journey home from school was a perilous one and I devised alternative routes to thwart my pursuers. A sudden growth spurt during the middle years of primary school assisted in getting the bullies to desist from extorting money from me in return for protection.

There is one nagging doubt that persists. I often regret that I never achieved my full potential at school. Good results came too easily and I was never motivated to excel. My mother often told me that my English teacher, who lived in the same street, said that I should go to a private school for the final years of secondary school, as I would not be extended enough in the state system. My parents decided against the advice on the basis that my older brother and sister had not had that opportunity. Given that none of my friends from high school went to university and my current circle are almost entirely from private schools and university, I sometimes wonder if things might have turned out differently. Perhaps, had I known and believed that education was for mediocrity might I

have never considered teaching? It is now that as I gain some insight into education as an explicative order that stultifies children's lives and curbs their creativity and freedom according to Jacques Rancière's critique, that I am able to recount my first teaching experiences through the lens that I remember them and then recall my teacher Miss Inez in the light that I do. My own education colours my recalling my initial teaching experience and later my understanding of the possibility of an education for releasing the power of individual potential liberates the memory of Miss Inez.

A return to the classroom

The feeling that I had made a terrible mistake was reinforced by my first experience of a discipline issue. Trainee teachers are easy game for any student wanting to push the boundaries of what was acceptable. I was supervising a class for my mentor teacher and had noticed a young female student disrupting the group around her. I asked that she come to the front of the classroom where I proceeded to explain the need to be on task and not disturb those who were trying to work. A perfectly reasonable request, I thought. She listened with eyes averted and when I asked her to go back to her seat she turned and I heard the barely audible, "Get f****d!" uttered. What to do? I took the time-honoured path and pretended I didn't hear but from that moment on I knew that managing that class was going to be a battle for survival.

My other problem was the subject areas chosen for me, based on my degree studies, were commerce and social science. The first subject area was to introduce students to office processes and procedures and provide some rudimentary bookkeeping practice. The brighter students might learn Pitman script shorthand, while typing was the destination of the majority of students enrolled. This was the era of manual typewriters and correcting typing tests was an exercise in exquisite boredom. It was as dull as could be and provided no basis for intellectual stimulation. I imagine the whole subject area has disappeared, as the jobs that it supported have disappeared. Amongst memories of the ancient and modern history I had studied at senior secondary school, with their great characters, wars and heroes and villains, commercial studies proved very pedestrian in comparison.

The second subject area I taught was social science, which was at the forefront of a revolution in teaching method. The idea was that teachers would not have individual classes but, by knocking the walls down and creating a large open space, students would work in small groups. Three conventional classrooms were combined so that 75 or more students and three teachers occupied the one space. Teachers were a learning resource that would provide guidance and assistance to the small working groups. As a teacher in the midst of this change, I saw average students muddle through as they always do, really bright ones coasting because they could and there was insufficient energy or inclination among the teachers to extend them, and low achievers, who lacked both the skills and the motivation to achieve in a self-directed environment, left to flounder and reinforce

their, and others', assessment of their lack of worth. It seemed to me that this initiative was a failure on all counts.

In the Commerce Department such 'progressive' educational ideas were yet to take root and the staff there taught in the traditional manner. I was the only one on staff with a degree, as the predominantly female staff had teaching certificates that had been phased out 20 years ago. At least the teacher knew what they had to do in these classes, and lesson plans and regular testing was the norm. The problem was that the curriculum was incredibly boring: bookkeeping, typing and commercial studies. These were the courses for students with low ability or aspirations or in most cases, both.

As it happened with many other new initiatives, a senior official of the Education Department advocated the 'open' classroom I experienced after observing it on an overseas trip to the United Kingdom, and recommended it be adopted across the entire school system in Tasmania. The main selling point for adopting new educational approaches was always that they represented the latest thinking 'overseas'. This was a time when the world was still a large place and had not been shrunk by international travel, the Internet, the mobile phone. There existed a cultural cringe in the once distant colonial outposts, a kind of low-self esteem—many ideas were adopted before they were fully evaluated in relation to their effect on student learning. Sometimes ideas were only partially adopted—physical changes were made without corresponding investment in teacher numbers or training, curriculum and learning resources. During the 20 years I

worked within the Education Department, I was to see this process repeated over and again—ideas imported from overseas without proper evaluation or understanding of our cultural and economic differences from their places of origin.

Each innovation incited beginning enthusiasm but seemed always destined to end in disillusionment and atrophy of teacher energy. I was to witness later that by the time we were tearing down the walls in our schools in Tasmania, the original innovators had decided to rebuild them and move on to another innovation. As recently as four years ago the entire senior secondary and vocational education sectors were combined into Polytechnics. This came after the visit of the Minister and his Head of Department to Singapore to observe their system. Two years of chaos followed before an incoming government reversed the decision and another ‘solution’ was implemented.

The government’s dealing with innovation with such hesitancy and inconsistency affected my becoming a teacher. I was thwarted in my two subject areas. In social science, I was prevented from teaching because of the open classroom, self-directed learning innovation, and in commercial studies, the subject matter was not worth teaching. My time in training and in my one-year teaching in a high school gave me access to some outstanding examples of teachers’ craft that most likely saved me from ‘falling out’. The first left an indelible memory.

Miss Inez

I was fortunate at my first teaching practicum to be supervised by an outstanding teacher who demonstrated one of the essential truths of the teaching process—you cannot hope to teach anything unless you establish a learning environment in the classroom. To establish a learning environment you must be able to maintain discipline. I am curious about the use of the word ‘discipline’ in this context. For most teachers ‘discipline’ describes the range of punishments that can be used to enforce student behavior, but taken this way it would not be required at all if students had another sort of discipline, namely self-discipline. Having observed hundreds of people negotiate in my consulting work, I come to understand negotiating as a discipline that can be applied in a wide variety of contexts. I explain this to my groups and I ask them, “What is the first thing you need to discipline?” The answer I seek is, “Yourself”. And there lies an essential element of truth.

In Miss Inez I experienced an example of personal self-discipline that was the bedrock of her teaching practice. She was a serious woman—I cannot recall seeing her smile once in the time I knew her—tall, gaunt and pale, her hair in tight curls pinned to her head with hair clips. She wore glasses tipped on the end of her prominent thin nose. She dressed in neutral colours, shirt, cardigan and long skirt with a faded tartan pattern. All her movements were restrained and deliberate. She had mastered the art of stillness and silence. When she arrived at a room she would pause at its entrance until her presence

had registered with everyone in the room. All eyes would meet hers. Only then would she be ready to enter.

First her students would line up in rows of two outside her room waiting for her to arrive. Once settled in a straight and silent line she would permit them to enter. Her secret was that she did not need to enter a classroom and then seek order—she created order even outside, before the class would begin. As if in the perfect contrast to Miss Inez’s class, there was the class of a first-year male teacher, who was good looking and eager to please his students. As Miss Inez explained to me that he wanted to be a popular teacher. In his class, chaos, disruption, noise, fights and constant interventions by teachers sharing the building were diminishing respect for the young teacher. The secret of Miss Inez’s success was that she created certain expectations of what was the required behaviour in her classes. She made it easy for her students to exercise self-discipline because there was no alternative for them. They had worked out that if they wanted a quiet life in her class all they had to do was obey the clear and simple standards that she had set.

Other teachers had similar standards and yet they had constant problems with students who continued to push the boundaries of what was acceptable. The real secret to Miss Inez’s system is that she followed-up—she enforced the rules. They were not for guidance or discussion—they were what was required to the letter. Students knew precisely where they stood. There was certainty and calm within her class from the

beginning. Any deviation from the required standard was immediately apparent and her response equally swift. She did not possess special powers or have access to punishments unavailable to others. She had infinite patience to follow-up. Her students knew with certainty what would happen if rules were broken, or boundaries crossed. There were no exceptions, no special allowances and no favourites in Miss Inez's world. My message from Miss Inez was that all teachers must 'organise' to create an environment where learning can take place.

Once Miss Inez was required to intervene on behalf of another teacher who had been abused by two girls. She asked me to sit in on the meeting in her office and take notes of the discussion. I was able to observe that through a process of softly spoken questions, she showed the girls the hurt they had caused the teacher, who was also present. The girls were obviously no angels and had the hardened look of truculent aggression. Gradually Miss Inez wore them down until their brittle veneer of toughness that had been protecting them finally broke and they tearfully admitted their rudeness, and made apologies and commitments for improved behavior. Softly spoken words, refined questioning and patience in understanding is what I observed and what motivated the girls' change in behavior.

I was obviously in considerable awe of Miss Inez and was extremely nervous when I was required to present a lesson in her presence. I remember the subject, 'Money in the Modern Economy', and the detailed lesson plan I prepared. I have presented thousands

of times since to audiences of 1, 500 people but in my half hour class I was the most nervous I have ever felt—my first ever practice teaching lesson and Miss Inez observing in the back corner. With a churning stomach and a dry throat, my words seemed to emerge from the throat of someone being strangled. Relentless pacing back and forward across the narrow space in front of the desks was one way of releasing the nervous energy bottled up inside of me. I obviously survived this initiation but worse was to come.

Miss Inez, the consummate professional, had taken notes to provide feedback on the foolscap pad that contained my lesson plan. I had run a 30-minute lesson and there were four pages of concentrated writing by Miss Inez. I remember with embarrassment that jangling coins in my pocket throughout my lesson had been distracting. There were comments about pacing, how to phrase questions and who to direct them to, tips on the use of the blackboard, and how to tie the lesson together at the end. I regret not having kept the sage advice the notes contained to apply them to my current work in teaching negotiating skills to senior executives. I am certain that all of that advice would still be pertinent today.

I remember thinking at the time I graduated that Miss Inez might have replaced the entire education faculty. If she had run intensive workshops on classroom management and discipline there might have been a dramatic impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the school system. There might have been real improvement in morale and

general wellbeing of teachers. The loss of many young teachers to the profession might have been prevented.

My second memory of teaching practice is almost comical in its simplicity but it is as strong, and perhaps I have yet to appreciate its significance. I was placed in an all girls' school. I cannot recall my supervisor as hard as I try. I think he may have used me as a form of indentured labour and I took over most of his teaching. One afternoon I was told to take a typing class as relief for an absent teacher. I was told the students could complete a set of exercises from their text and I was given the page reference and the room number. It was a bright summer's day and the typing room overlooked the extensive green lawns in front of the school. There were 28 girls in the class and each sat behind a large mechanical typewriter. I gave them their instructions and to my amazement they started their exercise typing in tune to the William Tell Overture. I will not attempt to replicate it here but 'ding' on the carriage return was the chorus break. It sounded fantastic and the girls must have enjoyed their individual contributions to the music because they did not flag for the entire class. I cannot take any credit for that 40 minutes of skilled practice but the sun on the fields, the breeze parting the curtains and the obvious concentration and pleasure of the class were a privilege to be part of, if only as a witness.

I see this typing lesson in sharp contrast to desultory hours spent in classes where the activity made no sense to the students and where the effort was individual or in small

groups where there seemed no sense of contributing to something bigger, something that an individual alone could not do. What was it about our classroom practices of those years that removed the love of learning, being part of a group, doing something worthwhile? Why have our schools diminished the love of learning, categorised people into successes and failures, and not provided the tools of curiosity and the skills of inquiry to service a lifetime need for learning? Might that single afternoon have been a shining example of what might be? Even stranger, might the typing pool to which many of this class were headed, have represented an occupational and technological dead-end?

Rancière in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) uses the life Joseph Jacotot (1770 -1840) to explain emancipatory education where the pedagogical myth

... says that there is an inferior intelligence and a superior one. The former registers perceptions by chance, retains them, interprets them and repeats them empirically, within the closed circle of habit and need. This is the intelligence of the common man and the young child. The superior intelligence knows things by reason, proceeds by method from the simple to the complex, from the part to the whole. It is this intelligence that allows the master to transmit his knowledge by adapting to the intellectual capacities of his student and allows him to verify that the student has satisfactorily understood what has been learned. Such is the principle of explication.

(Rancière, 1991, p. 7)

Rancière then explains that, for Jacotot, this represents ‘enforced stultification’. Jacotot’s discovery that the will to learn precedes intelligence and that the teacher did not have to know more than his pupils. The assumptions underpinning emancipatory teaching are

that everyone has similar intelligence and is thus able to teach themselves and that everything is in everything.

Postman and Weingartner (1969) examine the hidden messages implicit in modern classrooms.

Passive acceptance is a more desirable response to ideas than active criticism.

Discovering knowledge is above the power of students and is, in any case, none of their business.

Recall is the highest form of intellectual achievement, and the collection of unrelated 'facts' is the goal of education.

The voice of authority is to be trusted and valued more than independent judgment. Classmates are inconsequential. (pp. 31 - 32)

They explain how students take subjects that are discrete, "English is not history and history is not science", and once you have taken a subject "you have 'had' it" (The Vaccination Theory of Education) (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 32).

On reading my accounts of my beginnings as a teacher I am aware of the emerging realisation of how unready I was both intellectually and practically for the challenges of teaching. Is this an experience of 'the Everyman'? Possibly many have a similar experience of inadequacy in face of difficult challenges but I am faced with the realisation

that my analysis of the shortcomings of curriculum or classroom design are really masking the truth of personal inadequacy and youth.

After passing the Diploma, I was posted as a beginning teacher to a northern high school to face the real work of being a teacher. I had been chastened by the experiences of teaching practice and knew that I had a long journey before I could claim to be a 'teacher'. The year passed as a long, pointless grind as I struggled with discipline and motivation. I remember I approached at least one class with dread on Thursday afternoons and found it necessary to actually steel myself to cope. I was just starting to really regret my decision to take up teaching when salvation arrived in the different form of teaching that was to make my backwards move seem like a masterstroke of foresight. I was soon to begin teaching adults.

Recounting my formative experiences of teaching has revealed the power of narrative to open up possibilities and deepen understanding of past experiences. I had immediately recognised that Miss Inez possessed some thing quite special as an exemplar of the professional teacher, but until I wrote down my recollection of the experiences I might not have appreciated the multi-dimensional nature of her craft.

A Temporal reflection

While the intensity of these new experiences has remained in my memory, my first year as a teacher is largely unremembered. The days and weeks and months might have morphed into a single impression without any one memory standing separate from the rest. Yet it seems strange that I remember it as a time of intense frustration and boredom.

The experience of the passing of time is a universal human experience. Michael G. Flaherty in ‘The Erotics and Hermeneutics of Temporality’ uses the autobiographical account of Arthur Koestler to describe the incongruous experience of the slowing down of the moment and the speeding up of the experience in the following passage in *Dialogue With Death* (1960), about his imprisonment in the Spanish Civil War.

Time crawled through this desert of uneventfulness as though lame in both feet. I have said that the astonishing and consoling thing was that in this pitiable state that it should pass at all. But there was something that was more astonishing, that positively bordered on the miraculous, and that was that this time, these interminable hours, days and weeks, passed more swiftly than a period of time has ever passed for me before... (Flaherty, 1992, p. 143)

Flaherty discusses the relation of temporality to duration. All of us live in a world of standard temporal units—minutes, hours, days, and months—but experience the passage of those standard units differently. Flaherty describes five elements, which will have an impact on the lived experience of time—extreme circumstances, increased emotional

concern to make sense of a situation, new and unusual circumstances, when stimulus complexity is created by the preceding circumstances, and when the “density of experience is higher than their normal volume of sensations” (1992, p. 147).

It is a common misperception of time when nothing apparently happened as being free of any activity or stimulus. It is usually the absence of external stimuli and a concept of a passive self that leads to this belief. In fact, quite a lot happens in this time. Flaherty explains this empty time being misunderstood, “... as time free of embedded activity is, in actuality, filled with the thoughts and thoughts of those people who are tacitly, actively and self-consciously involved with their circumstances, despite (indeed, because of) the seeming uneventfulness” (Flaherty, 1992, p. 147). This time is for introspection, for deep thoughts, for the analysis and processing of events and for the laying down of memories. We may be using ‘automaticity’ to process external stimuli—operating on automatic pilot. The apparent disappearance of this memory Flaherty labels as ‘temporal compression’, time where temporal units merge into one and in doing so all but disappear which “... manifests itself as a shocked look backward, and this is manifest in those questions that are common forms of expression: Where have the hours (days, months or years) gone” (p. 151)?

Other processes are also at work to cloud the memory as time recedes from the actual events being recalled. Flaherty points out each temporal unit in the past carries less experience in each temporal unit and the further we go into the past the more intense is

the temporal compression. In writing these narratives I have attempted to be as faithful to my memories as possible. I am also fortunate that I have embarked on this thesis before the process of forgetting overwhelms the material available to me. I am also aware that time is only one of the existentials of the lifeworld.

van Manen (1990) describes the lifeworld as consisting of four existentials and describes their interrelatedness.

These four existentials of lived body, lived space, lived time, and lived relation to other can be differentiated but not separated. They all form an intricate unity which we call the lifeworld—our lived world. But in a research study we can temporarily study the existentials in their differentiated aspects while realizing that one existential always calls forth the other aspects. (van Manen, 1990, p. 105)

The narratives presented are my experience of the world, at a time and place in company with others. These are the elements that comprise my lifeworld. The purpose of the narrative is to understand the formation of self through the interaction with the other existentials. Lawn (2006) explains the relation of experience and understanding in his guide to the work of Gadamer, “Experience is really a form of understanding. But understanding does not give rise to detached knowledge of this or that; it is principally self-understanding, an understanding of the self and for the self” (2006, p. 64).

This quest for the “sense of the self, revealed in the quest for self-understanding always takes place within the context of historical reality” (Lawn, 2006, p. 65). Gadamer

calls this specific cultural milieu, tradition and positions it, along with prejudice as part of “the background to our engagement with the world” (Lawn, 2006, p. 65).

Welcome to TAFE

The salvation was to come at the end of my first year of teaching. Some positions in TAFE (Technical and Further Education) colleges for teachers of Business Studies were advertised. I applied and was successful at the start of 1975 and joined the Business Studies department at Hobart Technical College in my old hometown. TAFE was the sector that provided vocational education for apprentices, technicians and unfairly named ‘para-professional’ studies in accounting, engineering, real estate and business. This was post compulsory education, teaching young adults and mature age students. At 25 I had found the ideal job. I loved the students, it gave me time to master my subject matter and I had an appreciative audience. I taught in the TAFE sector for the next ten years and they were the most productive and the happiest of my working life. I had found the job that suited my skills and personality. I taught many subjects at all levels to people with an intellectual disability through to people in postgraduate programs at university during this period. I was encouraged to do so by Andrew, my first Head of School who was close to retirement. He gave me the advice that allowed for early promotion and for advancement within the system. I had always regretted the absence of a mentor who could guide me through the important decisions and actions in my career. I had finally found one.

A mentor at last!

The TAFE business school was the remnant of the creation Australia-wide of Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) which were set up to provide degree and diploma courses but without the research component associated with universities. Some CAEs were established as green field operations and others used teachers' colleges as foundation institutions. In Tasmania one new College of Advanced Education was established. All the diploma level courses previously taught in technical colleges were transferred to the new institution along with many of the teaching staff. Andrew had refused to go and remained in TAFE. He had trained three generations of accountants and was a revered member of the profession. Why he chose not to transfer was never discussed but he had remained committed to the institution he had served since World War II.

His advice to me was deceptively simple as he saw a need to provide for the education of the small business owner. Our course offering was currently at certificate level and required four years part-time study or two years full-time. For someone running their own business this was too time consuming and not geared to their specific needs. Andrew stressed the need for the college to provide appropriate courses for the small business community. Instinctively I realised that he was entrusting me with a body of work he knew he did not have time to complete. I subsequently understood it was a point of difference that enabled me to be promoted in a field of equally qualified candidates. My promotion took place in spite of my having less experience than two other candidates who were equally qualified academically and had been in the area for the

same length of time. Andrew had definitely given me the means of differentiating myself from my colleagues. I am also sure that the first promotion was a necessary precondition for the next two promotions that saw me ascend to the lofty heights at the top of the educational bureaucracy. For the next eight years and long after Andrew's retirement, I initiated a full range of courses for the small business sector. I organised weekend seminars and short courses for fishermen and hoteliers delivered in regional centres. I soon became an authority in small business management and pioneered the first program to provide the long-term unemployed with the skills and access to capital to start their own business. This course was still a national program 20 years after the pilot in Tasmania. I was recognised as an expert in the area and addressed national conferences and was in demand as a keynote speaker at conferences. I worked extremely hard to establish these initiatives often against the opposition of my colleagues and bureaucrats with an interest in the area. I was fortunate to obtain additional funding for these initiatives from the economic development agency of government. I was soon to find that an independent source of funding provided the autonomy and freedom that few others in the TAFE system enjoyed.

I had adopted a philosophy at this point of my career of never refusing an opportunity to speak at a function or to a group and to encourage other staff to share my enthusiasm for the small business sector. An illustration of one initiative from this period was the development of a course for retail pharmacy. The Pharmacy Registration Board asked me to develop a course for graduate pharmacists to provide them with the competencies to succeed at retail pharmacy. They also asked me to develop an

assessment tool and certify those completing the course as having attained the required competencies. I ran a pilot and as a result the program was adopted nationally and taken over by the Pharmacy Guild. I mention this initiative because I was not paid for the work, which included a weekend seminar and the marking of a major assignment. I did not seek financial reward and had the autonomy within my position to interpret this work as part of my general responsibilities. I had become a hard working, committed enthusiast for entrepreneurship and enterprise creation.

It was in TAFE that I first encountered the writings of Drucker initially through *Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (1985). His preeminence in management was due to the broad philosophic perspective he brings to each subject. On education he distinguishes between the need to make a 'living' and have a 'life'.

An educated person is equipped to both lead a *life* and make a *living*. Socrates and Arnold of rugby put all their emphasis on the 'life' and dismissed 'making a living' as irrelevant if not vulgar. But very few people in society have as few wants as Socrates the philosopher, or were as endowed with fathers as rich as those of Arnold's 'gentlemen'. (Drucker, 1989, p. 236)

In the search for the right balance in life luck can play a significant part.

The importance of luck

To the extent that I had worked hard on these initiatives I had been the master of my own good fortune but I am convinced that it was the early momentum that Andrew encouraged that made all the difference. In building a career, the element of luck cannot be overlooked. A colleague who had been a senior executive of a large transnational company provided the following anecdote. His story illustrates how the impact of seemingly small or random events on a career can be profound. My friend Robert had enjoyed a very successful career with a large multinational firm after humble beginnings as a junior accounts clerk in Glasgow. Eventually he became the managing director of that firm in Indonesia, responsible for thousands of employees and a large expatriate executive team.

He recalled his first step on his long ladder to promotion and advancement within the firm. He worked alongside another young man doing identical work. In his opinion, his fellow worker was brighter and far more diligent than he so it came as a great surprise when an opportunity to act in a more senior job in the office was offered him. The job eventually became permanent and he was on his way. He never looked back. Some years later, he ran into the manager who had given him that critical early break and he discovered the reason—the Glasgow Corporation bus timetable! The most convenient bus for him left at 5.45 pm and was a five minute walk from the office. As a result he left work at 5.35 pm each night which was well past the official clock-off time of 5.00 pm. His workmate, of superior performance, could catch a bus at 5.10 pm and left on the dot

of 5.00 pm every night. As a result, his work mate was perceived as a 'slacker' by the manager, while Robert was seen as diligent and keen to get on. What Robert didn't have the heart to tell his manager was that while he waited for the bus in the warmth of his office, he was reading a comic book inside a company folder. He had not done a moment of additional work after the official stop time. His later success can be attributed to many fine personal qualities but his early break and subsequent rise had nothing to do with those. His unfortunate colleague, unfairly labelled, did not have the same opportunities.

A consideration of vocation

The term 'vocation' comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call. Through the phenomenological reflections I have immersed myself in so far in this thesis, I am coming to understand that within my 'hierarchy', the pinnacle I most seek is to have a vocation, a calling, as if I was someone taking religious vows. It is something that you are meant to do, you have a gift for this, you can devote your life to your vocation, your calling. It is curious that in Australia, the term 'vocational education' is about training for jobs.

Dewey's work on education and experience calls upon the real etymology of *vocare*. Chris Higgins (2010) in his paper, 'A Question of Experience: Dewey and Gadamer on Practical Wisdom' enriches my understanding of what it means to have a vocation that rests upon the having of wisdom. My recollection of my work in vocational education

echoes in Higgins. He says that Dewey and Gadamer, "... share a conception of human experience as running in circles, both vicious and productive. Experience may spiral outward in breadth or become routinised and pinched" (Higgins, 2010, p. 303). Higgins sees their contributions as explaining the connection between work and practical wisdom, and an opening to new experience. Dewey, Higgins explains, regarded the division of liberal and practical education as disastrous.

Our strange but familiar reasoning goes something like this: if liberal education (concerning the cultural) is the opposite of vocational education (concerning the practical), then in order to ensure balance we only need only create a curriculum that is just as narrow, crude and mechanical as it is useless, decorative and effete. (Higgins, 2010, p. 305)

To resolve the compromises that arise from this dichotomy, Dewey creates a far broader concept of vocation. His definition includes social roles that we fulfill in our lifetimes. It features both continuity and purpose. Our choice of occupation becomes an organising principle for our lives. In Higgins' view, occupations as "complex purposive frames" are chief organisers of our lives. They give us a point of orientation in the chaos of our lives. They help us decide what is essential to us and has authority in our lives. Occupations might become vocations and "existential" in that they "constitute an axis of salience that defines an *environment* for [us as] practitioner[s]" (Higgins, 2010, p. 312). Within that environment our experiences can be aesthetic, or in Dewey's "inspired term anaesthetic, a term that conveys numbness and somnolence" (Higgins, 2010, p. 314). My early experiences of work were organised around repetition, ensuring boredom and 'switching off' the senses to avoid the drudgery. My experience in passing through the my initiation

to the world of work was aesthetic—a new enriched environment to absorb and understand, an interest in the people who shared this work and their inner lives, a building of my initial understandings of how the world worked and how a man should behave in it. In all these new experiences throughout my life I have been ‘an Everyman’, gazing on these new worlds previously hidden from my view. This thesis is evidence that I have a vocation in Dewey’s terms. For in his analysis the common understanding of the relationship between education and vocation is reversed.

To choose a vocation is to choose an educative environment for oneself. This completely upends the traditional notion of vocational education. Education is not a preparation for vocations: vocations themselves are (more or less) educative, preparing us for more complex vocations, wider experience, and a richer life.

(In Higgins, 2010, p. 317)

The link between continuity in vocation in Dewey’s terms and Aristotle’s concept of *phronesis* is examined by Higgins. Practical moral wisdom is having an ethical compass throughout all of your activities not just in morally contentious situations. “Like practical wisdom, continuity describes the ability to bring past experience fruitfully to bear on new situations, to bring generalisations into dialogue with concrete cases” (Higgins, 2010, p. 319). The hermeneutic circle provides a basis for personal growth through our ability to be open to the new experiences that constitute our lives. This choice is an open expanded circle, or closed and ‘vicious’. Being open may be uncomfortable as preconceptions and moral codes are subject to ‘disconfirmation’. Gadamer uses the words “pulled up short” to describe when our experience is not what we expected. Our

assumptions are then at question. This may not be comfortable but is essential for the gaining of insight. “Being pulled up short”, explains Higgins,

... is more like experiencing something that we didn't know could happen, something that cannot be, until we slowly and painstakingly rewire our sensibilities to allow its due. For some, even surprises are unpleasant; but for all of us, being pulled up short is a deeply disconcerting experience. (2010, p. 322)

Following Higgins' interest in Gadamer, I return to *Truth and Method* (1989) where Gadamer advises us that the way to overcome the natural resistance to such uncomfortable experiences is through open questioning.

We cannot have experiences without asking questions. Recognizing that an object is different, and not what we first thought, obviously presupposes the question whether it was this or that. From the logical point of view, the openness that is essential to experience is precisely the experience of being this or that. It has the structure of the question. (Gadamer, 1989, p. 356)

The key to widening the hermeneutic circle is to be conscious of the prejudices that we bring to the question and that this self-knowledge increases our openness to the world. Openness to the world commences with openness to our-selves.

Higgins summarises the contributions of Dewey and Gadamer in the development of the notion of *phronesis*.

If Dewey shows us how vocations themselves, when in good order, constitute productive hermeneutic circles, Gadamer describes the existential posture needed to

keep such interpretive, experiential structures from collapsing. Dewey helps us move beyond the idea of professional education as pre-professional preparation to see how work itself may constitute an ongoing education. Gadamer helps to see how learning to pose interesting questions prepares us to be educated through our vocations. (Higgins, 2010, p. 328)

I have been fortunate to work in many contexts, cultures and roles. I have had the advantage of an innate curiosity about the world and how it works as shown in Chapters 2 and 3. This naïve curiosity has been supplanted by phenomenological reflection as my focus broadens to a transcendental viewpoint. A dialogue with others in both similar and divergent jobs or careers has enriched this thesis. The following passage evidences Dewey's construction of vocation and the more common usage of having a 'calling'.

The Artist

The climb up the external fire escape of the former furniture factory is daunting but I press on knowing that the building is about to reveal its famous tenant. I knock on the door and gain entry to his world of work. The studio is enormous and apparently unplanned in an organic, chaotic way. The artist's works, current and past, dominate the space. They lean against walls waiting for future owners. There are trappings of domesticity—kettle, cups and leather chairs, fatback television and stereo—they complete a flung-together style.

It is a place of work dominated by the artist's tools of trade—paint tubes in abundance, rags, pallet knives and brushes, scattered on tabletops, in layered profusion. To me it appears to be a decade's accumulation of detritus. When I ask about the fire risk the artist responds that his cleaner removed all rubbish every week. This place of work is a testament to his industry and gives some clue to his creative energy and discipline. Beneath the wall where he hangs his works in progress is a ridge of accumulated paint on the wooden floor running parallel to and about six centimeters distant from the wall. This ridge represents the dried accumulation of paint removed from works by the artist's knife. It is close enough to the wall not to be flattened by his shoes as he paces back and forth in front of the painting. It gives a clue to his art in layering paint on canvas and subsequent selective removal. If I were to use a spade and scrape it along the floor I could detach this ridge of paint with one stroke.

Such an action would be sacrilege in the same way as removing cuts and nicks from a craftsman's workbench. To me the ridge was tangible evidence of a decade of scraping and smoothing. As I contemplate this, I realise that what the paint ridge reveals is the decision-making of the artist—what is to be removed, the eye, the shoulder and hand muscles execute. Where is the art demonstrated, I ask myself, in the thinking or the doing?

After some small talk, we sit among the debris in surprisingly comfortable leather chairs and our dialogue begins. In response to my initial reflection about the capacity for order to be created out of chaos, he explains that he finds

inspiration in many unexpected places and to demonstrate, he picks up from the floor a dog-eared photograph torn from a magazine. He points to his current work on the wall and instantly the likeness of the scene becomes apparent. Having provided the genesis of the work the photo had been discarded like the match that lit the fuse. I wonder how his cleaner decides what is potential inspiration and what is rubbish on her weekly visit—she too must use high levels of decision-making in her work!

I am curious about his initial motivation for becoming an artist and his realisation that he has the talent for it. He searches on his desk and as if miraculously, finds a landscape completed when he was ten. It is a rustic scene of a cottage on a riverbank dominated by a large and clumsily executed tree in the foreground. It is not framed and shows mildew stains and other ravages of a turbulent 50 year existence.

“Look at the sky and the river,” he says, “I almost got the water but the sky shows...” His voice trails off and resumes, “But in the sky I showed something,” he says with pride.

His mother had bought him oils at ten years of age, he said, so his interest and talent were evident early. He failed a subject at matriculation and was not allowed entry to Art School. He persisted at night school and the following year, after a late withdrawal by another student, he luckily gained admission. He enjoyed the study of art and art theory, and speaks eloquently and with scholarship about art. He remembers the visit of famous American critic, Clement

Greenburg, the first to discover Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. I get the impression that he is happy to share his thoughts and to reminisce about the essential loneliness of the artist, practicing his craft alone, without co-workers. He talks about the freedom implicit in that loneliness and how it is a life to which many aspire but few achieve. There is always a price to pay.

While the artist, profoundly immersed in vocation, struggles alone with demons and distractions that only they know. Many of us work in the company of others and our triumphs and failures occur in full view.

In the company of others I become a bureaucrat

After ten enjoyable years of teaching adults, some restless questioning confronted me—ought I continue the teaching that had energised me or seek a new opportunity? I thought I had achieved all I could within the teaching profession. I found my enthusiasm diminishing for the daily discipline of managing classes as well as an increasing number of small business education portfolios. I was becoming more involved in report writing and administration while others were delivering the course and having all the ‘fun’. I could go back into teaching the normal run of classes or move permanently into administration. I could feel my enthusiasm for the classroom declining and I thought I could make a greater contribution to vocational education in administration. I was offered a three month acting position in central administration where I would administer a range of Commonwealth funded programs My income would increase but I would

forego the annual 12 weeks leave enjoyed by teachers. I could feel the trap jaws opening as I contemplated this opportunity. Three months became six, the job was advertised and, before I had time to think through all the implications, like 'the Everyman', I applied and was confirmed in the position.

I stayed in the bureaucracy because the job was intrinsically interesting and challenging. There was a massive expansion of labour market and equity programs financed by the Commonwealth rather than State Government funding. Many of the programs involved people who had been underrepresented in post secondary education and TAFE was seen as a flexible and responsive partner for the Commonwealth. My Head Office position had removed me from college politics, which had become both pervasive and toxic. I expand on this in my next section, 'Power without Purpose'. I settled into normal office routines, I had a spacious office and a personal assistant.

Power without purpose

My time in TAFE coincided with a changing of the guard in senior management. The transfer of the diploma courses to the CAE at the end of the 1960s had seen the departure of the engineers, chemists and other professionals from the technical colleges. This exodus created a vacuum in the management positions of the technical colleges. The trade teachers, electricians, plumbers and carpenters saw an opportunity and moved to fill the management positions as they became available. Their better qualified

colleagues had long denied them opportunities for promotion and this was now their opportunity.

Their path to power was through the creation of a small trade union to represent the interests of TAFE teachers. They were successful in breaking away from the much larger teachers union. This relatively small union immediately wielded enormous power with TAFE. A union representative sat on all interview panels for initial appointment and promotion. The union, through links to the Labor Party, influenced government policy for the sector. The sector became a closed shop with all employees required to be a member of the union. The earliest test of the union's power was when a secondary school principal was appointed as Director of TAFE. There was a vigorous campaign against the appointment, which on this occasion failed. The union was patient however and learned from this early defeat. Elected union officials were included in government delegations and policy forums. They were advocates for the sector in terms of funding and expansion as well the conditions of the teachers within the sector. Union officials were able to raise their profile as 'thought leaders' in the sector.

I was an active participant in this process as an office-holder within the union for a period of five years. I witnessed the way the union influenced departmental and government policy in the sector. A small group of trade teachers dominated the union and rotated the various leadership positions between themselves. One of the union's early victories was for the department to agree to a union representative on every

interview panel for initial appointment and for promotions. They also had a member on every appeal panel. While this may seem perfectly reasonable, the union used this power to promote a selected few 'mates' at every opportunity. The union was constantly campaigning for or against some aspect of departmental or government policy. Over time this small group of no more than five people had secured all the principal positions at the technical colleges around the state. They had successfully campaigned for a special teacher-training course for TAFE teachers that gave them the educational status necessary for principal positions. They had succeeded but there was one last barrier. The next level of promotable positions required a degree or equivalent as a prerequisite. To overcome this they campaigned for an Associate Diploma of TAFE Management to be offered by the CAE. They succeeded and, after a number of skirmishes to reduce the assessments required to pass the course, the whole cohort duly passed. They could now apply for Director positions, duly did and succeeded. They were at the pinnacle of their power. They were now running TAFE and the union was now an impediment to their influence. Their interests and the unions no longer coincided. The solution was obvious. They lost interest in the union and allowed a series of less competent people to take over. As a result the union's influence rapidly declined and eventually it was reabsorbed into the wider education union from which it had split 20 years before.

Then, at the pinnacle of their power something quite curious happened. Nothing. They did nothing. The advocates for change suddenly became silent. They had fought and battled their way to the top and once they had succeeded there was nothing else. No vision, no reforming zeal, no enthusiasm for innovation. Nothing. They were at their

best when fighting someone or for something. Once they had become effectively isolated at the top they spent their time in pointless vendettas against real and perceived enemies. They went out of their way to create conflicts but even these provided limited satisfaction and they reminisced constantly about the good old days when they were on the rise. I write in Chapter 7, 'My World in Ruins', about the decline of the vocational education system and the parlous state of the sector today. I believe that this decline may have, in part, ensued from a lost generation of leadership. Looking back there was an early clue as to the group's attitude and motivation. I had no exposure to the union movement prior to joining TAFE and was unaware of some of the traditions. At the regular conferences and dinners we attended, there was always a moment late in the evening, when the group would lead a rowdy rendition of a parody of the movement's anthem, 'The Red Flag'. I was always curious at the incongruity of these lines but they proved remarkably oracular.

The working class can kiss my arse,

I've got a bosses' job at last.

Over the top: An exercise in corporate courage and collective will

They are in furious agreement, the situation is intolerable and cannot continue. The department needs the best of its collective intelligence and experience and that is being denied. They had so much to offer, their experience in senior roles in other states, their detailed knowledge of policy development and implementation. Years of high level experience are going to waste. We need

to make this a real issue and bring it to a head. We need to confront him at the first available opportunity. It is agreed that joint action had to be taken.

The cause of this discontent is the fact that their boss, the Secretary of the Department, is interfering in the day-to-day management of their divisions, he is communicating directly with some influential operators in the system without consulting responsible heads of division. Their authority is being undermined and informal networks of influence are being encouraged by the Secretary's actions. Even when they meet as the senior group it seems as though the Secretary and the Minister have determined what is going to happen before the group hold their regular Monday morning meeting.

These discussions and others with a similar tone have become a regular feature of the Department since the Secretary's appointment. He is an 'old hand', with years of experience at the most senior levels in Canberra. He is a published economist and has worked as Senior Advisor to a former Premier. He is one of the government's key appointments and has a mandate to reform what is seen as an underperforming department. He has a formidable intellect along with a bruising personal style. This is not going to be an easy issue to confront.

The talk continues among the discontents but the will to confront the Secretary is absent. The dysfunction dominates their conversations and they start to meet after work at the local hotel to further vent their mounting frustration. Over drinks their outrage and their courage grows in direct proportion to the drinks consumed. Finally, a recently appointed Director, the most junior of the

ranks and running the smallest division says that he has had enough, all the group do is complain and moan but when it comes to the crunch they 'sit on their hands' and do nothing. This Director determines that it is time to take some action. The rest of the group agree enthusiastically and, emboldened by their support, the young Director outlines his plan. At the start of next meeting he would ask for the agenda to be suspended and would raise disagreeable issues concerning decision-making processes and lines of communication within the department. Now is the moment. The group leaves the hotel with steely resolve to support each other in confronting the Secretary.

The next Monday meeting soon arrives and the group shuffle into the large office of the Secretary, exchanging knowing winks. The stage is set for rebellion. Buoyed by a feeling of solidarity, with the confidence of those who know they are right, the young Director launches into his prepared piece about the pressing need for a change. The Secretary listens, does not interrupt and the Director continues. The Secretary remains silent, a gesture that the Director mistakes for acquiescence and he finishes his prepared argument. Yet he blunders on into advocacy in no man's land, repeating himself, losing track of his monologue. He is about to learn an important lesson that "no battle plan survives contact with the enemy." His arguments become less relevant, other directors shift uneasily in their seats. Finally he exhausts all possible arguments and stops. The Secretary fixes him with a steely gaze, breaks his silence and proceeds to demolish the last of the arguments offered. He turns to the rest of the group and asks whether they support his view. They murmur acquiescence and some begin to proffer

arguments of their own, in support of the Secretary's position. The young Director is now abandoned, entangled in the barbed wire of his own limited advocacy, exposed to both the Secretary and the friendly fire of his former allies. Red-faced and humiliated, the young Director sits back in his chair, and the Secretary takes control of the meeting and the agenda in front of them.

The meeting ends and the group file out of the office. The sense of failure and resignation to the status quo is matched only by the quiet fury of the youngest, who at the first opportunity, rounds on his colleagues and asks them what happened to their critical support necessary to win the day. He hears a litany of words that will recur over the years as a rationale for failure to act. They include, "The timing is not right." "It is better to live to fight another day." "We can make the current system work." "You should have stuck to the main issue." "The Secretary must know better, that is why he is our boss."

As the young Director I learned a number of important lessons about ways of knowing, of truth and of values. The courage to have difficult conversations in the workplace is almost totally absent. So absent that there is a growing literature to service the need. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High*, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler (2012) and *Fierce Conversations* by Susan Scott (2002) are examples in this field. People go to extraordinary lengths to avoid a confrontation and put up with years of unacceptable behaviour rather than take decisive action.

As I read over what I have been writing, I recall a very recent conversation with one of the people who own the business that employs me. He said, “Do you know, Keith, you are the only person in this business who everyone likes.” At first, I thought that he was validating my superior interpersonal skills! What is there not to like about me? However on deeper reflection I know I have gone out of my way to build friendships with all people in the business, even some who were perhaps not worthy of friendship—people whom I would not select to meet in a non-work setting. I have not made a stand on principle on any issue that would jeopardise my employment. I have not rocked the boat. In saying this, I might be too lenient? Because there has not been any issue where I needed to make a stand—maybe I haven’t looked hard enough. Will I be tested before my working days are over? Will I recognise the test and be up to the challenge? These additional questions arise naturally in phenomenology as the recollections of memories highlight both presences and absences of behaviours and surface possible alternatives to the paths already taken.

Perhaps a strong reason for embarking on this thesis has been the search for self-worth that has not been immediately apparent to me. That is why the desert air and deepest cave from Gray’s ‘Elegy in a Country Churchyard’, introduced in ‘Walking to work’, have such resonance. I have hidden my worth well.

Good work/bad work

Up until this point in my career I had no reason to question the value of what I was doing. In a classroom the students' needs and the school's mission are reasonably well aligned and the teacher and individual worker could identify with their part in a broader social objective. In TAFE it had been even easier, as the adult students were committed to furthering their skills and careers by completing a tertiary education. However, promotion into the bureaucracy increased the distance both physically and ontologically from the beneficiaries of my work, if in fact there were any. There were times when I expressed the fact that at the end of each day a coal-miner could quantify what they had contributed to output. The bureaucrat and knowledge worker face a more difficult task to identify their contribution to wellbeing. The inevitable consequences of this dislocation between work and contribution can be both a sense of alienation and futility. I have chosen three examples of how good people can do bad work.

Possible parliamentary questions

An essential element of parliamentary democracy is that Ministers are accountable to the Parliament for the conduct of their department. This accountability is through Question Time in the Parliament when any Member can ask a Minister a question relating to their portfolio. In the small Parliament of Tasmania, Ministers have multiple portfolios and are expected to be across their brief on a multiplicity of issues. Of course in a complex bureaucracy, this is impossible and many questions are taken 'on notice' where the

Minister has to seek advice. A Minister does not like to take all questions 'on notice' as they would appear to know nothing of what is going on in their department.

The response to the Minister's dilemma is for their department to prepare, in advance, a list of possible parliamentary questions that the Opposition Members may ask in the next session of Parliament. These might be areas of possible policy contention, previous errors and scandals of the government, failures to introduce new policies or deal with emerging issues. It is an important task for the department to support the Minister and having identified those possible questions the department then provides the Minister with answers to them. The answers are designed to demonstrate that the Minister is both competent and accountable and that their department is carrying out government policy in an efficient and timely manner.

I had been seconded to the assist the newly appointed Head of the Department of Employment, Industrial Relations and Training and was in daily contact with the Minister's office. Eventually it became my responsibility to prepare the possible parliamentary questions for the portfolio areas of the department. It was not an easy task as you had first to adopt the mindset of the Opposition and identify possible areas of interest that they may have and also identify areas in which the department may be exposed to accusations of maladministration. I worked for six months on this task, which of course could never be completely finished as the situation was constantly changing as new issues emerged and caught the popular attention. Once the questions had been

identified I then had to find out the answers, which involved talking to the people involved in delivering the policy or service. Based on this research and advice I would then draft a possible ministerial answer. I had to learn the exquisitely subtle use of words designed to make the simple complex, the complex simple and generally torture the English language so the Minister could answer while preserving the department's reputation and providing the Opposition the smallest possible amount of actual information. The latter was necessary to close down the issue and to not allow the possibility of further questioning and the creation of an issue for the government of the day.

I laboured for six months on these questions and answers. I refined the language to the point of obfuscation and re-wrote them at the request of the Head of Department. I then re-wrote them again at the request of the Minister's office. I scanned the press for emerging issues. I updated and fine-tuned my portfolio of questions. What happened to this six months' labour? In the next two sessions of parliament, not a single one of my possible questions were actually asked of the Minister by the Opposition. I was almost tempted to leak some questions to the Opposition in order to prove the worth of my words.

The comma

During my time as Director of Adult Education there was concerted effort from the national body representing the sector to develop a national policy on adult and

community education, which would be endorsed by the Federal Minister for Education. This seemingly symbolic task would give the sector the recognition and status it had long been denied. A working party was formed to draft the national policy and the heads of the various state agencies met in a series of workshops to write the policy. The sector to be served was diverse—for example it included small community neighbourhood houses that conducted basic literacy courses, as well as the Victorian Council of Adult Education that ran its own successful travel agency organising overseas study tours for a large customer base. The state representatives were similarly diverse with some departmental heads, community advocates and researchers with doctorates

The working party was diligent in its task, the first meeting characterised by considerable consensus on the major themes and the purpose of the national policy. I had to miss the second meeting, and eagerly awaited the third meeting to see what progress had been made. I was astonished to find that the major part of the second two-day meeting was the about the replacement of the word 'and' with a comma in 'adult and community education'. Was the group now writing a national policy on 'adult, community education'? On closer questioning it appeared that a different person representing South Australia had been at the second meeting and insisted on the change. Because a number of the more senior heads were also absent, this individual had effectively hi-jacked the meeting for this purpose. It would serve no purpose here to repeat the semantic and philosophical arguments used to support the two sides of the argument. What I can say is that the proponent for the change had made a convincing case and had prevailed. The third meeting overturned this decision and the 'and' was

reinstated. The second meeting of seven senior bureaucrats and chairperson had met for two days on this issue only for their decision to be reversed at a third meeting. Strangely there is no antonym for synergy. After this experience I recognized the need for one.

Can you “vague it up”?

The group eventually completed the draft policy and we were ready to present it to the Federal Minister in Canberra. We met with the Minister’s departmental Advisor to discuss the draft. I had been to Canberra many times on government business and knew that while the Minister would be happy to adopt the national policy there would be resistance from the Commonwealth to assume any funding obligations for the sector. While full of praise for our efforts the bureaucratic Advisor said, “While the Minister is happy with the policy he wants you to vague it up a bit before he can endorse it.” ‘Vague it up a bit’ may be unfortunate English but it expressed inelegantly the Commonwealth’s desire not to be trapped into funding another area which was a state government responsibility. They had been down that pathway too many times before.

I am left with a sense of both personal futility and anger that so much intelligence can be deployed for such a small return. My decision to leave a secure and undemanding environment flows directly from these experiences of bad work. “You want it [your job] to be a million things that it is not and you want to give it a million parts of yourself that

nobody else wants there” (Terkel, 1972, p. 521). These sentiments of a staff writer distil the frustration of “jobs that are just not big enough for people” (p. 521). As workers we can be diminished by jobs that only demand a fraction of our faculties. We are doubly diminished when our efforts are dissipated, unrecognised and amount to nothing.

Redemption and transformation

In remembering these formative experiences I am having a dialogue with my past. The medium for the dialogue is the written word. Lawn (2006) describes this process,

When reading a text it is understood not simply by making sense of the words on the page but by permitting the horizon of the text to fuse with the horizon of the reader in such a way as the reader is affected by the encounter with the text. (p. 69)

Lawn then explains Gadamer’s argument that “... understanding is always part of a dialogue, hence it is dialogical in nature” (2006, p. 70). In having this dialogue with my past I am conscious of the identity in manifolds that the recollections represent. Sokolowski (2000) describes how our experience can be modified in a number of ways—through perception, remembering, imagining, and anticipation. In the unfolding of the narratives of work, the remembering and perception are embedded in the diary texts. In this process of remembering and writing I cannot avoid imagining a future life in work, I am confronted by the future every day. In imagining a future I cannot avoid anticipating that future. Chapters 7 and 8 contain these imaginings of a future rooted in the past as a

logical extension of it but drawing on the enfolded wisdom that emerges from this thesis.

Sokolowski (2000) explains,

We suspend our natural intentionalities, we bracket the identities correlated with them, and we unravel the complexities that make up our condition as rational human beings who have a world and experience things in it.

(Sokolowski, 2000, p. 87)

In this way I trust that this thesis will be personally transformative.

Sokolowski (2000) describes the phenomenological attitude as the widest context to examine the dimensions of the subject of our inquiry. He describes the shift as an “... “all or nothing” kind of move that disengages completely from the natural attitude and focuses, in a reflective way, on everything in the natural attitude, including the underlying world belief” (p. 47). He refers to the neutralisation of our ‘doxic modalities’ (world beliefs) in order to obtain the ‘phenomenological reduction’ or *epoché* as the “restraint the Skeptics said we should have towards our judgments about things” (p. 49).

Twenty years of experience has been distilled into these narratives. One possible reaction is to ask singer, Peggy Lee’s question, “is that all there is?” Or to reflect on the absences. One of the constraints of ‘the Everyman’ standpoint is that the person as witness to the events becomes a cipher—a person who does the bidding of others and

who has no will of their own, a person who is carried along by external forces, who is acted upon in the narrative—not an actor or an active participant.

In these memories I was witness to and possible beneficiary of dishonest and ethically questionable practices. These included the rigging of union ballots, favouring particular candidates in interviews for promotion, and the dilution of standards in courses to assist particular individuals to progress. Did I speak out? Did I refuse to participate? Did I resign? Did I become a whistle-blower? The truth is in the narrative. I did none of these things.

In adopting the phenomenological attitude to these writings and attempting to demystify the meanings in the text I am seeking to be both redemptive and transformative. How can the messages from the past provide guidance for the present? In the transition from work there appear to be many binary choices—to work or retire, to volunteer or not, to move or stay, to travel or stay, to seek the new or remain with the known. A colleague, when faced with these perplexing choices, says that the answer is not necessarily “Yes or No” but can be “Yes and...”. I can choose to work some and retire some at the same time, to combine travel with volunteer work, and to live away from home but return to it. Does a blend provide the best of both or the worst of both? If I follow the reasoning of Higgins (2010) these ‘inorganic composites’ are deadly, “Ordinarily, we don’t think of compromises as such a disaster... the compromise results

in getting *none* of the desired goods... In the inconsistent mixture everything is represented by its shadow” (p. 305).

The use of the mirror metaphor has been a constant in this thesis. It is only late in the re-writing that I come across the mirror being used again for the transformative power that the view of the image in the mirror provides. I have used shards—an incomplete view and ask now whether this makes the task more difficult or even impossible. Only a reader other than myself can answer this question.

Traditionally, phenomenology had as its goal the elucidation of the true nature of things, in the struggle to recognize the myriad of interferences with understanding. The phenomenological lens is more than a lens of understanding. It is a mirror, which allows the phenomenologist to see oneself in a new way. Phenomenology is a looking glass that is the opposite of the distorted mirrors in amusement park funhouses, although what we see may offer humorous self-insights. Phenomenology clears the focus, reflecting a deeper and truer image of who we are. The phenomenological looking glass mirror also reflects the lifeworld behind the image, revealing structures we have not seen before, and pathways to new destinations. (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008, p. 4)

How fortunate to read this passage again while completing this thesis. The mirror and shards have been my ‘throughline’. Only in a mirror do we see ourselves as others see us. In daily life do we truly see ourselves? In my experience when we look in a mirror we are usually shaving, cleaning our teeth or applying makeup. We are focused on the task not the image in front of us. As a traveller I have always been surprised when entering the

bathroom of a hotel and seeing my image in the mirror, as if for a first time. The reaction is usually one of mild shock, as the unexpected image reveals features that have gone unseen in daily life. The marks of ageing, the red-rimmed eyes, the pallor are there for us to see anew or perhaps for the first time. The glance is brief but telling, as we exit the bathroom to attend to other matters. This thesis represents the clearest image of self I am capable of.

I do not want to repeat the errors of the past and the process of phenomenological reduction surfaces insights into the past and potentialities previously unimagined may emerge. Before these can be contemplated I need to explain from where I am departing. I have tracked my journey from the Jam Factory to the present but I need to describe that present. The next chapter explains how I joined the world economy and explains through a diary, my current work.

Chapter 6 I join the world economy

My island home

As I write the later pages of this thesis and try to bring a seven-year project to a conclusion, I have suddenly become aware of an absence—a void that lies at the heart of this thesis and which denies the reader an understanding of the physical and temporal landscape in which this narrative takes place. In this regard I have been doubly blessed. I was born in 1950 in the state of Tasmania, Australia. I have often said that the only negative about being born in Tasmania is that I was denied the opportunity of later discovering it.

Tasmania is less than one per cent of the landmass of Australia and with a population of 517,000 has just over two per cent of the population. The population is relatively stable apart from a regular outflow of the young seeking to make their way in a wider world. Like all island people there is a strong desire to return home even when faced with limited employment prospects.

Separated from the Australian mainland by the treacherous pitch and toss of Bass Strait, Tasmania is a byword for remoteness. As with Patagonia, to which in geological prehistory it was attached, it is like outer space on earth and invoked by those at the “centre” to stand for all that is far-flung, strange and unverifiable.

Tasmania is in myth and history a secret place, a rarely visited place. Those who did make the journey compared it to Elysium, or sometimes to Hades. For the first 50 years of its settlement, it was, with the notorious Norfolk Island, Britain's most distant penal colony and under the name of Van Diemen's Land was open panopticon to 76,000 convicts gathered from many pockets of the Empire, the majority of them thieves. (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 7)

Tasmania has always faced a net outflow of young people and that has led to an ageing of the population and a heavy reliance on tourism as an economic driver. The low rates of growth have meant that a rich colonial heritage of buildings has survived to provide a backdrop to wilderness. More than 45 per cent of the land mass is in National Parks or World Heritage sites. The two most famous Tasmanians are Errol Flynn, the actor and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark.

The inevitability of the loss of sons and daughters marks many families. The following letter to a parent expresses sadness and hope.

So it is inevitable that a Tasmanian child will leave the little island to see the world. Our abandoned families are left with one shred of hope, which my father strongly grasps. He believes the images of vast remote beauty he so deeply implanted in my juvenile sponge of a brain might unavoidably become so unavoidably vivid they will have me packing my bags... for the smaller, more familiar backwaters of home. (Wooley, 2016, p. 26)

Being a Baby Boomer

I was born in 1950, in the centre of the Baby Boomer cohort. I have had the privilege to live through the longest period of prosperity ever experienced, no depressions or world wars have disturbed my life. I have never known unemployment, sickness or poverty and this is true of most of my generation. In his prologue to *Baby Boom* (2014) P.J. O'Rourke describes the Boomers as,

We are the generation that changed everything. Of all the eras and epochs of Americans, ours is the one that made the biggest impression — on ourselves. But that is an important accomplishment because we're the generation that created the self, made the firmament of the self, divided the light of the self from the dark of the self, and said let there be self. If you were born between 1946 and 1964, you may have noticed this *yourself*. (O'Rourke, 2014, p. xvii)

With O'Rourke's analysis it is little wonder that other generations have complained about the Boomer generation's selfishness. We have been blessed with the best jobs, the levers of power, the best real estate and it goes on. O'Rourke himself calls us "God's favourite spoiled brats" (O'Rourke, 2014, p. xi). The Boomers have been accused of many things by subsequent generations—taking advantage of free university education, hogging all the best rock bands, best jobs and defined benefit superannuation. However, there is an element of conspiracy theory when demographer, Bernard Salt in *In The Big Picture* (2006), accuses the Boomers of making black a universal fashion colour (for the slimming effect) and the shaved head haircut popular (to disguise male pattern baldness). Salt observes, "It is not at all uncommon to see a 30-something male dressed in black and with a No. 1

haircut — even when there are no signs of a receding hairline or spreading girth” (2006, p. 86).

Having filled the void by explaining the good fortune of my place and time of birth I cross another bridge that appears on the landscape of work and leads into the global economy.

Reconciling geography and ambition

In this chapter I explain how I joined the world economy and provide a description of the work I am currently engaged in. The second part of this chapter is a phenomenological analysis of this thesis through the reproduction of a daily journal and reflections on that journal.

My time working in Adult Education had been a period of personal growth as I saw the liberating possibilities of lifelong education and developed some ideas about the transfer of knowledge and skills from one generation to another. My timing was poor, as the state government was facing a budget crisis and heavy cuts to non-essential government services were being implemented. My task was to mount an economic case for Adult Education and try to preserve the physical infrastructure, the staff and programs that had been developed since the end of World War II. The cutbacks that

occurred during my tenure have led to a downward spiral of enrolments and government support. The programs have all but disappeared, the staff dispersed and the heritage buildings sold. Adult Education and the state government's commitment to a life-long liberal education are no longer.

I was facing a career crisis. At age 44 I was a public servant. It was nearly ten years since I had stood in front of a class. I had become a bureaucrat—a shuffler of papers. I confronted the possibility that if I survived that the next 15 years, they would be a repeat of the previous decade. This was not an appealing prospect. I had already explored the option of joining an accounting practice and starting from scratch in a profession I had left voluntarily 20 years previously. The curious thing is that the partner of the firm who interviewed me expressed the view that I would be crazy to leave the security, the salary and the superannuation I enjoyed. I understood that this was perhaps my last chance to do something different. This time coincided with reading *The Wealth of Nations* (1992) by Robert Reich, a Harvard Professor, who served as Secretary of Labour in the Clinton administration. In his book he predicted the globalisation of corporations and the end of national champions and the growing disparity in wealth. Reich saw three jobs of the future. The first, routine production services, who typically, "...work in the company of many other people who do the same thing, usually in large enclosed spaces. They are guided on their job by standard procedures and codified rules and even their overseers are overseen..." (Reich R. B., 1992, p. 175). The second, group were "in-person services" which included hairdressers, retail salespeople, security guards where the services must be delivered person-to-person and whose jobs cannot be transferred

overseas. In-person service workers are “supposed to be punctual, reliable and tractable... and they must smile and exude confidence and good cheer even when they are morose” (Reich R. B., 1992, p. 176). The third category were symbolic-analyst services which “...included all the problem-solving, problem-identifying, and strategic-brokering activities” (Reich R. B., 1992, p. 176). Symbolic analysts and their work can transcend national boundaries and were seen as the occupational category most linked to the global economy and therefore are the most likely to participate in the rewards of the global economy.

Today, in every company there are in-demand workers who either commute physically to where the work is or work via the Internet. I now had an opportunity to join an organisation with a global reach even with less than 100 employees. Until the thinking in Reich’s book made it apparent that the global economy was the place to work I had thought of my island home, Tasmania, as being a major constraint on the work I could do. How would I join the global economy but retain the lifestyle of a small community? I was fortunate that the nature of work had changed in such a way that it was possible to enjoy both.

...work increasingly consists of talk — try ringing someone at the office and they are always at a meeting. But the more we talk the less there is to talk about with confidence. We have nearly all become experts, specialized in one activity... learning to become an economist is like learning a foreign language, in which you talk about a rational world that only exists in theory. (Zeldin, 1998, p. 35)

Joining a multinational company

SNS operates in over 30 countries after being founded in Glasgow in the early 1970s. The company offers a three-day, intensive negotiation skills course for senior managers. The company has been very successful with this single product for 40 years. I worked full-time selling and delivering the course for 15 years and have been a freelance tutor for the last five years. I managed to make the transition from the public sector to the private and have been able to work internationally for the first time. I have worked in Indonesia, Singapore, China, Thailand, Germany, United Kingdom and Slovakia as well as Hungary, New Zealand and Hong Kong. A friend had been granted the Australian license after working with Scotwork in Africa. He approached me to join him and after completing the course and being vetted by the founder in Glasgow I joined him in starting the business in Australia. The contrast between my previous work and selling the first courses to be run in Australia could not have been greater.

My first market to tackle was Perth in Western Australia and I flew there without a single reference or contact. The business was a start-up in this country and I booked the cheapest motel room I could find (65 dollars per night including breakfast) and for the next three days sat in a barely air-conditioned room 'cold calling' with the local phone directory on my lap. This was a long way removed from my spacious office, government car and personal assistant. It was an adventure that allowed me to have an insight into

the personalities and structures that underpin the most successful businesses in this country and overseas. I currently manage quality assurance for the business and the following analysis concerns that role.

My self from the outside... intersubjectivity

At this stage of my career, there is a fortuitous conjunction between my interests as a researcher of the lived experience of humans and my professional responsibility. My official title is Head of Quality Assurance for a negotiating skills training company. This company, based in Glasgow, Scotland, has been a pioneer in the field and since its foundation in 1970 has spread to over a hundred countries. As the pioneer in this area and in a recent rebranding the name SNS is represented as a dictionary noun. This positions the name as synonymous with negotiating.

Professor Gavin Kennedy conducted the initial research on behalf of the Shell Oil Company. I have worked for this company since 1994 when I left a senior executive role in the State Department of Education as Director of Adult Education, to join the company when it commenced business in Australia. Therefore, I have been running the three-day course that is the company's main product for 21 years. I am currently the longest serving tutor in the country. As an educator I possess the most thorough understanding of the course materials and the methodology we have developed. Although I have effectively run the same course for over 20 years I continue to experiment and believe that I have not yet achieved my full potential as a tutor. I operate

on the basis that ‘my best is yet to come’. I have been given the responsibility to train and assist the development of my successors in the business. The course has been acclaimed for over 40 years for the capacity to teach people a more effective process for negotiating. The methodology of the course is outlined below.

What makes a successful training program?

The course is based on sound adult learning principles—people learn most effectively through doing, and inevitable mistakes in initial practice provide wonderful learning opportunities and an incentive to change behaviours. In fact the course structure allows people to make mistakes, understand that there is an alternative to their current practice and provides an opportunity to practice the ‘new’ behaviour before returning to their work. The long-term success of the course is in its ability to engage participants in active learning, but ultimately allowing each participant to change their behaviours to more effective ones in the workplace.

The course is based around the concept of case-plays where we ask participants to resolve a typical commercial conflict using their normal negotiating behaviour. The cases are recorded on video. The key insights and learning occur when a tutor de-briefs a case with the participants. The case is recorded for an initial 30 minutes and then the debrief takes an hour. Participants are instructed to resolve these conflicts as they would in the workplace. The cases are filmed and the processes reviewed with participants. The cases

are designed to highlight common errors in negotiating practice. They do this in four ways—participants cannot use the advantage of their subject matter expertise, they have limited time to prepare and resolve the conflict, they are put into an unfamiliar environment, and we train a camera on them and record their experiences for replay and review. This is outlined in the objectives set at the start of the course—to understand the structure, to practice the skills so that participants can ‘be in control’ of the negotiating process.

In the original research by Kennedy there is a loosely defined, but recognisable structure in all negotiations and there are a number of specific skills associated with each part of that structure. The course is based around an eight-step structure and the related skill sets. Through the lecture content and the specific learning points identified for each case, participants are encouraged to make mistakes that can then be used by the tutors to illustrate the next part of the process.

The lecture introduces key parts of the process and the skill elements associated with that part. As a result, when the participants negotiate the first round of cases, they have been introduced to alternatives to negotiation, the components of power, the costs of negotiation and deadlock, the bargaining arena and the five elements of a preparation agenda. The discipline and rigour of the tutor is to focus on these elements exclusively in the first round of cases. There has been some discussion in recent times that tutors can teach any of the skill tips at any stage of the course, for instance, an unproductive

argument about who is to blame for the equipment breakdowns in the case 'Multimedia'. While it is possible to do this, it has two negative impacts on the course design and integrity. It crowds out one of the teaching elements they have already been introduced to in the 'Introductory' lecture and the 'Prepare' lecture. Secondly, it reduces the 'Aha!' moment of discovery in the 'Argue, Signal, and Propose' lecture when we outline the two types of arguments and the preference for negotiating dialogue.

That is why the course has compulsory teaching points for each of the cases. They are not optional because the opportunity does not occur elsewhere in the course to introduce them when they will have their maximum impact. Therefore the 'Either Or Proposal' and 'Behind a Proposal Lies a Need' are taught to the group watching 'Multimedia' and shown in replay to the group who perform the case. This process is repeated for each set of lectures and round of cases. It is a slow reveal until the 'Golf Club' case where participants have been exposed to all of the eight steps and all of the skills with the exception of 'Out of Bounds'. The focus in the 'Golf Club' is managing the process of the negotiation so all of elements of knowing the structure and the specific skills come into play. This teaching a skill and then providing an opportunity to apply the skills in a subsequent case concludes with the 'Out of Bounds' technique first introduced in 'Golf Club' subsequently being used by participants or illustrated by the tutor in the final case, 'Budgets'. The whole process is a slow reveal of structure and skills with opportunities through the case experience to recognise when they are applied and more frequently not used and then to subsequently apply them. This is the essential magic and the integrity of the course.

Using this background I can see that the success of the course does not occur accidentally. The course design reflects the best of adult learning theory and follows Kurt Lewin's four-stage feedback cycle, which is summarised by David Rock in *Coaching with the Brain in Mind* (2009). Lewin proposed a four-stage model or action–reflection cycle. It is summarised below:

Experience

Observation and reflection

Abstraction and generalization

Testing implications in new circumstances.

(Rock, 2009, p. 226)

Rock then cites the work of Malcolm Knowles, author of *Adult Learner* (1998), in establishing principles of andragogy. As a person matures they become:

Self-directed rather than dependent or passive.

Experienced, providing more resources.

Ready to learn what his or her social roles require.

Focused on application to immediate problems rather than being subject focused on what may be useful in the future.

Knowing ahead of time what is to be learned, why and how the learning will be accomplished.

Knowing how the learning will be useful to them personally so as to stimulate internal (rather than external) motivation. (Rock, 2009, pp. 226 - 227)

The course that was developed from Kennedy's research has been refined and developed over a 40-year period. The underlying structure and design, in accordance with the principles established by Knowles, is unchanged. The auditing of tutors is a requirement of maintaining a license to teach the course. It is many years since the process of school and teacher inspections were part of state education. I can remember an inspector visiting my primary school in the early 60s—a vivid memory of a vigorous man addressing my class, who I later discovered was a Rhodes Scholar. There must have been a collective sigh of relief among teachers when the inspections ceased.

The audit

I have come to carry out the task of an inspector and audit the work of a colleague to assure the quality of his work. The task of auditor places me in a formal power relationship with my colleague, as failure to achieve the required standard could have a range of negative consequences for them. In recent times a tutor lost their job as a consequence of failing an audit and demonstrating a lack of awareness of the gap between the required standard and their actual performance. This was a senior person who had held executive management positions on three continents.

A tutor has the following resources available to accomplish this task: a flipchart, a screen to replay the tape, a set of time-based notes that have recorded actions of the parties to the negotiations—all there to use. The tutor also has available the group of six

people who have just had the experience of trying to resolve this particular conflict. It is within this environment, with these resources that I have worked for over two decades. As mentioned earlier, I am never bored with this work, even though the subject matter remains the same and the conflicts that the participants try and resolve are unchanged. The issue of boredom was raised with the founder of the business before I joined, when I asked him to explain how he maintained his enthusiasm and interest after a similar period. As he replied and as I have subsequently found out for myself, the possible interactions between six people are infinite and the cases are always challenging to interpret and de-brief. While the task of assuring that a predetermined standard was being met may appear relatively simple, it involves some judgment and there are wider ethical considerations.

My consideration of the ethical dimension consisted of three domains—the personal, the organisational, and the public. The personal domain requires a capacity to provide insights for the individual to improve their performance of their task. I am interpreting my brief as not only reporting on what is and on the gap between the standard and the individual, but to establish with the individual a desire for them to improve and the means for them to do so. Of course this is a simplistic notion in the often cynical and selfish world we inhabit. However, the belief that all individuals want to improve drives my practice.

The organisational domain involves the responsibility to discharge my agency to my principal to the best of my abilities. That is my contract with them. They require the task to be completed to protect their license and the higher the standard of their tutors the more likely the business will survive and flourish.

The final domain is to a broader public represented by the participants on the course. They are on the course to improve their ability to negotiate to win in the competition for scarce resources. We introduce them to a process and set of skills that are broadly termed by business academics as the 'mutual gains approach' to negotiating. This approach is both ethical in its approach and efficient in the processes it introduces. On that basis there is not only an individual benefit to the participant but also a wider benefit to the community. I am regularly asked by our participants to advise them on what they should do when they realise their counter party in a commercial transaction has also done the course. My advice is to relax because two skilled negotiators are more likely to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome than a mismatched, skilled and unskilled pairing. In fact, the use of language is critical to the development of a negotiator's mindset and thinking processes. My use of the term 'the other party' rather than the terms 'opponent' or 'opposition' that are often used by participants, illustrates the importance of language. My language is deliberately neutral without the implication of a battle and a win-lose mindset.

Prediction revisited

In 1972 I made a prediction on leaving the accounting firm that my ambition was to become ‘an expert’ to assist others to solve their problems and this was outlined in Chapter 4. At that time I had no concept of what it would take to become an acknowledged expert in a field that enabled me to help others solve their problems. Forty-four years later it appears that I have finally achieved, in a discrete field, what I had set out to achieve. Did the prediction guide my choices or is the felicitous outcome the result of a random set of events or ‘drunkards walk’?

Having arrived at that plausibly vague destination of becoming an expert I should be content with my lot. Unfortunately, this is not my condition but perhaps the human existential condition. When I reflect in the next chapter on the institutions and causes to which I have laboured, I find my world in ruins.

The diary of a knowledge worker

In this section of my chapter I transcribe notes taken over a four-week space of time, from my diary of a year during which I experienced the working life of a knowledge worker in the new millennium. The diary was completed four years ago before I yet knew the final form this thesis would take. At the time I was not even sure that this record might be part of it. That is the risk the phenomenologist takes when they write—as van

Manen (2000) counsels, recording an experience could change it in subtle ways. I wrote my entries in mundanese at intervals during the day and again at its end.

Because my work involves travel to another state, the boundaries between work-life and life outside work are blurred. Even this distinction between the two 'lives' has involved some definitional boundaries. A more common distinction is often made between work and leisure. This is less than useful, as the definition of 'leisure' combines free time and enjoyment—reading, playing tennis, going to the beach and other pleasurable activities. If you asked a worker to detail whether all their time spent not working was leisure they would hardly agree. Shopping for groceries, paying bills, cooking, cleaning, mowing lawns and looking after children would not be included as leisure. These activities are the essential activities to maintain a person and a household to enable them to work for pay. Many of these activities are only undertaken in order that you may work, such as ironing shirts and preparing lunches. One of the benefits of retirement is that not only do people get their working hours back but also they get the bonus of these 'preparing for work' hours. It is little wonder that privileged Ancient Greeks saw work as demeaning and devoted their entire lives to leisure. While this may be acceptable in a society with slaves, it is not usually the case today—even the very wealthy, like Rupert Murdoch who could afford not to work after the accepted retirement age, continue to work into their 80s.

Away from home, I have temporary relief from many domestic chores and I find almost all my waking hours have a work element. Most people who travel regularly will attest to how difficult it is to maintain a fitness regime or any meaningful leisure activity 'on the road'. Common activities I observe among my fellow travellers are reading and watching movies. The distinction between work colleagues and friends is also blurred by travel that combines unsociable hours with the absence of friends from home. I usually work in small teams and tend to socialise with my colleagues at the end of the working day. They become friends of a different kind. This capacity to be 'good company' is so essential that it should be a specific requirement of the job. On re-reading my diaries, this blurring of work and the rest of life is striking. Even on my morning walk, a colleague accompanies me and we talk predominantly of work and the day ahead of us.

A problem for the diarist is that there is a subconscious or conscious thought that others might read the entries. The thought of having an audience may induce the diary keeper to censoring some of the entries or write with a more conscious objective. I have worked hard to resist this possibility of self-censorship in the interest of accuracy and veracity. I have edited the original draft to correct grammar and spelling. My use of avenir font distinguishes diary entries from commentary upon them.

van Manen in *Phenomenology of Practice* expresses the difficulty of writing of this nature in two parts.

First, writing is itself a reflective component of phenomenological method. Phenomenological writing is not just the process of writing up or down the results of a research project. To write is to reflect; to write is to research. And in writing we may deepen and change ourselves in ways we cannot predict.

Second, the pathic phenomenality of phenomena and the vocative expressivity of writing not only involve our head and hand, but our whole sensual being. So writing a phenomenological text is a reflective process of attempting to recover and express the ways we experience our life as we live it - and ultimately to be able to act practically in our lives with greater thoughtfulness and tact.

(van Manen, 2014, Loc. 620 of 11093)

Sandra K. Simpson talks about the hermeneutic spiral that begins with a question that “guides our explorations” (in Rehorick & Bentz, 2008, p. 54). For Simpson, the spiral then opens out to reveal some initial, faltering understandings that produce another round of questioning and a tightening of the spiral. She used a journal as the basis for her understanding self and the purpose of her existence.

I have written from an existential stream of consciousness to bring to light and have before me the activity of my intellect, my emotions and my consciousness for the purpose of better understanding myself - to have text of my deep consciousness to interpret, to uncover what is hidden beneath the everydayness of my thought, and to seek to understand the meaning of my being in the world.

(Simpson in Rehorick and Bentz, 2008, p. 55)

The ability my recordings offer me, to re-visit and analyse the thoughts I collected in the moment, might lead me to a greater understanding of the work I do, what I bring to that

work, and what it demands from me and takes from me in the pursuit of a living. I was not conscious at the time of writing of the risks that might manifest as I put pen to paper to record my daily thoughts and activities. van Manen warns that the outcomes I seek might not reveal the insights or understandings I wish or want. He says, “Phenomenological method is always a matter of attempts, bids, and hopeful risks. Within a phenomenological context, method is never just an engine that will unerringly produce insightful outcomes” (2014, Loc. 810 of 11093).

Sedimentations of understanding

The original events recorded in my diary occurred in the February of 2012. The process of keeping a diary focuses the mind, otherwise engaged in daily activity, to remember thoughts and feelings as they occur for later recall. The conscious mind engages the memory in a more purposive endeavour than normal. The consciousness becomes attuned to the experiences of the day. Conversations on a tram that were previously part of background noise are now at the forefront of experience. The process of recording the memories of experience then changes them through the conversion of memory into written word. There is an inevitable expansion as the writer is drawn into the beginnings of reflection and analysis. My diary entries were handwritten in a journal. Weeks later I converted the handwritten text into a Word document which is now available for the reader. Again the process of expansion and analysis are an implicit part of this writing. The first set of reflections was then made as a natural part of the writing up of the

entries. This process of laying down deposits of reflection and analysis is labeled as ‘sedimentation’ by van Manen (2014). It is this process where

... phenomenology directs its gaze towards the regions where meanings and understandings originate, well up and percolate through the porous membranes of past sedimentations — then infuse, permeate, infect, touch, stir us, and exercise a formative and affective effect on our being. (van Manen, 2014, Loc. 748 of 11093)

Themes emerge naturally from the writing as smoke does from a fire. Themes are understood as “*structures of experience*” (van Manen, 1990, p. 79, van Manen’s italics). Themes cannot be imposed on the writing and van Manen gives examples of statements which,

... may capture some of the phenomenological qualities of the experience of themes as emerging lived meanings in life:

Theme is a needfulness or desire to make sense.

Theme is the sense we are able to make of something.

Theme is openness to something.

Theme is the process of insightful invention, discovery, disclosure. (1990, p. 88)

The sedimentation of themes is evident in this chapter when the insights and understandings that surface in the section called ‘Knowledge worker health warning’ are compared with the themes that emerge at the end of the chapter. This is not to posit that one set of themes is correct and one is wrong, or one is inferior or superior. The sets of themes represent emergent understandings that are the product of the *epoché* and bracketing.

Week 1 Day 1

The alarm rings at 4.30 am waking me from a deep sleep. I have 30 minutes until my regular driver Steve picks me up for a 6.05 am flight to Melbourne. My luggage comprises two suitcases, 31 kilograms in total and a shoulder bag with my laptop and iPad. Two hours on Sunday had been spent unpacking, testing and replacing my recording and replay equipment for this program. With my regular driver, we fall into the relaxed conversation of old friends. I ask the questions about the state of the taxi industry (never good, anywhere) and Steve berates me for a slow return to work (it has been six weeks since I last travelled with him).

Checking in at the airport is painless, the express lane and being known to the staff makes a real difference. We are 'victims' of an expectation that everything will go according to plan. A coffee in the lounge and a quick browse of the local and interstate papers completes my pre-flight preparation. I leave early to negotiate security and, as is my habit, reflect on the absurdity that it has become. That recently a large pair of scissors placed inadvertently in my partner's hand luggage was undetected reinforces the pointlessness of the charade we undergo at this minor airport. I am in my regular travel mode, a no vigilance zombie-like state. I do not converse with fellow passengers unless they start the conversation and then I try to keep it short. It helps that I often fall asleep before the plane has reached the end of the runway.

Given my natural gregarious disposition I find this deliberate distancing of myself from fellow travellers curious. I see that those with the baggage of frequent flyers do the same—bury their heads in papers or a laptop for the duration of the flight.

The good news is that I have a complimentary copy of the latest *Fortune* magazine that usually has at least one great article. This in itself is a commentary on the times because its sister publication, *Time*, has been much diminished in size and content in recent times. The specialist business magazine features in-depth articles rather than bland summaries of old news. Business, rather than current affairs, is paramount in 2012 in terms of readers and relevance. Three great articles, in fact, four, one as yet unread on the best employers in America. In order of immediate personal interest was an article on the founder of LinkedIn, Reid Hoffman, perhaps the world's most consummate networker. He even quotes my favorite author, Jonathon Franzen, who is quoted as saying that "inauthentic people are obsessed with authenticity" (Hempel, 2012, p. 22). Hoffman is described as a pioneer of social networking, a term that has only recently been used to describe a growing industry with Facebook at its centre. Hoffman sold his own company, Friendfeed, to Facebook. The names of the companies he has founded or invested in include Friendster, Digg, Zynga, Groupon, Tumbler and Airbnb. These strange names are probably destined to join the popular culture very soon and become indispensable in the same way as Twitter has.

The beauty of the article and the book extract is that networkers are encouraged to be selective and to give generously before receiving in a relationship rather than relying on sleazy sales gimmicks. Business best practice meets the Bible with the "give unto others as you would want to be treated yourself" repeated as if it has only just been discovered. I propose to reflect more on management theory later. Other articles of interest are on Apple's famous secrecy and the founder of Salesforce.com. I make a note to refer these articles to my daughter Erika who is building an online network and presence in Toronto, Canada. I will try and accomplish that this afternoon with a Skype hookup.

During the flight I notice breakfast includes Weetbix in a sealed container. Must ask the course participants who are from a packaging company if it is one of theirs and whether it contains inert gases to keep the Weetbix fresh. This minor thought leads me to think that the knowledge worker never relaxes. They are constantly scanning the world looking for new information, new knowledge and insights. It is also necessary to try to understand your clients as a means of building rapport and understanding their worlds. I am reminded of the rabbit that continues to grow teeth throughout its life and unless those teeth are worn away by constant nibbling they will eventually grow to an extent that the rabbit will be unable to eat. Similarly, the knowledge worker must constantly graze from a variety of sources to keep the brain sharp and useful.

I am struck by how quickly I have come to this realisation and what the implications are. It is not as though a knowledge worker can switch to standby mode as their computers do. Knowledge workers are constantly 'on' as they scan their environment for new information.

I catch a tram to Docklands and use the time to collect my thoughts and put myself in sales mode. In addition to delivering the course, I have a responsibility to sell courses. I need to establish relationships with new contacts, secure information about their requirements and attempt to match their needs to our current offering. I needed to master the sales process and today I am joined by Kath, my Melbourne colleague. As many have found in selling an intangible service, this is a lot easier to say than to do. There is pressure on to me make sales to maintain my workload with the company and the income that results. I feel this pressure acutely at times, particularly given my age and the enviable lifestyle that this work allows. There is also a personal need, given the sales success of my colleague, Mark who I trained and mentored in the business ten years ago. So there is both an internal status need and competitive streak that motivates me on this occasion.

It seems to me that many people in the workforce complain that they are 'under pressure'. Many are using the word 'pressure' as a euphemism for stress. Pressure is seen as debilitating and unnecessary. Two things emerge from the diary. The first is that a lot of pressure is self-imposed. My need to compete with a colleague is entirely my own creation. I am not even sure whether it is healthy to feel that competitive pressure or

otherwise. The second is that managing the pressure as a positive motivation to do well and improve performance is less likely to turn the pressure into destructive stress. It is our ability to see ourselves in control of the amount of pressure, or to be able to reduce the pressure, that might ultimately decide whether we master stress or become its victims.

Day 1 continued. One of the most difficult things to get these days is an appointment with someone. The more important they are the more difficult it is. Personal assistants have been trained to guard their bosses from interruptions with a ferocious vigilance. Because we were dealing with an existing customer—this took two rather than 50 calls. Not only was the client happy to meet, but also made an appointment for the first date offered which was the morning of my first course in Melbourne. This is important in maximising the client's valuable time and my time on the mainland. The meeting is a fascinating insight into modern corporate restructuring. A large, complex international industry manufacturing telecommunications equipment is under siege from emerging Chinese firms. Former giants of the industry, Siemens and Nokia, have had to form an alliance to forestall the Chinese onslaught. A busy executive with regional responsibilities has given us 90 minutes of his time to outline his company's strategy for Australia and the region. He explains how his firm has become 'change junkies' with regular corporate restructuring as a response to market changes. While he says this sometimes confuses employees it does have the advantage that they are not afraid of starting afresh if something is not working. Contrary to popular conceptions of selling, Kath and I spend almost the

entire meeting listening, asking questions and taking notes. I find the meeting both illuminating and challenging, with many acronyms to describe the technology and business units. Fortunately Kath used to work in this sector and I leave the note taking to her. We identify a great opportunity both on a regional and country basis but we have to prepare a presentation for the end of March. Much coordination and work will be required to complete a compelling presentation.

It is interesting to note that we did not win the work in this instance. I have prepared a number of proposals for the organisation in the intervening years and have not had a single piece of work for all those calls and presentations. Being able to cope with rejection and the disappointment of not making the sale is an essential personal attribute. The job requires resilience and taking a long view of the sales process. Eventually, if you stay the course, there is repeat business that naturally flows without apparent effort on your part. Late on Friday of this week I had a client that had been inactive for two years phone me and order two courses. The problem with this sales environment is pressure for short-term results can add a sense of personal desperation to the sales process.

A knowledge worker finds it difficult to rest, to switch off and let the mind wander. On the tram into the city I overhear a conversation between a passenger and their real estate agent where the potential buyer makes three fundamental errors in negotiating strategy in the space of a minute.

“Has there been any interest?”

“We are really keen!”

“It was like Flinders street, at the open home!”

Of course it was a real estate transaction where market forces outweigh any amount of negotiation skills. Still I could not help but go into consultant mode.

Good manners prevented me from offering some possibly unwelcome advice.

A knowledge worker is always working even when engaged in activities others would see as leisure. My avid reading of newspapers and periodicals, along with my absorption of radio, television and electronic news allows me to link in a manifold of worlds of special interest. The interplay between work and life when I am away working is so constant as for the two to be indistinguishable. In this space everything is connected—therefore seemingly disparate fields are linked by common themes. For example, human behavior, whether it is in the rise of civilizations or on the sporting field, is a constant source of new learning and reinforcement. A knowledge worker is interested in many areas and there will always be something that sparks some new thoughts. I am generous in sharing sources and inspiration on the basis that I have learned so much from others’ sharing that I should reciprocate. In the knowledge economy my sharing always leads to mutual gain because when I transfer knowledge I still retain that which I passed to others. Compare this situation with the transfer of a physical asset, a book or money where the object I transfer is forever lost to me.

Was I yet still unconscious of this always-working aspect of knowledge work and was I yet able to appreciate whether it is a boon or a burden, or both? On one hand I might have been constantly learning but on the other I seem never to have been ‘turned-off’. A

former boss once confided to me that he always approved job-sharing requests because he would rather “have two people thinking in the shower than one!” When this always-on-the-job is added to the constant availability provided by the mobile phone and the Internet then the knowledge worker faces the prospect of habitually working or being available for work. The knowledge worker is complicit—bombarded by communications from others, he or she adds to others’ burdens by initiating communication. Is this the source of so much dysfunction in the modern workplace? Why are these workplaces so often characterised by stress, confusion and lack of focus? Tony Schwartz in *The Way We’re Working Isn’t Working* (2010) characterises the situation as,

All this furious activity exacts a series of silent costs: less capacity for focused attention, less time for any given task, and less opportunity to think reflectively and long term. When we finally do get home at night, we have less energy for our families, less time to unwind and relax, and fewer hours to sleep. We return to work each morning feeling less rested, less than fully engaged, and less able to focus. It’s a vicious cycle that feeds on itself. Even for those who still manage to perform at high levels, there is a cost in overall fulfillment. The ethic of more, bigger, faster generates value that is narrow shallow and short term. More and more, paradoxically, leads to less and less. (Schwartz, 2010, p. 4)

Week 1 first evening

The first evening allows the two tutors to introduce themselves, the course, the methods we use and to set the scene with some major concepts around the negotiating process. It also allows participants to introduce themselves and for Kath (my colleague) and I to understand the issues, the pressures and the

individual needs they would like to address on the course. The session lasts 90 minutes between 4.30 pm and 6.00 pm. Most tutors would contend that it is the least successful part of the course because there is very little opportunity for interaction with participants. All attempts to change to a morning start and incorporate the content in Day 1 have been vetoed by our founder.

I have been delivering this content almost without change (apart from my comfort with it) for decades. There is little room for innovation so when an opportunity presents itself to work with a real example of a conflict that a participant has just experienced; it is vital that we discuss it. The particular conflict was essentially about a female participant attending the course to replace someone who had cancelled. Her boss insisted that she miss the first morning to deliver a presentation she had previously agreed to do. She had reluctantly agreed but said that the whole exchange had left her feeling uneasy and with a bad taste in her mouth.

One of the major learning points of the first evening is that there are at least eight different ways to resolve conflict. Each is appropriate in particular circumstances. She had chosen to give in, which is appropriate when the relationship is more important than the particular issue. The real point is that I had a choice between choosing this real live conflict or the standard situation I usually use where I have prepared answers and amusing anecdotes for each of the alternatives.

I needed to make an assessment of the risk of using the real conflict or the one that I had prepared earlier. My considerations covered the relevance and immediacy of the real example that would demonstrate a number of positives. It would demonstrate that we were listening, that our content was relevant to the participant's everyday conflicts rather than hypothetical situations. It also had the benefit of forcing me into an area of personal discomfort, as I had no prepared script for this example. Some quick thinking allowed me to think through at least some of the possibilities available in the real example. The potential downside was that if I struggled with the alternatives then my credibility and that of the course would suffer. Given that the first evening is all about establishing our personal and corporate credibility ("We work for the top 50 companies... I have consulted widely in..."), this was a real risk.

I made a judgment that the risk was worth taking and used the real live example. It worked well and I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had made the right decision and had delivered the learning points with immediacy and relevance that the prepared example could not match. In recounting this example, I am suddenly aware that one of the key skills that I have developed is to make these judgments precisely.

The course involves extensive video recording of participants negotiating realistic conflicts. I then have to determine which pieces of the tape will be replayed to the group and for what purpose. Factors that I need to consider in making that choice are, the stage of the course to ensure it is on content already covered in the lectures, the relevance to

the group and individual, whether it reflected good skills or the absence of skills, the ability of the individual to handle any direct or overt criticism, and the availability of stronger learning points. All this has to be done with six people eagerly waiting for their moment in the spotlight and keen to see themselves at their best. My colleagues describe this process as 'being in the moment' or 'fully present' for the group. The knowledge worker is constantly making these judgments, when to push and when to pull, when to guide and when to be silent, whether or not to rely on the group to discover an essential truth or to be didactic.

Dinner with Mark: Elements of magic

I have arranged to have dinner with a friend and colleague, Mark, an experienced tutor whom I have worked with extensively. The focus for our discussion was the question, "What creates the magic that occurs on the course?" I have tried as far as possible to produce responses to my question verbatim and have used quotation marks accordingly and my comments or context in brackets.

"You and I differ from our colleagues (in that we asked ourselves these questions constantly... their involvement in the delivery is transactional in comparison) I make an unconditional investment in a transformational experience for those in my care (words chosen with intent). So for me when somebody signs up for a course, from the moment they enter the door they are my responsibility

(not only for the learning but their entire experience) from the food they are served, the comfort of the seats and the temperature of the room. (There has, at times been criticism of Mark for acting as a waiter and taking around plates of food at breaks.) I am there to service their desire for knowledge and the environment that serves it.”

“I never take liberties with humour, the terms I use. I am circumspect and cautious about words and language. I am not loose and casual. (Mark’s repetition is included for emphasis.) I am there for them not they for me. I am there to learn from them. If there are opposable points of view, I am keen to hear them.”

“I want them to discover what is possible not what is. By opening up to what is limiting and to what is possible provides a whole new agenda. They need to trust me so I need to be focused on their wellbeing.”

The return to the theme of all-encompassing care and responsibility is illuminating.

“Another piece is the (pause) I love what I do... When Jack Welch was CEO of GEC (a fallen giant of American industry) he looked for the following qualities in his employees, personal energy, the ability to energise others, an edge (being able to make hard decisions) and, the ability to execute (getting things done).”

I am curious that Mark is using a fallen giant to illustrate his point but on reflection, someone being out of fashion does not destroy their entire message. Mark goes on to discuss some of our own internal hiring decisions based against the Welch template.

“I try to get with (understand) why they are here (on the course) and what they are trying to achieve.”

Mark and I can't help ourselves from introducing some current affairs into the conversation. We reflect on how past behaviours are good predictors of future behavior and relate it to the performance of the Captain of the Costa Concordia. A related example of arrogance was from a former boss of Coles supermarkets who claimed on his appointment that he had never been inside a supermarket!

This gives Mark time to gather his thoughts and he continues.

“You need to see someone who loves teaching and acknowledges their responsibility to those they teach. When you study the teachers you remember did they give you half of them or all of them? They tell you “I am holding you, you are my responsibility”.”

“My commitment to them is: I am there at 7.30 am. Talk to me before the course starts or talk to me afterwards. I am here for you. From a selfish perspective I am there to have fun and to learn while I am with them. I am offering a generosity of spirit.”

I think I probably knew all of this before this particular moment, but the considered, yet moving, way Mark explained his ethical framework had both clarity and an immediate impact. Different people bring entirely different perspectives to work—their uniqueness is manifest in their values and beliefs. The particular experiences they choose to allow to surface with the group and the narrative that they develop across the days of the program, along with how they demonstrate consistency in their own behavior in what

they teach, shapes new identities and meanings for all those present in the experience, including my self.

Week 1 Day 2 Morning

I deliver a 45-minute lecture on preparing to negotiate. We are using a variation of the timetable starting the day 15 minutes earlier. I adjust my arrival time to 7.45 am necessitating a rushed breakfast. The group is slow to assemble and given four of them missed the first evening because of late flights, there is a delayed start because of introductions and explaining that we will recap the previous evening's lecture for their benefit after the conclusion of this morning's lecture. It is very much a standard 'vanilla' presentation (no light nor shade and minimal response to the standard jokes). I like to finish precisely on time so the introduction to the cases is not rushed. My internal settings are askew as a result of the new starting time and I speed up the conclusion of the lecture and don't provide a summary. The participants then have an hour to prepare their cases.

During their preparation Kath and I provide any clarifications necessary and prepare the filming and recording equipment. We run two video and one sound cable between the filming room and the lecture room. This enables one group to watch the other negotiating. An essential task is to ensure the quality of the videos for replay. There is constant tension, particularly if there are problems with the equipment. Today there are no issues and both cases run smoothly, technically. The quality of the negotiating is a different matter. Both cases involve ambit opening positions and the creation of large gaps between the two

parties. Neither then had the skill to bridge the gap. This is not an unusual outcome for the first cases.

The highlight was an industrial relations executive exclaiming, "I want to come back as a union representative (in real life). I loved it!" (That is, being a union official in the case.) The key to the learning that participants experience is being able to relate their behaviours in the contrived and artificial environment on the course to their workplace experiences. I have disciplined myself not to use the term 'real world' to describe their workplace. The term implies that what they are experiencing on this course is not real. The pressure they face, the tension they feel and the desire to get it right on the course are just as real as anything that occurs in their workplace. So rather than using the term 'real world' I use the words, 'your everyday negotiations'.

Week 1 Day 2 Afternoon

After lunch I introduce the core of our message in a 45-minute lecture on 'Argue, Signal, Propose'. It is almost Zen-like in its simplicity. "Give them what they want... on your terms." I always feel that while the group is keen to learn how to bridge the gaps they created in the first round of cases, the message is so alien to them that it will take much longer to sink in, let alone be practiced. I also have to cope with my personal energy trough that I experience post-lunch. I have always suffered from this and given the relief of tension from the morning when the participants turned up, the equipment worked and ran on time. The only thing that works is minimal lunch and strong coffee immediately post-lunch.

I confess that I find the coffee easier than restraint at lunch. I am never satisfied with the lecture inputs and after 18 years I am still experimenting with ways of making the key points more relevant and therefore understood. The next stage is to encourage people to put the skills into practice. I make a note to make the morning's cases an even greater source of examples in the afternoon lecture.

A key understanding here is that the knowledge worker is constantly seeking improvement in what he or she does. It is a relentless and ultimately, a fruitless search for perfection.

Week 1 Day 2 Evening

I had initially decided not to account for my evening activities in this record on the basis that the following account seems hardly illuminating: packed up equipment, ate dinner, watched television and went to sleep is dull. However there is a desperate loneliness that is the constant companion for those who regularly travel for business. This is beautifully captured by the line, "You draw back the blinds and gaze out on a landscape that you would not willingly want to inhabit" in *The Heart Aroused* (1994), a book of corporate poetry by David Whyte. Dinner is the opportunity to get to know your co-workers, to entertain clients and escape the pressures of the day in food and wine. The alternative is room service, which is almost an admission of the failure to organise anything better and a lack of ambition. Eating alone in a restaurant is a public admission of this failure and even protected by a book to read at the table, there is a tendency to shrink into invisibility.

I have high hopes for dinner on the second evening as I am meeting a friend and colleague. He has made the booking and as he is a gourmet and wine buff I eagerly anticipate his choice. Unfortunately the evening starts badly and steadily gets worse. There is a golden rule in dining and that is to never eat in an empty restaurant. It is empty for a reason. We do of course break our own rule, having made a telephone booking on the basis of the reputation of the owner–chef. There always seems to be symmetry between the food and the conversation, it either soars or crashes. Colin is unhappy with the state of the business and the lack of opportunities it is currently providing for us freelancers.

I have watched this unhappiness grow and deepen over the intervening period with the result that Colin no longer works in the business. I am disappointed that the relationship ended—for both the business and for Colin. I have only now, when reviewing my account of this period, really understood that it was entirely at the emotional level that the two parties failed to come to an accommodation. Of course, they will present a business reason for the breakdown but that is only at the mundane level. The business issues were minor and there was flexibility present. A transcendental viewpoint would provide a more complete and complex explanation. I will attempt to explain.

The current owners of the business use their full-time staff in the first instance and freelance tutors are only used as a substitute when the others are fully utilised. This creates permanent uncertainty for Colin and myself. Perhaps more troubling from Colin’s perspective is that we have been told many times, “We do not owe you anything,

we have no obligation to provide you with any work. Conversely you have no obligation to us and can refuse work when offered if there is a better alternative for you.” This statement, while correct in a narrow legal sense, has had a deeply dispiriting effect on Colin. In his view it effectively devalues the relationship with the business and the owners. There is an emotional element required of all tutors whether freelance or not. I refer to Bunting in Chapter 4 as introducing this emotional element to so many modern jobs. It is only now that I appreciate the centrality of the emotions to this dispute.

On the course all tutors are required to represent the company with enthusiasm and commitment, to demonstrate their mastery of the topic and Colin has brought practical experience at the highest level to his work. However he is not in the right mood for the discussion I had envisaged and I do not get an opportunity to elevate the conversation to a discussion of the magic from Colin’s perspective. I am cast into the role of listener and confidante but when combined with our over-ordering overpriced food and perhaps trying to wash away the sorrows with too much wine, the net effect is dispiriting. The evening sits as a heavy weight on my spirit at evening end and this mood continues the next morning when I forgo my walk for some extra time in bed.

Week 1 Day 3 Morning

A more relaxed start with Kath delivering the ‘Package and Bargain’ lecture allows me to regain my good humour. I had time to chat to the early arrivals and find out more about them. Kath starts the ball rolling with a hilarious story about her dogs eating a leather couch she had recently rescued from her mother. That

leads to a discussion about hoarding and the increasing use of storage lockers. One of the participants confessed to being a hoarder. The condition is known as 'decision deficit disorder'. I am astonished that there is even a psychological name for it. Interestingly she did not have the same problems in her professional life.

The group is late in starting, with those staying at the venue being the laggards. I sit and listen to Kath's presentation. All senior tutors have a professional and personal responsibility to extend and enhance the skills of our less experienced colleagues. My comments cover both the content of her lectures and the way she engages with the group.

The debriefing with Kath was done while the group were preparing for the next case. While the comments I have made are about improvements Kath can make, she has made a good fist of it and I start her debrief on this positive note. This moving from the positive reinforcement to areas for improvement is a methodology that has served me well over the years. If you start with praise, people keep listening—while they turn off when faced with unremitting criticism. Kath thought the presentation was rushed and that accounted for many of the issues I raised. We both agreed there was more work to be done.

The training program we deliver involves many elements. It is rare that a tutor is completely satisfied that their lecture or replay had the perfect balance of erudition, humour, inclusion and practical illustration of the application of key skills to everyday situations. If perfection was the objective, then failure and disappointment are

guaranteed. The important thing for a knowledge worker is to be able to reflect on their experience and constantly adjust and refine. It is in this constant challenge of trying to improve that real satisfaction in work resides.

The next case was a curious case where the more senior and experienced members of the group torched what is perhaps our easiest case. It was not that their behavior was bad, in fact, much of the behavior was exemplary but because of an early proposal by the seller and subsequent inflexibility, no deal was possible. Interestingly the replay revealed that the sellers had an unrealistic, inflated view of their importance to the buyer that explained their intransigent behavior.

I was allowed time to collect my thoughts while Kath delivered the 'Close and Agree' lecture and introduced the afternoon's case. This is a time to assess where the group is, in terms of their ability to absorb and practice the concepts. I am not sure whether it is a piece of inspired design but the 'Rush Job' case should enable both teams to get a deal before they run out of time and therefore feel more confident before they tackle the pressure cooker of the 'Golf Club' case. In fact neither team gets a deal—Kath's team by a narrow margin but mine by a long way. Over lunch the participant who led the negotiation for the sellers came and explained that his inflexibility was, in large part, because his two counter-parties worked in the same plant and were his bosses. He had taken a view that any movement away from his opening position would be considered

a sign of weakness on his behalf and therefore it was a matter of personal pride that he had managed to stare them down.

I appreciated the fact that he had taken the trouble to reveal his personal motivation behind the behaviour that had effectively killed the deal. It is not often that this happens and it gave me the opportunity to take him aside and explain that flexibility should not be confused with weakness or lack of spine. However, what flexibility does require is a trading mindset and that to trade you need to have something to trade with. I pointed out to him that there were a number of variables that provided him that opportunity, multi-year contracts and increasing shares of the customer's business. On reflection, the interesting thing for me was the importance of 'face' in shaping behaviours, because 'face' is often based on past experiences and events, it is very hard to read. I have decided to follow up with an email to the participant to reinforce the point.

This small incident contains some important lessons for the knowledge workers. The first is that initial analysis of a situation is exactly that. It skims the surface of the real motivation of a participant in a case. If we settle with this surface analysis then the real reason for the behavior will remain hidden. The root of the problem is undiscovered and therefore unaddressed and unresolved. It is common for doctors to refer to presenting symptoms as those initially explained by a patient. Only after the patient has assessed their level of trust for the doctor and the doctor demonstrated empathy for the patient are the real symptoms presented. Patience, curiosity and trust are essential tools of the

knowledge worker and consultant. Real issues and their solutions are often slow to emerge.

The afternoon of Day 2 is essentially downtime for the lead tutor, an opportunity to catch up with emails, selling opportunities and occasionally, sleep. I take the opportunity to sleep for the full three hours and wake feeling guilty, but refreshed. The afternoon is left to the co-tutor so the lead can return refreshed to take the group through a general discussion on their personal negotiation issues before briefing them for the final case to be held on the last day. This goes smoothly and we join the participants for drinks at the end of the day (6 pm). These sessions are always enjoyable and enable participants to have individual discussions with tutors and perhaps raise any personal negotiating issues that they were reluctant to reveal in front of the whole group. Two of the participants have full sleeve tattoos and their obvious pride in them and what they represent for them was illuminating. Tattoos are a Maori tradition and are highly symbolic of family history and connection. One participant explained the process of waiting 18 months for a traditional Maori to be available and of the 6.5 hour process to complete one arm. It is an opportunity to get to know the individuals and perhaps develop the trust essential for the critique of the final case.

Week 1 Day 3 Evening

I join Kath and her partner Norm at a popular seafood restaurant close to their home. I have an interesting conversation about their charitable work

amongst Aids victims in Cambodia. They are sponsoring families into agriculture as means of self-sufficiency. This is rapidly becoming a life work for Norm and he and Kath have made an enormous personal commitment to these people. It is obviously a cause that motivates both of them. My motivation of working to maintain a lifestyle and family seem narrow by comparison with their nobler calling.

Week 1 Day 4

Three nights out have taken a toll and I again miss my early morning walk and run. I summon enough energy for the final case that runs for 90 minutes of negotiation. All this is filmed and I make time-based notes to debrief the group. We end up with no deal, with intransigence being the culprit yet again. The lesson is well-learned and the feedback from the group is positive. One participant takes the trouble to say that this was the best training course she had ever done. I am intrigued to know what created the magic for her and follow up with an email at the end of the course.

Kath and I pack up and she is gone by 3 pm. I have a 7.40 pm flight which, being the last into Tasmania, is often delayed to wait for connecting passengers. A demanding week and three nights out. I have seven hours to kill before I get home. Airport lounge, more food and drink temptations resisted. I spend some time watching the speakers on TED on YouTube. They are impressive—ranging from Malcolm Gladwell, the author of *The Tipping Point* (2002), to unknowns speaking on a plethora of topical subjects. I watch perhaps three or four but

nothing worthy of special note. I now have insufficient energy to do anything particularly productive but read the papers and doze while observing my fellow commuters eating, drinking and laughing. Everyone seems to be in happy groups. Seven hours and I don't speak to a single soul while surrounded by people. Is it the intensity of the week or personal preference that I avoid the one or two familiar faces in the lounge? I arrive home at 10.15 pm and slump into a chair.

This work described above requires tutors to establish rapport with a diverse group of participants; to understand both the context of their work and the challenges they face; to provide tailored advice to improve their performance and overcome weaknesses; and to work under pressure with a fellow tutor while helping them improve their work so they can progress—all within the three days of the course. It is no wonder that I am emotionally exhausted at the end of the course. When combined with socialising with tutors and participants during the week, it is not surprising to hear that tutors retreat to an uncommunicative state on the days they are not teaching. It is also a contributing factor to domestic disharmony when partners are not only physically absent for the majority of the week but return home emotionally drained at the end of the week. These are the hidden costs of the knowledge worker life particularly if combined with travel.

Reading the text has literally sent a shiver down my spine. These costs are not mentioned when these jobs are advertised. Interviewers provide no warning about the potential impact of these work demands on the rest of your life. I certainly did not

contemplate these impacts before I embarked on this career. I have produced below a set of statements that job applicants should be asked to read and agree to before accepting a knowledge worker position. They are exaggerated in order to convey the point.

Knowledge worker health warning

I am aware that my work will involve constant learning and I will need to regularly master new skills to perform this role.

I am aware that the job will involve a high degree of stress requiring mental resilience and physical health of the highest order throughout my working life.

I am aware that I will need to travel to places I would never chose to go to and form productive relationships with people I would avoid if I had the choice.

I acknowledge that my constant travel will fracture friendships and limit my ability to participate fully in the life of my local community.

I am aware that my work will be emotionally draining and create conflict with loved ones when I am absent and unable to give them love and support. Additional conflict when I am home and emotionally withdrawn as a consequence of the work.

I acknowledge that I may be absent for significant events in my family's life and that they may sometimes resent this.

I am aware that my job is an intrusive presence in my whole life and that I will be unable to turn off my mobile phone at weekends and resist email messages until the work week begins. When physically present with my family in leisure time I will be often be working.

On completing and re-reading the list above I have decided that there is no exaggeration. This is a discovery in itself—the potential damage cannot be exaggerated! This of course begs the question that if I had known the risks and had been asked to acknowledge each of them would I have made a different choice?

Week 2 Day 1

A much more civilized departure time allows a 6 am wake up. Just as well because the three-hour time difference between home and my destination, Perth, makes this a long day. If I adjust the timetable for this time difference I will finish work at 8.30 pm and then look for an evening meal. Then I will wake up at my normal time which will be 3 am local time (6 am home time) and then find it difficult to get back to sleep. It is no surprise a week in Perth seems particularly draining.

There has been some drama with boarding the Hobart flight. After being all lined up ready to board we have been delayed several times while engineering work is carried out. The blue smoke coming from the rear of the aircraft was not a good sign at this point. An engineer has been called to complete the necessary maintenance. I am not overly concerned as I have two hours wait until my connecting flight in Melbourne. I also know from experience that no amount

of frustration or agitation makes any difference to delays. I do have a program to start this evening on the other side of the continent. There has only been once in 18 years when I have missed the start of a program, there have been lots of close shaves but I have learned a stoic acceptance of any delays is the least wearing on your nerves. This delay has given me a chance to reflect on what I learned last week about the magic and how I can incorporate more into my delivery of the course. Last night I came across the word 'reify', to make concrete the abstract, and I think it describes precisely the challenge I face each time I meet a new group.

So before I start this week I need to collect my thoughts from last week and consciously incorporate them into my approach to this week's course. Given that I have been doing this with a high degree of success for 18 years the obvious question is, why am I bothering? I could have my head in the latest Swedish crime sensation or the daily newspaper. I could get by, as others must do, by running with the same presentation week in week out. In fact, I have described this disparagingly as 'teaching the course straight out of the box'. I have seen it done and there have probably been periods when I have been guilty of it myself. I am reminded of a book, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) by Donald Schön, which had an impact on me in my teacher education. I would like to think that part of my growth and development, which is ongoing, comes from this process of reflection and improvement. I doubt that I could still be finding satisfaction in this type of work had I not become a reflective practitioner.

As a result of being on the 8.35 am flight I notice a significant difference in the passengers compared to last week on the 6 am flight. There are almost no suits flying out to do business on the mainland. They are already in their first meeting or on their way to it. I am in the company of departing wedding guests, tourists and other leisure travelers. The atmosphere is therefore more relaxed, particularly after the delays are announced. Eventually we board and I walk onto the tarmac into bright sunshine and I am instantly reminded that today is a public holiday in Hobart, Regatta Day. Not for me because the schedule of the knowledge worker has no public holidays in it. My partner had planned to work today to get ahead but when I rang her she had decided to have the day to pursue some personal interests and I wondered about the pressures she faces on a daily basis which force her to consider going into a deserted school to work alone for the day. We have allowed work to take over our lives to the exclusion of the very things that we work to provide.

This week I am working with an old friend, Colin, with whom I shared a desultory dinner last week. He deserves a fuller introduction. I first met Colin when we were participants on this course in May 1994. Much has happened since that experience which was both magic and transforming for me. I have reflected in some detail in the bureaucrat stage of my career on the motivations I had for taking up this new career. Back to Colin, very few people have had the wealth of experiences from shop floor, to senior executive and serial entrepreneur. He brings both a broad experience and great insights to his teaching. His work is primarily in industrial relations and unlike many in the team he has personally conducted many high stakes negotiations. I need to consider how I will question him

about his motivation for doing this kind of work and the experiences and people that have shaped him as an individual.

I am using the flight to write rather than to read but it may be instructive to list my current reading list. It comprises *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* (2006) by Muriel Barbery, *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (1982) by Mancur Olson and *The Origins of Political Order* (2012) by Francis Fukuyama. Why they are there is worthy of further comment. The hedgehog book was a recommendation by my daughter who thought it gave wonderful insight into the development of a personal philosophy. It contains a devastating critique of phenomenology and Husserl in particular by the concierge heroine that I have used earlier in this thesis. The works of Olson and Fukuyama are essentially about the rise and fall of nations and the causes and remedies for these phenomena.

I have used each of these works in some part of this thesis. It is instructive to see how all encompassing an exercise in phenomenology can become. These works were inexorably drawn into my thesis because of the impact they have had on my thinking about the future of work.

At the lounge in Melbourne I watch a presentation on TED, a website, by Nancy Duarte. It is about the art of turning presentations into compelling stories. I had watched it almost absentmindedly the previous Thursday while searching for another presentation. Like a slow burn it came back to me over the weekend and I remembered enough of it to know that it offered a solution to my desire to improve the impact of my presentations not only on the course but also in all my

formal work including sales. It provided a universal template that I had seen before in a variety of contexts. It was her analysis of two famous speeches by Martin Luther King and Steve Jobs that was most powerful. I resolved to try to use elements of the formula this week. The structure is very simple—an outline of the current situation, followed by a statement of the ideal, what could be, then a call to action outlining what it is necessary to do to bridge the gap. It almost sounds too simple and I resolve to watch it again.

The client last week was a manufacturer of packaging and was facing the twin forces of an appreciating dollar and pressure on margins from customers. In other words, difficult trading conditions. This week our client is an oil and gas producer trying to bring massive new projects to market in the North West of Australia. For them it is trying to get resources to build their projects in a seller's market. In this region, time and availability were of higher priority than price. Last week we had competitive behaviours and ambit claims from individuals consistent with the difficult commercial environment they operated in. What will be the defining features of this this group? I have had previous experience of this company and I should be in a position to make an educated guess.

The defining feature will be trying to deliver commercially viable outcomes within very tight time frames in an overheated market place for goods and services. Booms create their own special kind of pressures and Western Australia is at the epicenter of such a boom. The other pressure they face is resistance to any development in the Kimberley region from environmental groups and some

parts of the Aboriginal community. A column in the Herald-Sun, a Melbourne newspaper, recently lampooned the resistance to the development of a new port in the Kimberley. It compared the number of ports in Germany, 58 with the number in a greater area of the Kimberley, 4.

My thoughts inevitably turn to the growing tension between the environmental movement and those who regard economic growth and innovation as solution to our problems rather than the cause. Has the Green Movement overplayed its hand? The question 'How much wilderness is enough?', needs to be answered. It is interesting how work and personal viewpoints sometimes collide. The knowledge worker needs to be careful that personal agendas do not intrude into the work environment. You can never be sure of the beliefs or political orientation of a group and in my experience, once someone is offended they stay offended.

In-flight magazines are another source of information and in the Jetstar magazine there was an article about the Melbourne Hub. It is an online member community providing almost incubator services to small enterprises. I make a note to visit the site for more information. The issue here is the constant stimulation of new and interesting ideas. Different from the information overload, it is an opportunity overload. Where is the time and energy to follow up? How can you be both discriminating and omnivorous? It is my experience that some of the most surprising insights come from strange sources. And there seems to

be proliferation of them. The flight to Perth is uneventful and I watch the Tin Tin movie. It passes the time.

It is instructive to point out that I did follow up the TED talk and the website. My fears of overload and lack of discrimination were well-founded.

Week 2 First evening

The people from the oil and gas industry are a diverse group. The industry is like an international community of people who have served their apprenticeships in the communities around major oil and gas fields. It has all the elements of a diaspora with the same names recurring. We have Oxana from Sakelin Island in Russia and Katy whose family was from Aberdeen. These two locations recur time and time again. There are seven women and five men in all, unusual in a male-dominated industry. The group members are also impressive in their honesty about their negotiating needs and difficulties. With one exception, they all complain about an inability to negotiate effectively on their own behalf (an almost universal issue among negotiators). There is also a tendency to give in where it is perceived that there is a need to preserve good working relationships. This can obviously cause problems in an industry where joint ventures are common.

We also have a visit from the course sponsor, Geoff, who makes the observation that his company does not negotiate enough and does not negotiate hard enough. This accords with my experience of their people on the course and I think it provides plenty of opportunity for consulting work in the future.

My co-tutor, Colin, and I decide to have dinner in the hotel as we are both tired from the flight and are on a diet as far as food and drink is concerned. I arrived back after the course the previous week feeling as though all my clothes had shrunk. The combination of eating out, alcohol and the absence of exercise in the morning reminded me of the bad old days, so I limited myself to a single cider and tried to exercise portion control at the buffet. The result was a draw but at least I was out of bed at 5.45 am and exercising. Colin and I had had a desultory night out the previous week where we bitched and moaned about the company we work for and those who manage it. The details are not important but this recurring conversation is a curious feature of the lives of those who work for the company. I have had the same conversation in Rome, Bratislava, Glasgow and Munich. Is this a characteristic of the knowledge worker that they are endlessly critical of those who try to manage and direct them? The litany of management sins extends from poor decisions, to lack of consultation, greed and general incompetence. Of course, we are also talking about those who founded the company, invested in the product, devoted their lives to it and had substantial funds invested in it. They are also the people who have flown us around the world, allowing us to stay in the finest hotels and eat the finest meals. As we say on the course, it is easy to be an armchair critic rather than a performer facing the camera.

These conversations were so consistent and prevalent that Colin was depressed about our future, and particularly his. The combination of a difficult market and new recruits had meant that Colin's share of the work was less than

before and he was obviously feeling unloved as a result. This disaffection was also reinforced in that he wasn't being consulted by the business leaders as much as before. Colin places a high value on his own advice and is therefore bereft when others don't ask for it.

The cumulative effect of these negative conversations was that it was making Colin angry and sick. His solution was to develop our own course and break away from those that have employed us in a variety of capacities over the last 18 years. I was pleased that he wanted to stop the negative conversations but his solution is one fraught with dangers and difficulties, not the least of which is being sued by our current employer who is notoriously litigious. I am keen to discuss a positive way forward but this solution seems too difficult. These conversations are endlessly repeated but rarely acted on.

I have already discussed the underlying emotional component in this dispute and the inability of the parties to address it and resolve the situation. The emotional dimension of work requires further explanation. Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro in *Building Agreement* (2005) identify five key concerns that are at the core of all human emotion. These concerns are appreciation, affiliation, autonomy, status and role. In this situation it is Colin's need for both affiliation and appreciation that are at the heart of his dissatisfaction. Under a previous management he was the trusted advisor whose wisdom and experience were regularly sought by the previous owners of the business. He therefore felt that he mattered, that he was appreciated. This was no longer the case, as his opinions and advice were no longer sought. In addition, the mercenary nature of the

commercial engagement often repeated by the new owners, there was no acknowledgement of his past services nor his place in the future of the business. This arrangement meant that his desperate need for affiliation, a sense of inclusion and belonging, were no longer even recognised or satisfied.

It may be instructive to revisit the comments made by Mark earlier in this diary to understand why he has not felt the same level of dissatisfaction as Colin while facing exactly the same employment conditions. Mark's dedication to his clients and participants is extraordinary. The fact that he personally serves their morning and afternoon tea is an indicator of his need to be loved—his affiliation needs rather than his appreciation needs. Mark seeks friendship among the participants and often meets them for coffee post-course to follow up. This need for affiliation is so strong that he continues to work long after he could afford to retire. It is a sad reflection that if I ponder his reluctance to retire it will be the loneliness that he fears, the absence of lifelong friends outside work and close associations with community. Mark is a double immigrant. He is initially from the United States but spent his young adult life on a kibbutz in Israel. He lives alone and has few interests outside his work. The money he earns satisfies his need for security and the participants' enthusiastic response to his often-theatrical performance on the course are his primary motivations. He does not need his employers to acknowledge his contribution, paying him is proof of that. His real motivation is the warmth of the response from participants. While this was also true of Colin, it was to a much lesser extent. What Colin wanted was the appreciation from those he considered his peers. (The unresolved conflict with Colin was to last another

three years until finally resolved to no-one's satisfaction. I spend some time in Chapter 8 discussing the conflict and its aftermath.)

I have been excited about the quality of this group and the fact that I am going to try something new for the first morning which incorporates the 'promised land approach' I had seen on the TED video. I had been thinking about how to incorporate this new approach during my morning walk and run. I was pleased with the opportunity to have some clear thinking time before breakfast to contemplate the changes. I was acutely aware that I could not afford too radical a departure from the standard input. So I commenced the lecture on 'Prepare' by asking them to identify their worst-case scenario for preparation. We listed things like insufficient time, no mandate, untried team and absence of coherent strategy. I then went on to identify a best-case preparation that was, of course, the opposite of all those things we had just listed. I then asked them to identify which was closest to their personal reality. Of course the answer was the worst case. It was now relatively easy to identify what they needed to do to move from worst-case to best-case preparation.

Rush, rush, rush! These were my thoughts at the end of the lecture. By incorporating a new introduction and still required to cover the normal content, I felt under constant pressure. While I am pleased with the way the slight change to the 'Prepare' lecture went, there needs to be a much longer 'front-end' exploring what is before revealing what could be, the possibilities. This is the dilemma we constantly face when trying to introduce new elements without

throwing out any of the old. Probably better to start with a blank sheet of paper again.

This morning's case ran smoothly with strong performances. I have at the back of my mind throughout the analysis of the course sponsor who visited on the first night. He stated that, as a company we are not good at negotiation, we don't do enough negotiating and we are not hard enough when we do negotiate. This is an opportunity to add some process and some steely resolve to the participants' negotiations.

The first round of cases are reasonably strong, though Colin has a frightful 'Expenses' case where one of the participants, Steve, who has a dominant personality, decides that the best approach is to 'wing it' and make up a strategy as the case unfolds. This unfortunately, is a common approach of experienced negotiators to their preparation. The negotiation is of course, a train wreck and there is considerable tension in his team as a result. Colin will have his hands full in the replay but it is a task he relishes. It happens to be Valentine's Day so every decent restaurant is booked out. We cannot go back to the buffet so our only option is the hotel bar and a bar snack (burger with chips). This is not our natural habitat and the conversation lacks energy as a result. The bar attracts the usual crowd of elderly tourist couples in travel wear, single men in transit and couples having a pre-dinner drink. Colin comments it is easy to see that we are in a resources boom since two-thirds of male patrons are bogans [an uncouth or unsophisticated person] who would rarely see the inside of a five star hotel. I find

the comment elitist and it offends my natural democratic view that the benefits of the boom should be shared. Those in the executive suite have had more than their share already.

I raise the same question with Colin as I had discussed with Mark—what creates the magic? The answers given are quite different. Colin thinks that many more of our courses were once residential and this created a social environment in which we got to know the individuals on the course. As a result we could push the boundaries in both our critiques and our humour. I think that part of the past strength was that the course was more ‘blokey’ [male-oriented] and we were more comfortable in that environment. My initial reaction is to see this as the classic lament for the good times past but I think it may hold some essential truths. More of this later in the discussion of the changing customer profile and the new demands they are making on the course.

We also discuss the idea that part of any new offering will be the provision of mentoring services to organisations that have got rid of all the experience that the senior age group provided. The good news for the companies is that they only pay for it when they need it, since the older staff that they have made redundant is not hanging around as a dead weight. I argue for my ‘game changing’ concept but without much enthusiasm.

It has been a very long day (5.45 am to 9.30 pm) and I am brain dead. I fall onto my bed and remain motionless and watch appalling TV until I have sufficient energy to roll into bed. I know this is my way of relaxing, but I would

love to stop. There is almost a need to switch off and enter a zombie-like state. There must be an alternative. Writing is certainly one of them but at day's end, I have very little energy for the journal.

Week 2 Day 2

I think the TV has had an entropic effect because although I had a good night's sleep (absence of alcohol) my spirits are low on day 2. There is a cause and effect issue here because I give a lacklustre, low-energy 'Package and Bargain' lecture and this further reinforces my low spirits. This is a self-reinforcing, downward spiral that I cannot afford to continue. I resolve to recapture my energy in the 'Rush Job' case.

I am going to have to pull out all stops because the case is a train wreck of confusion. People who are normally buyers are finding it hard to be sellers—they have rushed to proposals without an effective argue step. They should be better than this at this stage. Where did the \$7k number come from? This is a cryptic note to remind me of the absence of structure and thought they have put into the case. The group is already fragile and this will not do them any good to experience another negative review. I resolve to use the 'what is, what could be' approach to make the story compelling. I don't think I can leave it to them in my preferred style of Socratic questioning.

I start with asking them to identify what contributed to them getting a deal by using the terminology we have introduced them to. This starting with the positive then allows license to look to the areas requiring improvement. Again

the hour of the replay went so fast I had barely enough time to cover all of the points. In fact I seem to be covering fewer points than ever. The obvious defense is that I am covering them better, but I am not so sure. We finish and go back to the main room where Ian has not finished and waves us away. Given my fragile mental state and that I have finished on time in a tightly packed day, my instinct was to stalk off to a distant part of the building and let him fend for himself in the next part of the day, which is his responsibility. Of these small irritations, big disputes grow and I returned to sit with my group. We only had to wait five minutes during which time I reinforced some of the learning points. In fact if I had studied the new timetable, I would have found some flexibility. A moment of calm reflection is far better than an overreaction when the whole positive reinforcement of the course disappears. In fact the unwritten rule is that the job of the co-tutor is to make the lead tutor look good and the job of the lead tutor is to make the co-tutor look good. I have stood on the precipice of reacting to my emotions rather than my responsibilities.

I have also had the indignity of Colin reading some handwritten notes of my conversation with Mark and commenting that I have been a little bit hard on myself. I am upset that my personal musings have been exposed, but also that I will have difficulty explaining the notes without telling Colin about the PhD project which I am reluctant to reveal to him—more fuel for the emotional fire that is burning inside me.

I spend the break I have in the afternoon visiting my favorite bookshop in Perth, Boffins. I discover two books that I will buy—one on establishing a digital presence and the other on presentations. I didn't buy them at the time because my library already takes up too much space and much of it is unread.

We share a drink with participants at the end of the day and Colin believes he has had a breakthrough with Steve. Each of the participants fills in a drink order—I notice Steve ends up with two drinks in front of him. When I draw attention to this he says that he ordered two. I seize on this as an example of those who want a better deal needing to be specific. I am not sure they all get it and just think Steve was being greedy.

Colin and I have a discussion about whether to brief the Day 3 case fully before they depart. I maintain that we should only give the basics of the case and leave the detail for tomorrow. I want them to be able to think about possible strategies overnight in order to give them a head start in the morning. Experience tells me that some arrive with a fully programmed spreadsheet on their laptop. The official timetable has been changed and has the entire briefing the next morning, giving the participants no opportunity to sleep on the problem.

My suggestion is a halfway house or compromise with a stripped down version on the evening before, followed up with a more detailed brief in the morning when it will be fresh in their minds. As I often characterise compromise as the worst of both worlds in the course, it is not surprising that I yield to Colin's

view that I should give them the complete package this evening. Having had the afternoon to gather my energy and gone for a second vigorous walk, I give an upbeat briefing with very little effect. Colin and I comment on this apparent lack of energy over dinner and wonder whether we are not communicating as well as we did in the past. The group has managed to negotiate two deals in their first multilateral case, so we think they may have turned the corner.

Colin has booked a restaurant off the net that is one of Perth's new eateries. Given our rather downbeat and dispiriting evenings the last three times we have been out, I am wondering how we can recover some of the personal magic we have enjoyed before. The restaurant is prefab modern in the centre of the city—all exposed services and plywood paneling. The exterior is galvanised mesh filled with hundreds of terracotta pots growing ivy and other green creepers. It is called the Green Room. I could attempt to talk about the meal and our establishing a rapport with the manager, a fellow Tasmanian, but have determined it is outside the scope of my interest. It was a fabulous experience made even more so because Colin and I finally have a real conversation.

Colin asks whether my low mood has anything to do with him and his behavior, so I decide to be truthful about my PhD studies which I have not told him about previously. I have been reluctant to reveal my studies to anyone but my closest friends. I am unclear of my motivation but I hope that not wanting to appear superior or boastful is principal among them. This opens up a new dialogue including his desire to write a myth-busting book about modern

business practice. His experience is from the shop floor, as a union official and senior executive in the oil and gas business his status is legendary and he has a fierce and penetrating eye for all the human foibles. We now have similar projects in common and the bond of friendship we enjoy is strengthened.

Having established the trust so important in these close relationships, we are now free to talk about what has hitherto been a taboo between us—the fact that we no longer speak the same language as our thirty-something participants so they demand a revision of our principal method. It is the holy writ from our founder that we provide no assistance in any form to those in our case plays. We can provide clarification of the brief but nothing more. I have noticed over the last few years that many tutors are starting to cross this clear directive and, rather than wait for a participant to make a mistake and to learn from having it exposed in the replay of the tape, they provide advice on strategy and process in their briefings.

Colin has been a leading example of this new approach. When I broach this with him, he is unrepentant and says that our new audience has been spoiled by both parents and teachers and responds better to coaching than learning by mistakes, a strategy on which we have based our entire approach. This is heresy and I can imagine the furious reaction of our founder if he was aware of this.

Week 2 Day 4

The final case on the course is terrific—great negotiating skills on display and I am impressed that so many have been able to put the key skills into practice.

We finish with lunch and a number of participants require personal feedback and also want to discuss some personal negotiating difficulties they are experiencing. This takes an hour and a half and we are both exhausted after packing up. It has been a great conclusion to the week marred by the fact that one participant has rated the course a 3 (out of 5). So seriously does the company take this that it must be followed up independently by quality assurance. I must say that I almost expected the rating given my assessment of the individual. However after the person had made a speech praising our work at the conclusion of the course I was surprised. Colin is furious.

We leave Perth at 6 pm and arrive in Melbourne at 11.40 pm. I drag my luggage to the airport hotel, check in on midnight and arrange for a wake up call at 5.45 am. For this I pay the princely sum of \$320. I am paying \$60 an hour to sleep. By this stage I know I have caught a severe head cold. Moving between cold conference rooms and the 33 degree outside temperature in Perth has taken its toll.

Week 3 Day 1

The week starts badly, as I am writing this sitting in a crowded waiting room waiting to see a doctor. The sickness mentioned yesterday and five hours of air travel has managed to embed an infection deep in my ears, so my hearing is affected. It used to be said that if you treat a cold with all the modern medicines you should be back to normal in a week. If you just ignore it and kept warm you would be back to normal in about a week! So why have I gone to the doctor?

The last cold I had is fresh in my memory—it lasted 10 weeks, I had three or four rounds of antibiotics and it ruined one holiday. It just kept coming back. The previous one had lasted a similar period but had been several years before. I am lucky to enjoy robust health, but traveling in aircraft seems to make me susceptible to such infections and they just seem to be getting harder to shift. It is not that I am worried that I am too sick to teach a course because you can always rise to the occasion but traveling while ill seems to double the misery.

I meet Simon, my boss and co-tutor for this course the night before to check the rooms and discuss content for this course, which is an extension of our standard course. The problem is that the participants must have done the standard course as a prerequisite and only three of our 12 have. The client has paid a premium price for this and has dragged the original participants off the course for an urgent business deal. We design a hybrid course to combine the essential elements of each. I am impressed with our flexibility but wonder whether we might end up with the worst of both worlds.

I am really sick even after taking antibiotics, so sick that I wouldn't even go to work in a normal job. Fever, headaches and other flu-like symptoms are a constant. I arrive sweating so badly that my shirt is soaked through in five places. I have to do the first lecture and introduction. Fortunately I am full of drugs and the runny nose and raspy voice enable me to just squeak through. I would be doing nothing if not working.

The program has been re-designed by Simon and the first day is now an accelerated version of the 3-day course—just as well the participants are high caliber, drawn mainly from the trading arm of the client, an energy company. They include a South African former grain trader and a Pakistani maths whiz. There are two very clever women on the course, one with a brilliant eye for detail who picks up misprints and wrong numbers in our final case play.

Day1 goes well including my one-hour introductory lecture. The participants who have previously done the course take leadership roles, as expected, in the case we run. Unsurprisingly they have forgotten almost everything. Basic skill errors are prevalent with the ambit claim-making deals impossible. It is important to understand that we have to move the course away from a transactional plane to a more strategic level. This involves a more complex preparation with two new elements introduced. It also means that we do not film the remaining cases on the course. The rationale being that if we film, it is too easy for us to default to a critique of their transactional negotiating.

I am somewhat nervous about this because the key to the success of our normal program is that no one has the capacity to goof off and not take the cases seriously. The reason being that no one wants to look foolish in front of peers and subordinates. So powerful is this as a motivator that when we have really senior people on the course they often find it necessary to hide when it is their turn to lead a negotiation, so great is the fear of not performing well in front of their colleagues. So tomorrow is going to be the big test.

The second day of the course is split—a half-day on new content (lectures) and the balance on one case that is not filmed. I am therefore both nervous and curious as to how the group's motivation will hold up. Fortunately I am feeling moderately better than the previous day and introduce a new concept to the group. It is in fact a new concept to me, the PODEL. This was developed by our founder as a process to assist executives to coach their staff for negotiations. It is a silly mnemonic to describe, Problem, Options, Do it, Evaluate and Learn.

The reason I am less than enthusiastic about this, is not the concept of coaching itself—I am a proponent of coaching, but that the original concept was developed by a colleague who originally called it the IDEAL diagnostic. This was a better mnemonic because it expresses the same process more elegantly and in has a double meaning. I originally learned the IDEAL in a training course in Rome run by the originator. There was a subsequent dispute between him and the owner of the business who imposed his solution. His reason was based around the difficulty of translating IDEAL into 14 languages but it was really a smokescreen to mask professional jealousy. There is a strong element of 'not invented here' in the business with all innovation from outside the founders being quashed by Glasgow and any new innovation being imposed by Glasgow without consultation. There have been many of these instances over my 18 years with the business. There is another consequence of this centralised control. Ideas from outside the centre have dried up. This in itself would not be critical if the centre was innovative. Not only is it not the case, but it seems to be stuck in a time warp. Nothing illustrates this more than a slavish adherence to a ridiculous timetable for our standard course. I

was going to call this a digression and get back to it but it illustrates how organisations become frozen and resistant to change. They do this at their peril—something we are about to find out.

The original timetable had scheduled the group meeting on Monday at 6 pm, after drinks and introductions we would sit down at dinner until 8.40 pm and then have an introductory lecture input until 10 pm. The participants would then go home if the course were not residential. For some this might mean an hours drive. All this after a full day at work! This is the timetable we ran in Australia for the first eight years. The original design was based around the United Kingdom rail system and the fact that the course was always residential. The course was run for the benefit of the tutors not the participants. The rationale was that the location of the course (near to the tutor's home) was a half-day rail journey from United Kingdom population centres. Starting with a dinner gave late arrivals time to synchronise with the group over dinner and still participate in the first lecture.

Fast-forward 40 years to a different country, Australia, where very few courses are residential and 20 per cent of our participants complain about the timetable. Issues of work-life balance are far more important today and yet we are stuck with a Monday evening start, albeit without the dinner. Our attempts to develop an earlier start and a more family friendly timetable were outlawed head office in Glasgow. It has been the opinion of the local team that we lose business because of this.

Anyway back to today where the new content in the morning is put into practice in the afternoon case, 'Tyred'. The case has been centrally developed, of course, and one of our participants finds five errors in the numbers and some English expression bloopers, so much for centralised quality assurance. The case goes surprisingly well with both groups suspending their disbelief and working for almost three hours on resolving the dispute. The problem is, as we anticipated, there was too little focus on the strategic elements and too much on the transactional. This acts as a wake up call for the group for tomorrow's case. During the afternoon reality intrudes into the course with several of the group receiving emails that one of their biggest customers, BHP Temco, is suspending operations in Tasmania for three months while they review the viability of the operation. Four hundred jobs are at risk in a fragile state economy. The loss of a customer of that size has both revenue and system stability implications for Hydro Tasmania—this is worrying.

Day 3 is effectively one case called 'Online' that is about the rise of Internet retailing. The group spends the entire morning preparing and reviewing this case. Again I am impressed by both their application and resolve to get a deal done. The quality of the course and the quality of the participants is a virtuous circle with one having a significant impact on the other in a mutually reinforcing way. I think that we often overlook the importance of our participants in contributing to others' learning, including ours on the course. The evaluations are positive and I am pleased our hybrid course has been appreciated. In fact, one of them publicly thanks us for taking the pains to do precisely that.

The next day is spent having some skin cancers removed from my back. I am feeling vulnerable to the ravages of time as a result. While checking emails, I come across the advanced schedule and notice that the course I have been booked to lead in Perth in March has been cancelled. I suddenly realise that is the only work I have scheduled between now and May. My financial position requires one course a month. I suddenly feel threatened. I have been ignoring the warnings of Colin that the new owners of the business are not generating the necessary courses to keep the full-time staff and contractors like myself working to our desired rate.

I finish the week, still recovering from the flu, wounded and feeling vulnerable—welcome to the Brave New World. I flee to the coast for the weekend and the first thing I pick up to read is *The Age Magazine* with a feature article about Freelancer.com. The founder, Chris Barrie states that a tectonic shift to society is underway and this shift is going to be so significant that it is going to change the way we live our lives and the way we do business. It is going to change everything. I will tell you why. The reason is that 70 per cent of the world is about to join the Internet. They are poor. They are hungry. They are driven. They are self-skilled. They are self-motivated. They want a job. The article says that there is going to be a lot of pain for those caught in the rip—people who studied for years and were well paid but who find their jobs no longer exist—not in Australia, at least. Several Australian economists I spoke to also say it could lead to a flattening out of Australian wages. Professor Julie Cugin, of UNSW Australian School of Business warns, this is really, really scary. You think of the next generation. There is

going to be far less job security, maybe reduced conditions and pay, and a casualisation of our workplace—this has huge implications for our children and for us even now.

So it has come full circle. The forces that persuaded me to leave the best job in the public service and join the world economy have finally shown themselves not to be the benevolent, wealth and opportunity creating ones I anticipated but the forces of creative destruction first identified by Joseph Schumpeter all those years ago. I am then struck by the thought that the Jam Factory where this story began is now a boutique hotel, the waterfront warehouse where I hefted newsprint rolls is long gone, replaced by parkland. The Adult Education division I ran so briefly is confined and constrained to be unrecognisable in less than 20 years. All that work, endeavor, sweat and tears. And come to what? Fading memories or invaluable wisdom.

On reading these journal entries I recognise for the first time the extent to which my personal and work life are blurred and intermingled. The old boundaries between work and personal life have become virtually non-existent. As Bunting (2005) states, “Now the workplace culture has been personalized; along with the often appreciated relaxation of reserve and formality comes a wealth of complex emotional relationships to negotiate” (p. 78). The importance of working with emotions also explains why work has become so draining and a source of so much conflict and dissatisfaction. Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998) states the case as follows,

My mission in writing this book is to act as a guide to the scientific case for working with emotional intelligence—as individuals in groups, as organisation.

In Part 1 I make the case that emotional intelligence counts more than IQ or expertise for determining who excels at a job—*any* job—and that for outstanding leadership it counts for almost everything.

Part 2 details twelve specific job capabilities, all based on self-mastery—initiative, trustworthiness, self-confidence and achievement drive among them—and describes the unique contribution each makes to star performance.

In Part 3 I turn to thirteen key relationship skills—such as empathy and political awareness, leveraging diversity, team capabilities, and leadership.

(Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, 1998, p. 13)

Given the increasing primacy of these skills in determining success in the workplace the emotional demands of work have increased accordingly, not only for the knowledge worker but also for all jobs. The growth areas in employment continue to be in the service sector—human services in aged care and childcare are obvious examples of jobs with high emotional requirements.

The phenomenological insights that these journal entries have provided reinforce the unique demands placed on knowledge workers today. They are constantly learning and reflecting, they are always available through pervasive connectivity, and their work and personal lives are no longer separate but blurred. They are required to exercise a wide range of emotional skills to work effectively and invest heavily in personal development,

work relationships and organisational knowledge. While they are the privileged members of the workplace, their jobs come with a commensurate price.

Themes for the knowledge worker

The process of sedimentation of the narratives of experience evidenced in the journal entries and the emerging of themes is an attempt to “give shape to the shapeless... to describe the core of the notion... and expresses the ineffable *essence* of the notion” (van Manen, 1990, p. 88). I have experienced the events described and written about them at least four times in laying down the sediment. I have read the resulting text and reflected on the notions hidden, buried, emergent and surfaced at least six times. On the notion of themes, all I can say with certainty at this time is the themes that have emerged for me with sufficient clarity for them to be expressed and written are the ones that follow.

Knowledge workers are always working.

Becoming a knowledge worker involves disabling the ‘off switch’. All knowledge is connected and to be interested in one thing is to be interested in everything. If you know one thing you know nothing, as everything exists in relation to another. The aphorism, “What knows she of French whom only French knows”, expresses this perfectly. The boundary between work and leisure disappears as a result.

All knowledge is incomplete and contested and as a consequence, the knowledge worker is always learning.

This process of testing existing knowledge and learning is not a regular event of retraining or participating in courses—it occurs every waking moment of the knowledge worker’s day for their entire life. The formal course of study represents an ice-cube atop an iceberg in relation to the daily reflection, testing and accretion of knowledge by the knowledge worker.

Knowledge is only knowledge when it can be transferred to another person.

Knowledge does not exist in isolation. You can only demonstrate knowledge by transferring that knowledge to others. The knowledge once transferred will be modified in transfer and therefore be different.

Knowledge work has people at the core.

Because knowledge exists only in transfer the knowledge worker is engaged in an intensely human activity and a complex range of emotional connections and exchanges. An executive told me, “People buy from people and people sell to people.” This was in response to a question about whether his business sold business-to-business (B2B) or business to consumer (B2C). The simplicity of his response expressed an essential truth often masked by business jargon and complex process models.

Knowledge is never static and knowledge workers want to be active participants in developing knowledge.

Knowledge workers will resist any attempt to restrict their ability to innovate and learn through experimentation and change. Organisations that do not embrace the disruptive nature of knowledge generation will not prosper. Knowledge workers want to participate in the generation of knowledge.

The analysis of my diary and the reflections on my 20 years as a knowledge worker represent an unfolding of the impact my choice would have on all of my life. Now I need to contemplate the conclusion of that working life.

Chapter 7 My world in ruins

The dramatic chapter heading is a device to illustrate the first of a number of competing narratives that I am struggling with as I contemplate the end of my working life or career. It is my intention to explore these narratives and their potential to frame the experiences that lie ahead. It seems common for this period of life to be characterised by introspection and the search for the answers to the universal questions, ‘What does it all mean?’ or, ‘Has there been a plan and has it been executed?’ This bringing to account seems a universal desire or need. The possibilities provided by an unknowable future also exercise the creative imagination to construct a variety of possible futures ranging from the calamitous, plagued by loss and ill-fortune, to the serendipitous, where a utopian age of wisdom and contentment are imagined.

Even in the absence of dramatic external events, people construe and reconstrue their experiences to point to (or to foreclose) possibility in the future. Living involves the continually constructing and reconstructing stories of our lives, without knowing their outcome, revising the plot as new events are added.

(McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001, p. xv)

It seems easy for the retired and soon to retire to bemoan the state of the world they have created. The grumpy old man and woman is perhaps alive and well in all of us depending on the state of our mood or medication(s). While made popular by the eponymous BBC television series, as a comedic device, the general dissatisfaction with

the world at large appears a common affliction, in fact for some it becomes the dominant *zeitgeist* of the years of decline. While my basic nature is modeled on the modest aspirations of the Roman philosopher, Seneca, I am finding the descent into pessimism is beguiling for me creates common ground with my colleagues who are similarly afflicted. The first step on our broad pathway of dissatisfaction is to take a keen interest in current affairs, particularly politics. My professional life has been devoted to education and training and in one weekend my reading of both the national and local press could have the impact of seeing a lifetime of work being destroyed or at least undone.

The Hobart *Mercury* newspaper reports that enrolments in Adult Education are only 38 per cent of the government's target. The fact that the target is a mere fraction of what was once achieved by the important sector is reported deeper in the article, "In the 2010-11 financial year, there were 15,080 enrolments in Adult Education... Last financial year there were 1536 enrolments, up from 1491 in 2013-14" (*Mercury*, 2015, November 7, p. 20). The decline of Adult Education has been documented over the last decade as the state government's commitment to lifelong education has disappeared. Despite the rhetoric, a combination of funding cuts and bureaucratic bungling have effectively destroyed a once vital public institution.

At the same time the Vocational Education and Training sector has been rocked by a series of scandals where private colleges have been selling courses door-to-door in low socio-economic areas, mental health units and caravan parks. Students have been

encouraged to enrol in courses by the offer of a 'free' computer. These 'students' rarely have either the will, learning or social skills to complete their courses. The student signs up for a government loan to pay for the course, which is forwarded in full to the provider. The student never completes the course and the loan to the government remains unpaid until the student's income exceeds \$54,000 per annum.

The *Weekend Australian* of November 7, 2015 quotes the Federal Vocational Education and Skills Minister, Luke Hartsuyker,

This is the education version of the pink batts program (a previous government funded scandal). Labor set up a system without the necessary safeguards in place to ensure quality training for students. They set up a money free-for-all and unscrupulous operators were keen to take advantage of that. Colleges have been selling courses to students with no intention or ability to complete. Many of the courses are of poor quality. We are seeing very low completion rates. The program has grown at an unsustainable rate. It's a shambles. (Bita, 2015, p. 35)

The failure of the TAFE sector to establish credibility with policy makers has seen the rapid growth of private sector provision of training. The report by Natasha Bita states that not only has the number of providers risen dramatically but that fees charged for courses have tripled in three years.

Students have run up a \$5.5 billion debt in the three years since federal, state and territory governments decided to deregulate the VET system, with few safeguards for students or taxpayers over the cost or quality of the courses...

The average cost of an information technology diploma has soared from \$2799 in 2011 to \$18375 last year. A diploma of business management that cost \$4623 in 2011 now costs \$15493. (Bita, 2015 p. 35)

These changes have led to a rapid growth in the number of registered private providers with Bita reporting that,

At the start of this year, Australia had 4609 registered training organisations, of which 3440 were privately operated. Worryingly, nearly one in 10 have had their registration refused, cancelled or suspended by the government regulator. (Bita, 2015 p. 35)

While I am reeling at the sheer incompetence of these ‘reforms’ there was no respite for me when page ten of the same paper reveals that Australia’s senior public servant has described the performance of the schools sector over the last decade as a national disgrace. The Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet addressing a reform summit stated that, “We have spent 40 per cent more on education and we’ve got a 300-500 per cent worse result measured by the OECD in the PISA statistics (international student assessment) for 15 year olds” . Mr Thawley went on to warn the Prime Minister to guard against ‘unintended consequences’ as he shapes his reform agenda. The reforms that fail to deliver the intended outcomes have become a feature of national and state government performance in recent times.

While it is too easy for the ideologue to criticise government and laud the private sector as exemplars of efficiency and value creation, the story there is no less disturbing.

The fall from grace of the once dominant Volkswagen empire over the use of software to circumvent emissions standards in the United States and Europe has been well documented. The collapse of a tailings dam in Brazil and the death and destruction caused by the subsequent flood have damaged the share price and reputation of Australia's largest company, BHP Billiton. In both cases there are clear examples of the lack of a moral compass when the tradeoff between doing the 'right' thing and the pursuit of profits come into conflict. In an increasingly polarised political environment in Australia and particularly in the United States, the ability to occupy the middle ground becomes an increasingly remote possibility.

The failure of government has been documented by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge in the *Fourth Revolution* (2014). They detail the assumptions that contribute to the underperformance of government and the subsequent failure of government to deliver the ever-increasing demands of their constituency. These assumptions are:

That organisations should do as much as possible in house

At its most extreme, that means the state having a monopoly over everything that might conceivably touch on the public interest.

Decision making should be centralized.,

There are times when the state's ability to centralize power is crucial: when a country is attacked by an enemy or convulsed by a huge crisis. But the logic...does not seem to work so well when it comes to running universities or providing welfare.

Public institutions should be as uniform as possible and that change is always for the worse.

Few things are more uniform about the public service than its workforce. It is certainly diverse when it comes to race and gender, usually because of laws it has itself set. But it is depressingly uniform when it comes to attitude and experience.)

You get ahead by following the rules, keeping your head down, and keeping the show on the road. In the public sector innovation is what gets you into trouble — often the only thing that will get you the boot. (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2014, Loc. 2583-2607/4136)

Robert Reich in *Beyond Outrage* (2012) uses the metaphor of ‘connecting the dots’ to outline the current situation.

- The first dot: For three decades almost all the gains from economic growth have gone to the top.
- The second dot: The Great recession was followed by an anemic recovery.
- The third dot: Political power flows to the top.
- The fourth dot: Corporations and the very rich get to pay lower taxes, receive more corporate welfare, and are bound by fewer regulations.
- The fifth dot: Government budgets are squeezed.
- The sixth dot: Average Americans are competing with one another for slices of a shrinking pie.

- The seventh dot: A meaner and more cynical politics prevails.

Reich sees the cumulative effect of these factors as a threat to democracy and the economy. He says, “The fundamentals of our democracy are out of whack, which has distorted our democracy, and these distortions, in turn, are making it harder to fix the economic fundamentals” (2012, Loc. 48 of 1920).

Though these books offer me a considered critique, they expose failings that I rail about in the current institutions, at the same time they are optimistic about the capacity of societies to adapt and change to reform institutions that are underperforming and to reshape the very nature of society. The authors see innovation and the widespread adaptation of technology as being integral to the reform of public institutions and to the increase in accountability of the private sector. The fact that these books are in my own library is testament to a personal investment in being part of the solution to problems outlined. My consulting work has been in both the government and the private sector giving me an opportunity to assist—through helping individuals to achieve their personal potential and organisations to develop clarity about their purpose. My own experiences in work place me alongside the two authors at the optimistic end of the spectrum of potential narratives.

These autumnal musings on the state of our society motivate me to contemplate the ruination of the heels of my own body.

Wounded heels

While the institutions that dominate our modern societies struggle with the demands of the era the initial impetus for this analysis is an examination of my own wounded heels.

After a month travelling for work I have arrived home not for recreation but to recover from influenza. I have unluckily caught the strain that the immunisation program did not cover. I am forced to rest and I do not choose to. At least it allows me to address some of the areas that I have neglected while the demands of travel and work took over. I notice that I am limping. I have sore feet. On closer examination they resemble the ancient ruins of Rome with deep cracks in my heels and around my big toes. The skin has become hardened, calloused and basically dead, leading to the deep pressure cracks. I am both shocked at their condition and horrified at the neglect of something so basic and essential to a healthy existence. I immediately embark on a process of rejuvenation and recovery. While the sorry state of the often unseen and therefore neglected part of my anatomy concerns me, I suddenly realise that they are a metaphor for a wider neglect. The neglect of self, family, partners and friends becomes obvious. Those relationships require attention and repair. Before I can accomplish this task there is a more pervasive and basic neglect—that of myself. Now that work is a choice rather than a necessity, its demands and the crowding out of all those activities that sustain and nurture me become apparent.

The approach of the final decades of life often leads to a commitment to improved health and a gym membership. Anyone who has returned to the gym to rebuild a wasted body will appreciate this account by A. A. Gill in the *Weekend Australian Magazine*.

Old age came to our grandfathers quite suddenly at the end of working lives on meager rations. It was short-men died a handful of years after retiring. Now we are looking a three decades of not being quite fit for purpose, unfancied, unthreatening, unimportant, excused games. That's a tough call for boys.

The men in gyms crunching and puffing to shove back the years, have a particular look. I recognize it. I catch myself wearing it: it's a bitter cocktail of hope, fear, bravado, vanity and panic. (Gill, 2015, p. 31)

One of the pleasures of life is sharing ideas and thoughts with others. I am fortunate that I have regular contact with a diverse group of individuals who can spark a thought or engage in the preliminaries that sometimes result in an illuminating conversation. A recent exchange with a Doctor of Medicine who is involved in professional development in general practice illustrates. I asked if there was an expansion of other unrecognized diseases to fill the gap left by the many common diseases that have been cured by medical science. He replied that the aggregation of diseases was expanding rather than diminishing. He referred to the common taxonomies of disease and how shyness, once a social affliction, is now classified as a treatable disorder. It is these diverse conversations that continue to fuel the desire to understand and to know. It is this sharing of knowledge through conversation that is essential to human intellectual growth. I find myself as an inveterate sharer of articles and books with colleagues who share an interest

in a particular area. I am sometimes disappointed that the recipient does not always share my passion and enthusiasm.

I found a passage that distilled so much of what I had intuitively understood of the intellectual riches available to the individual today. Never has so much been so freely available to so many. I doubt that the availability of these riches has increased the actual participation in them. In *How to be Good* (2001), Nick Hornby attempts to answer the question of how a totally good person might survive in the modern world. The protagonist, Kate, is a Doctor who struggles with the demands of career and family responsibilities while trying to maintain a sense of personal worth outside the roles defined for her by society. She finds herself reading a biography of Vanessa Bell, sister of Virginia Woolf and an artist member of the Bloomsbury group. She reflects on the life of the artist and compares it to her own.

OK, Vanessa Bell. She was a painter, so, you know, easier for her to live a beautiful life than someone who has to deal with Mrs. Cortenza and Barmy Brian and all the Holloway junkies [her patients]. And she had children by more than one man, which may have made things a bit richer than they might otherwise have been. And the men she knocked around with were, it is only fair to say, more interesting and talented than David and Stephen [her husband and lover respectively]. They tended to be writers and painters or what have you, rather than people who wrote company brochures. And even though they didn't have money, they were posh, whereas we're not. It must be easier to live beautiful lives when you are posh.

(Hornby, 2001, p. 241)

Kate goes on to lament that the rich and beautiful life has been crowded out by the press of modern living and that such a life is beyond the aspirations of almost all.

Anyway who lives a rich and beautiful life that I know? It's no longer possible, surely for anyone who works for a living, or lives in a city, or shops in a supermarket, or watches TV, or reads a newspaper, or drives a car, or who eats frozen pizzas. A nice life, possibly, with a huge slice of luck and a little spare cash. A maybe even a good life, if...Well let's not go into all that. But a rich and beautiful life seems to be a discontinued line. (Hornby, 2001, p. 241)

It is on a second or third reading of the passage that the initial surge of excitement and thrill of insight that I experienced at first returns. It is the next passage that reveals a meaningful way forward for me in the decision about where work fits in my future. I have included the entire quote to maintain the integrity of the slow awakening for the heroine that I have, in a brief moment shared.

What helps is not Vanessa Bell, but reading about Vanessa Bell. I don't want to be like Poppy the squashed cat any more. Ever since I have moved back into the house after my stay at Janet's, I have the nagging feeling that I miss something, without being able to quite describe what that something was. It's not my former flatmates, or my chance of sleeping on my own bed... but something else, something that is clearly not important enough to me, in both senses: it should be more important than it is, because I miss it, and yet life is clearly not impossible without it, because I have been managing to survive despite its absence - in other words, it's some spiritual equivalent of fruit, which I am bad about eating. And it is only when I have shut our bedroom door for the third or fourth time on my husband and children in order to find out how Vanessa Bell's life was better than my own that I work it out.

It is the act of reading itself that I miss, the opportunity to retreat further and further from the world until I have found some space, some air that isn't stale, that hasn't been breathed by my family a thousand times already. Jane's bedsit seemed enormous when I moved into it, enormous and quiet, but this book is so much bigger than that. And when I have finished reading it I will start another one, and that might be even bigger, and then another, and I will be able to keep extending my house until it becomes a mansion, full of rooms where they just can't find me. And it is not just reading, either, but listening, hearing something other than my children's TV programs and my husband's pious drone and the chatter chatter chatter in my head. (Hornby, 2001, p. 242)

The existence of barely recognised nor understood absences—a richer interior life—and the crowding out of those things most important to us are a feature of the considerable price we pay individually and collectively for our commitment to work. We hardly notice the absence given the pressure of the 24/7 work week and the constant connectivity of the Internet Age. The absence is there, a void, an unnamed longing—a sense that we are incomplete, dissatisfaction, and a melancholy that our lives are slipping away without us noticing. Even when we stop to think about what it is that ails us we rarely are perceptive enough or honest enough to identify our own neglect. Why? Are we frightened that if we discover the solution we will lack the will to acknowledge the absence and actually start to fill the void? Would we rather not know than be forced to do something to redress the imbalance in our lives? Is ignorance really bliss in this instance? Fear of knowing but not doing is also somewhere in the mix.

Final act

March 2015 and I am flying to Melbourne to run an 18-person course. I am feeling the pressure to perform for a large group and in front of two colleagues. I am reminded that an actor is only as good as their last performance and a salesperson as good as their last sales call. Some occupations have that natural signal that it is time to fade away. When I wrote the 'Final Act' as the title of this piece of writing, there was an unpleasant sense of finality until I remembered that after the final act there should be the encore. There is, in fact a movement in America founded on this very notion of an encore career. I reflect that my friend Simon self-diagnosed that he was not competent to complete complex tax returns at the age of 67. Juan and Colin, both approaching 70 and unemployed are desperate to obtain full-time employment. As for me, I want to be on the main stage and to keep the encore in reserve. I want to be there in the encore.

Derek Walcott, Nobel Prize-winning poet evokes the reconciliation with self that occurs in midlife and the final act. The words are equally palpable to someone in my position.

The time will come
When, with elation,
You will meet yourself arriving
At your own door, in your own mirror, and each will smile with the other's
welcome,

And say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was yourself,

Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
To itself, to the stranger who has loved you

All your life, whom you ignored
For another who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
The photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life. (in Whyte, 1994, p. 206)

The Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, reflects on the liberation of coming to terms with past failings and hurtful memories.

Last night, as I was sleeping
I dreamt-marvelous error!-
That I had a beehive
Here inside my heart.
And the golden bees
Were making white combs
And sweet honey
From my old failures. (in Whyte, 1994, p. 207)

Walcott's final act and Machado's sweet honey pave the way for my encore. These poets appear in David Whyte's *The Heart Aroused* (1994). These poems inspire thinking about alternatives to the world of work.

On my flight I read the in-flight magazine and note with interest that there is a tiny house movement complete with blogs and an online magazine. The Internet and the global economy have allowed the development of a plethora of specialist movements and interests which are a reaction to the highly integrated global economy but paradoxically, can only flourish because of the enabling technologies of that economy. The success of the slow food movement, farmer's

markets and artisan food are part of a trend that seeks to differentiate itself from an integrated and homogenised world market place.

People are encouraged to buy and shop locally when there is a scare about the safety and quality of processed and internationally sourced products. An example is the recent food scare in Australia where frozen berries from China were found to contain Hepatitis C virus. It was later revealed that the berries were originally grown in Chile and exported to China for processing. There is even a new noun to describe this new food philosophy, eating only what is grown locally, *locavore*.

The interest in food and cooking is a subset of a growing movement to return to a simpler less hurried and harried existence than the one we currently have in the West. Books like *Affluenza* (2014) and *Stuffication* (2015) are but two examples of a growing literature on the subject. This desire for a simpler life has a long history from the *Small is Beautiful* (1973) movement founded by E. F. Schumacher that promoted low-tech solutions to economic development to Henry David Thoreau's *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854).

The motivations for these movements range from the moral imperative, 'live simply so others may simply live' to the personal wellbeing or save your-self perspective. In a TED talk, Brene Brown (2016) makes the following statement about the current generation of Americans,

We are the most indebted.

We are most obese.

We are the most medicated.

The stressful 24/7-connected world is necessary to support a consumer lifestyle of bespoke watches, exotic holidays and cinema quality home theatre in our homes and the list goes on. The paradox is that the very time necessary to acquire all advanced technology precludes us from having the time to enjoy it—let alone understand how it works or operate it to its potential. Many are so busy that they now have to hire an increasing army of people to carry out the tasks they no longer have time for. People will assemble your flat pack furniture, set up your home entertainment system, mow your lawns and walk your dog. The rise of the Jim's service empire in Australia, offering a complete range of domestic services is a symbol of this new economy. In seeking to master the complex external world of work we have become incompetents in our own domestic domain.

One symbol of this dichotomy—competence at work, incompetence at home—is the boot last. I attend a weekly auction of general goods, usually from the finalisation of deceased estates. My original objective was to acquire garden tools but having satisfied that need I continue to inspect the goods for sale. Two items stand out from the remnant household goods of the generations before. One, a box of rusty hand tools—planes, chisels, drills and augers long unused, either through replacement by power tools, or the ageing and decline of their owners. The second is the boot last made of cast iron, heavy and somehow strange with a set of feet at right angles to each other. The feet are

arranged this way so a boot or shoe can be slipped over the correct size foot. There the footwear could be held firmly in place, special tacks could be hammered into place to attach new soles or toecaps and a new sole could be trimmed using a sharp knife. I remember my father repairing my first school shoes using the boot last we kept in our back shed. My mother used it in later years to hold a gate open. The boot last has all but disappeared. Only shoe repair shops would know what a last is today let alone be able to use one. For me the boot last represents a possible high point in the concept of domestic self-sufficiency for men. For women it is probably the electric sewing or knitting machine. Regaining domestic competence rises as a possibility, as a prospect for my future.

The end or the beginning

It is one thing to contemplate the desirable options available for a life after work but an entirely different prospect to actually face the reality that you are no longer wanted. My contemplation of the sunny uplands of leisure was about to be interrupted by reality.

Can you do it? When the time comes?

When the time comes there will be no time.

Now is the time.

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

The phone call comes while I am sitting in the sun having coffee. I have finished work for the year, declined an invitation to the Christmas party and my

focus is the holiday break. It is the office calling, I have no premonition of what is to follow—it is so fast that the true import is momentarily lost. “We have decided not to continue your retainer next year...” There is some detail on how the new arrangement will work but it is lost as the words strike home. My job is being taken away. No consultation, no inclusion in a conversation about how this will work. I cannot believe this is happening. These are the very people who I have built a relationship with over years. I have worked hard to achieve their requirements of me. I have refused to support those who denigrated their background and performance. I have been loyal to them and this was my reward. Of course these thoughts arrived later but I am sure my subconscious was already processing them. The words quickly form in my mouth, “I disagree with your decision and I believe the need for the services will be greater.”

They sense my rising anger and in response to my offer to provide a counter proposal they are in no hurry to receive one. Wait until the New Year to submit it, they offer. This point is crucial, as I will learn later that day. The conversation is terminated and I trail after my partner in a daze of emotions. The first thought is, how can they possibly expect me to accept a decision that I have had no part in? I am part of the management team that makes these decisions and for the really important one—I have been excluded. This more than anything hurts and continues to hurt.

I feel two other conflicting emotions as I try to chart a way forward. The first is a realisation that my colleagues really do not value my contribution and that I am

working for fools. My colleagues have been saying so for two years but ever the peacemaker, I have defended them. Running a country branch of MacDonalds is perhaps not the greatest preparation for managing independent knowledge workers. I wince as I write the words because they read like the sort of intellectual snobbery I have accused my colleagues of. The words express the hurt of not being valued for a contribution made over the last 12 months above and beyond the scope of my agreement. The second can be placed squarely at my own feet and that is another failure to manage up. The one kernel of advice I would offer to a person starting their career would be the importance of selling your skills and your potential to your immediate boss. (The word superior was first to mind but I have chosen not to use it for obvious reasons.) I have been a serial offender in my failure in not selling my skills throughout my career and the failure to learn from past mistakes rankles even at this stage. There is also the nagging doubt that I have indeed been the master of my own destiny and rather than an admirable character trait of not wanting to 'blow my own trumpet', it represents a fundamental boredom I have with completing tasks. There is a famous epigram about managing projects where they all proceed to 90 per cent completion, where they then tend to stay—never finalised. In my case, if I am to be accurate, the percentage of completion is close to 60 per cent rather than 90 per cent.

When I re-read this narrative I am shocked by the visceral nature of my response. I am past the official retirement age, after all. Why not just let go? My response was in part

due to the lack of warning and the fact that it was a novelty—a first in my adult life. It is also an indicator of the centrality of work to our lives and sense of self. It is ‘an Everyman’ response.

The internal dialogue that I commence has three discrete elements. The first is to lash out at those that have perpetrated this travesty, calling into doubt their judgment, their character and their understanding of the real needs of the business. Having vented my anger at the personalities involved, I can then turn my attention to the process, or lack of, which they have adopted to make and then inform me of their decision. The element of process is important in determining my reaction to what has happened. The third element of the dialogue is to personally accept the blame for the decision. It was my fault, I would make the same decision if I had been them. If only I had kept accurate records of my work and provided monthly updates then they would have had a different appreciation of the value of my work. This self-blame is the harbinger of eventual acceptance of the situation.

As I write this personal reaction to an all too-common event in modern economies, I am struggling to understand how I can write a phenomenological account of this important event. The preceding account is written in mundanese, the language of the everyday but to take its place in this thesis a transcendentalese account will be required. No sooner do I contemplate this task than my initial reaction starts to take the form of the five stages of grief identified by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969). I contemplate the

events using this framework to distance my self from them. Kubler-Ross proposes five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. I have skipped over the denial stage and have proceeded straight to anger and vilification of those responsible—including me. I have been in partial denial of what has happened.

I was informed of the decision by telephone call on the eve of Christmas. It lacks the formality of a written notice and I immediately wonder whether those informing me have the authority to actually make the decision. The situation is not lost yet. Rather than immediately email an emotional response I decide, acting on good advice, to find out whether the partners were aware of the decision. I telephone a partner in the business. This is definitely an act of denial and demonstrates the importance of undertaking appropriate research before making any response at all. The words had already been forming for the email I had been contemplating. The words came easily and included outrage, treachery, failure to consult, double-crossed, not valued, misled, lack of due process, unappreciated and undervalued. I am surprised how rich language is in expressions of anger. I feel a growing sense a grievance as the full import of what is happening to me gradually forms. Email is essentially a cold medium and unsuited to complex communications where the nuances of face-to-face conversation are absent. Tone of voice, volume, facial expressions and associated body language are completely absent. Misinterpretation, confusion and a spiral of escalating threats and counter threats will be the inevitable result. This may be appropriate when the objective is to escalate the dispute or sever

the relationship. I follow my own advice once given to others and do not send the email.

The mental composition of the attack email has a cleansing effect for my mind—allowing a more considered analysis of the situation, and in the absence of anger restored rational processes. Holidays intervene and while uncertainty about my future role is ever present there is nothing I can do about it and the issue slips into the background as I enjoy the traditional recreations of an Australian summer. Part of the holiday break is to be spent with a former colleague, Colin, who departed from the business during the year in unfortunate, even ludicrous circumstances. I have already made a mental note not to repeat the manner of his departure from the business.

Redemption or contamination

In relating another's story in contrast to my personal narrative I am mindful of my ethical responsibility to my friend and colleague. His experience was a precursor of mine and informed my processing of my experience. Unlike Colin, I have the benefit of this thesis as a source of guidance. The ability to engage in phenomenological reflection allows me to identify emotional traps and triggers and name them. This choice of intentionality is not available to 'the Everyman'. I am using Colin to represent 'the Everyman' precisely for this purpose. My ethical responsibility to Colin is to tell his story honestly and to accurately report the essence of our conversations over an extended period. I have

imagined some biographical details to protect the confidentiality and identity of my colleague.

We met in the early 90s when we attended the first negotiation skills course. He was the executive in charge of industrial relations with a large company and I was director of an adult education service. Eventually we both joined the negotiation skills consultation group—I, as the first full-time employee in Australia and Colin, part-time. We work together and are close friends. We describe ourselves as the ‘A team’ of the business and we actually believe this. In many ways we are the perfect combination for our participants. Colin has a vast practical experience of negotiations at the most senior levels and an earthy charm that gives him an ability to communicate effectively across a broad range of participants. I lack the practical ‘knock about’ experience of Colin but have a deeper theoretical understanding of negotiation and the relationship of negotiation to the broader concepts of communication and influencing.

Twelve months after his leaving the group, Colin’s hurt is still real and the words he uses to describe what happened indicate that he is still stuck in anger—his conversation is peppered with emotive terms like shattered, incredulous, dishonourable and gutless. We have raked over the detail of his departure so many times as he has sought to understand what has happened and why. It is obvious that he misses the sense of belonging to something bigger and has suffered from depression as a direct consequence. I attempt now to illustrate how we are all ultimately the masters of our own success or

failure. There may be elements of chance or luck involved but they often play a tangential part in determining our fortunes compared with our own efforts.

Colin is a larger-than-life character, married three times, an expert on wine, cheese and the good life. He started his working life as an operator in an oil and gas plant and after being an elected union official and working extensively representing workers, he joined the management team and eventually became a director. He made the transition from the shop floor to the executive jet in a decade. He has been a consultant for 20 years and successfully represents clients in a variety of industries. He is uniquely placed to see conflict from the perspective of both sides and has an ability to empathise with individuals. He has accomplished all this while dealing with a severe physical disability. His mobility is restricted and he requires his co-tutor to do most of the technical set up for a course. While this is a seemingly trivial matter and in my personal view is far outweighed by the experience and wisdom he brings to the course, this was one of a number of issues that assumed greater importance when conflict arose. Colin is a close personal friend of the owner of the Australian business and through this relationship travelled to the United Kingdom where he has extended this relationship to the founder of the business. He is therefore highly influential. These personal relationships could not save him from himself. In fact, they probably contributed to his departure because they created a sense of invulnerability in Colin that was far removed from the objective reality of the situation.

The genesis of the conflict was simple—the refusal of the company to pay for hotel accommodation for Colin when he was working in his hometown. This is a perfectly reasonable position for them, other workers did not receive this benefit and it would create a precedent if they were to pay it. Such a payment was not included in his contract with the company and therefore he had no legal right to claim this expense. Colin proposed the company pay, they refused and all communication ceased. Neither party made any attempt to bridge the gap. After six months of waiting for a communication Colin resigned and the company accepted his resignation. What I have reported is the surface facts revealed by the parties. But these alone could not explain the depth of feeling and antagonism that existed beneath the surface and which neither party would reveal to the other side. I have worked on similar situations as a consultant where parties find themselves in a stalemate and I am hired to help. At first glance it is hard to understand why the situation is so difficult. Dig beneath the surface and gradually a fuller picture emerges. Small slights, almost trivial are revealed. They are stored and never resolved when they are fresh in the memory. They are added to other grievances and over time the underpinning of the relationship between the parties is eroded—there is no relationship left when the parties most need it to save themselves from an unnecessary fracturing of long-term friendships. Because I was close to both parties, I offered to mediate but was refused. If the parties had been negotiating the same conflict on behalf of a client, rather than themselves, I am sure it would have been resolved. In this case, the issues were not contractual—they were personal. In the end both parties achieved what they really wanted—a termination of the relationship. I consult accounting and legal firms on building relationships with their clients. One insight is that in business you need

to build the relationship before you can use it build business. Of course, if you already have a relationship, you need to work at maintaining and enhancing it. Both parties in this situation allowed a series of unresolved conflicts to ‘poison the well’.

Searching for a theoretical framework to guide me in this analysis I turned to *Turns in the Road* (2001) by Dan P. McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich. In Chapter 1 McAdams and Philip J. Bowman introduce the concepts of redemption and contamination. They are useful concepts in understanding Colin’s ongoing sense of pain and grievance, and I trust, are a useful guide to the transition I am attempting to make myself. McAdams and Bowman show that the sequences of life stories that people tell go from bad to good (redemption) and good to bad (contamination).

By engaging in interpretations and evaluations that focus on the benefits and lessons learned, survivors emphasize benevolence over malevolence, meaningfulness over randomness, self-worth over self-abat[s]ement.

(Janoff-Bullman, 1992, in McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001, p. 26)

In their research they collected life narrative data and measures of psychological wellbeing from a mid-life cohort. In their analysis they use the concept of ‘generativity’ to describe “the adult’s concern for and commitment to promoting the wellbeing of future generations” (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001, p.10). The desire to leave something behind, a legacy that will outlive the self is a perhaps an equally important concern for those contemplating the end of their career. For many of them the question becomes, “What have I left behind?” rather than at midlife asking, “What will I leave

behind?” Those at midlife have time on their side to build a legacy while for those at the end of a working life the die may well be cast.

The way we choose to construct our life-story can have a profound impact on our wellbeing. If we are ‘highly generative’ adults we construct “... more life-story scenes containing more redemptive and less contamination imagery than adults scoring low on measures of generativity. In addition, redemption and contamination were significantly associated with wellbeing” (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001, p. 27). Importantly, for guiding my understanding, McAdams and Bowman illustrate a strong correlation between redemption narratives and wellbeing and a similar correlation between contamination narratives and depression (p. 27).

The circumstances surrounding the ending of a relationship with my current employer that eventually emerge and the narrative I construct around that experience will shape my personal legacy. Colin’s story provides an example of contamination, my choice is to focus on the redemptive aspects of my situation. The prospect of redemption or contamination narratives becoming habitual as life events unfold is also worth considering. Endings are important as the events surrounding them can impact on new relationships that result. They too, could be contaminated by unresolved conflicts. As Sokolowski suggests,

We suspend our natural intentionalities, we bracket the identities correlated with them, and we unravel the complexities that make up our condition as rational human beings who have a world and experience in it. (2000, p. 87)

It is from this detached perspective that I start to imagine possibilities.

The year I re-designed my life

Considerations around health and the realisation that there may be an alternative to work offers a vision of a different future. Not a fully formed and coherent vision but a tantalising flash of freedom. My thinking had been gradually evolving from one of a shallow 'glide-path' to retirement where a full-time, all-encompassing commitment became 80 per cent for a year, then 60, 40 and so on. A gradual weaning off work had been the model that has previously made most sense. The shock of leaving work one day and being fully retired the next has always seemed a risky transition. For its abruptness and the absence of a period of transition to adjust to the new circumstances. I remember a pharmacist who struggled with the loss of an identity that had been essential to his concept of who he was—the white tunic top, the rows of medications, the deferential customers eager for both his advice and sympathy. One day there was certainty, the next a void. Then, what am I to do now? What are the expectations of me? What is my place in this community?

Might my notion of weaning off work be a fallacy, particularly for a knowledge worker? The totality of commitment, the interconnectedness and the always ‘being on’ that I write about in Chapter 7 lead to changing my long-held belief. Imagining a future of doing all those things that had been ‘crowded out’ by work, I have difficulty reconciling that the glide path would actually land anywhere close to the place I want to be. I am beginning to think that my situation is analogous to the aphorism that ‘you can’t be half pregnant’. I have managed to reduce the decision to an ‘all or nothing’ choice. The evidence of this change in thinking is the following attempt to re-design my life.

As my 66th birthday approaches I am increasingly conscious that time is running out. I am approaching the age when life-threatening diseases make their first appearance. I have worked hard at maintaining good health all these years and wonder why I should continue to squander that vitality and energy on working for an organisation that no longer cares about anything other than the pursuit of money.

I have spent my entire life postponing—I was over 40 when I first went overseas, I have never fully used the boats that I saved so hard to buy. I have never had a gap year or been able to truly relax for months of time in amenable surroundings. I practiced the characteristic of the middle class—deferred gratification. So much has been deferred that I hardly know now what would be truly gratifying. After 50 years of continuous work and deferral of what I truly wanted to do I am faced with the situation of being able to finally do what I *want* to do rather than *have* to do. There is the danger that lurks beneath

the surface of this consideration—it has been so long since I had this opportunity that I no longer know what I want to do.

Even if I do know what it is, I then wonder whether I still have the physical and mental capacity to actually do it. Take the surf for instance, in recent years I have felt weak and powerless when confronted by even medium size waves in the ocean. There is something that turns my arms to jelly when confronted with the very sea I want to be my natural habitat.

This wistful longing to be free of the pressure to work and literally create the time and space to do what I truly desire has been lurking in the background for some time and recently came forcefully to the surface.

I am walking along a beach in the early morning on a pristine spring day. The water is a series of sparkling ripples as the sun played over the surface. In the far distance a pair of kayakers paddle towards the beach. As they drew closer I realised that they were shepherding some swimmers who are spread out across the ocean. Arms rose to propel them forward in rhythmic synchrony. I am captivated and transfixed at the same time, admiring and envious in equal measure. The lead swimmer, as if to rub salt into a fresh wound, actually swims past the beach and proceeds to circumnavigate the bay. The fact that they are actually doing what I could only think about caused a wave of regret that rankled. I imagine the cool water on my face, my cleansing breathing as I stroke

across those waters. Watching them emerge from the water does not help my cause either, as few are young and there are some well-padded individuals among them. I would not be out of place. I am forced to ask myself the question, "Why aren't I there with them?"

There are many reasons and I should list a few for the record. First, I do not have the correct ocean swimming wetsuit cap and gloves. They are custom-made and cost around eight hundred dollars. How can I justify that amount for an occasional swim? It would be a foolish. The group meets everyday at 6 am for their swim of approximately two kilometres every day of the year. On Sundays, the day I see them, they go on a longer swim. To join it was necessary to be able to swim 400 metres in under 9 minutes. I doubt that I would qualify and on first attempt in my local pool, I take 11 minutes for the distance. Who am I kidding? I resolve after the pool swim to lower my time to the qualifier over the next month. Pity I will be travelling for much of that time working!

This reflection on the beach evoked the realisation that other desires are there that remain unrequited at the moment. The list is extensive.

I want to be able to produce exquisite meals from fresh produce I have grown or caught myself.

I want to take photographs of the places I go that do justice to their beauty rather than the iPhone snaps often taken as an afterthought. I want to spend a day planning a single photograph.

I want to make things of wood and metal that are simple and elegant and useful.

I want to write about the daily adventure of living life to the full—to squeeze the pips dry, to let the sweet juice run from my mouth.

I want to be hungry and lean, to search out new places and people. I want to examine the familiar and strange with an intense clear eye.

I want to grow and develop as a whole person not as a cipher, a ghost, or a one-trick pony.

I want to share all these gifts with those I love and to inspire others to be who they can be not who they are.

When I read this statement of aspiration I am immediately struck by how modest and therefore achievable they are. The insight of Kate in *How to be Good* is a marker. I am not proposing to swim the English Channel, ascend Everest or write a best-seller. These are not fantasies relying on physical attributes I will never have nor financially impossible. I can do all of this and I can do it now. The question is “What is stopping me?” I think I know the answer—now.

Today I finished something.

This may not sound like an event to remark upon let alone remember, but it does have significance for me. Every day we finish something, a conversation, a coffee or a newspaper. However in my case the difference is that I finished a simple, mundane task to my satisfaction. I mowed the front lawn, a task normally regarded as a chore. So what

was the cause for reflection and for this analysis? Well, the difference was that I finished this simple task to my satisfaction. I did not feel rushed. I completed the work at a leisurely pace. For the first time I can remember the lawn was raked to gather small twigs and branches blown from surrounding trees. Normally, I don't have time for this and just run over them to reduce them in size, but they remain on the grass to remind in the subsequent days of my shortcut. On completion of the mowing I stood back to admire my handiwork and decided that the grass trimmer was necessary to complete the task on the borders. It started immediately and the edges soon succumbed to the insistent whirr. My usual rush normally results in some uneven patches or an uneven strip of long grass between the rows. These imperfections are not a source of guilt or shame but a reminder that there are compromises in the busy life where the household chores are squeezed between other more pressing priorities. This reflection should not be interpreted as the sad lament of a long-suppressed lawn fetish or closet perfectionist. It was the novelty of being able to treat the task as one worthy of my full attention for its duration rather than a distraction from what is really important.

It would be perhaps going too far to say that I experienced a 'flow moment' during the task but there was a significant qualitative difference in both my planning and execution. This was the source of my satisfaction—a simple task done well, not delegated nor outsourced to a national mowing franchise but completed by me for me.

And so now to the importance of this suburban triumph—it may seem like a small victory but I had allowed sufficient time for the task. It made me reflect on my efforts across a wide range of activities over the preceding 30 years. How many of them were botched? How much satisfaction delayed?

While we focus on the big things in our life—family, career, relationships—how many of the little things go begging for our focus and attention? But isn't our life the sum total of the little things? Did Aesop tell us “If we look after the pennies the pounds will look after themselves?” Or was it a more contemporary sage? I am sure a “stitch in time saves nine” has relevance. On the other hand, is this an artificial dichotomy between the big and the trivial or does it encapsulate a wider movement, namely the replacement of the false gods of status, money and power for the more enduring community, learning and meaning?

Escape from work

This book, being about work, is, by its very nature about violence — to the body and the spirit.

It is about a search, too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying. (Terkel, 1972, p. pxi)

The throat-grabbing power of Terkel's prose goes straight to the essential, central problem of work that defies any simple definition. The definition of what constitutes work is not as easy as it would appear. Intuitively we each individually know what is work and what is not, however a satisfactory definition remains illusive. Svendsen in *Work* (2009) points out that the physical exertion does not define it, as many leisure activities require more than our jobs. The existence of payment cannot be used since slaves, who were not paid for their labours, constructed much of the ancient world. Svendsen eventually gives up on a precise definition, and says, "Work can be paid or unpaid, entertaining or boring, liberating or akin to slavery. Work is a curse to some and a blessing to others and a little bit of both to most of us" (Svendsen, 2008, p. 9).

What is work? Most people know they are working when they clock on in the mornings and they know they have stopped when they clock off in the afternoons. The physical act of inserting a card in a machine to record their working hours bookends their working day. In today's connected world such a distinction is much harder to make. Svendsen makes the point that the question is more complicated today than when work was carried out at a specific location for a set period of time. That was work and you knew why you were there and what was required of you. The modern workplace has expanded to include almost any space of location as the relentless connectivity of the Information Age obliterates the boundaries in daily life. The section in Chapter 6, 'Diary of a knowledge worker' charts this new reality. Svendsen decides against a comprehensive definition and declares,

The fact that work is such an enormously varied phenomenon, with so many aspects, prevents any simple answer to the question “What is work?” there is no single truth about work, but a multitude of truths, depending on who we are and what we do, how we do it and why we do it. (2008, p. 11)

Clocking on and off

I have experienced the time card environment when working as a trainee in a large zinc smelting business on the banks of the Derwent River in Hobart. Because the plant was classified as a mine site and contained toxic chemicals and dangerous processes all workers entered through a security gate at the entrance. From there you walked to a large covered area similar to series of bus shelters where you found your employee card in its designated slot. You removed the card and placed it a grey clock/recorder where it was date stamped recording your arrival time. The card was then placed in its slot on the other side of the wall where the process was repeated at the ‘knock-off’ time. If you were late the time stamp changed to red to highlight the fact and three reds in a week would result in the foreman taking you aside. The official finishing time was six minutes past 4 pm for the day shift but in reality the actual work finished some time before that.

I remember the plant as dusty, malodourous and noisy because of the various processes powered by steam boilers. Many roads traversed the plant and vehicles moved backwards and forwards all day carrying various loads. Overhead conveyers framed the skyline as did a variety of smoke stacks. The overall impression was one of bustling,

ceaseless activity as 3,000 workers transformed ore delivered to the wharf in bulk-carriers into shining ingots of zinc. I had free range of the facility as I conducted guided tours for small bands of hardy tourists who wanted a close look at an industrial plant first established in 1913.

The curious thing was however that from 3.30 pm activity in the plant noticeably slowed, by 3.45 pm hardly a thing or person moved. Stillness settled over the plant. By 4 pm nothing moved except the birds and a tour guide moving another group back to the entrance. If you looked carefully, as I did when I first encountered this strange transformation, you would notice a stray head peek prospectively around the corner of a building. The clocking station was empty as employees were prohibited from loitering there close to 'knock-off' time. At 4.06 pm the quiet was punctuated by the shrill sound of the steam whistle signaling that the working day had finished. Suddenly workers in their overalls appeared from everywhere running to the clocking station where they bunched and formed orderly lines to process their cards before fanning out again in the sprint to the front gate and through it to the car park. Early arrivals parked close to the gate and so had an advantage as they deposited their Gladstone bag on the front seat, gunned their cars that slewed across the car park in a race for the exit road. They would then string out in a long line until the highway where they bunched again before dispersing to the sanctuary of the suburbs. I was reminded of a salmon surging up a tailrace desperate to find the upper reaches of their river. The slow orderly pace of the day was replaced with a manic energy to leave the workplace as quickly as possible.

The culture of confinement and escape that lies at the heart of this memory was, and perhaps still is commonplace. David Ireland in *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* (1971) writes,

... while at the Termitary and Grinding Works man was alienated from his true essence; he became functional in the eyes of a handful of far-off anonymous shareholders. His labour, his opinions, his family were for sight or mores this day, depending on his local status, owned by a means of wealth by someone not himself. It would have been no use to tell him that instead of serving a few shareholders of great wealth, he was privileged to serve the common good of millions. He would still be serving someone not himself. He would constantly be at war within himself; his deepest instincts of self-preservation, selfishness, greed and hate constantly at loggerheads with his collective, anonymous, meaningless duties to a society too large and varied to be intelligible to him. (Ireland, 1971, p. 25)

Ireland himself spent his working life in an oil refinery and the sense of alienation and the high price that work exacts on individuals is a recurring theme in the work.

The whole thing is a grinding works. Each man, if he lets it happen, is ground down a little each day until, finely and smoothly honed of all eccentricities and irregularities and the originality that could save him, the grinding suddenly stops and at sixty. Then they shot you out. (Ireland, 1971, p. 10)

Imagine a job in the great outdoors with a beautiful river as your workplace and gleaming jet ski at your disposal. Surely this would be as far from the 'grinding works' as possible.

Driving a jet ski for work

Imagine a dream job where you can be paid for doing some thing you would chose to do in your leisure time. You may even pay in order to experience riding a jet ski. However if the experience was turned into a job what would be your response then? I have the inkling of an answer from an experience I had when I was working running training courses for an advanced engineering company who were making engines for a range of recreational vehicles including snowmobiles, jet skis and other small vehicles. Their technology offered significant fuel savings and significantly reduced emissions, which was critical to the company's success in the United States.

As part of their research they had to test their engines in actual operation and accurately measure key performance and environmental data including engine wear and tear. To conduct these tests they needed to recruit test-drivers for the jet skis. It should not have been particularly difficult to recruit drivers, as there must have been a long queue of potential applicants applying for the positions. "You want me to drive your jet ski all day and you will pay for it! Where do I sign?" The problem the company faced was that while it was initially relatively easy to recruit drivers it was almost impossible to retain them for longer than a week. So what was the problem? In order for the test data to be valid the jet skis had to be operated according to a strict set of protocols. They had to be operated at a certain speed for a set period, and then at another throttle setting for another period, and on and on and on for an eight hour day on the water. Any variation from the instructions would invalidate the test data, so the riders were strictly supervised.

The rider would then return to shore for refueling and regular breaks and then return to the water for another fixed period of trials.

Drivers rarely completed a week of tests before quitting. All complained of the boredom of having to complete strict procedures on a machine built for bursts of speed and interesting tricks and jumps. These of course, were strictly prohibited. There was no driver discretion or initiative allowed. They had to operate the vehicles in accordance with the research protocols and that was it. Some actually complained that they found themselves nodding off to sleep and were seriously concerned about falling off as a result. This was 20 years ago, I am sure that human riders would not be required today as all the telemetry could be remotely monitored and controlled.

“You are useless”

If you have ever had those words ringing in your ears then you know that the very core of your being is under attack. The admonition effectively means that you have failed, failed to do something, complete a task to the required standard, pass an exam, burnt the toast or went through a red light on your driving test. The synonyms may also rain down on you—clumsy, stupid, worthless, witless, slow, lazy and incompetent. These epithets reinforce the shame of not being useful. They strike at the very centre of our sense of self and self-worth. This is one of the reasons why unemployment has such a corrosive effect on the young where a robust self-image has not been formed yet.

An article by Trent Dalton in *The Australian Magazine*, 'The Cobblers Workshop', gives a graphic account of one man, Gordon Kelly repairing many lives through the simple process of teaching useful skills. Kelly runs a workshop space for 200 young people,

Refugees and asylum seekers, angry white kids, kids at risk, kids with dyslexia, kids with Asperger's, kids from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Iran, Afghanistan, the Pacific Islands, New Zealand and Australia. (Dalton, 2016, p. 25)

Kelly's philosophy is simple and powerful and Dalton records it as follows,

"... you know what is easy to repair?" the cobbler says "A car. You know what's easy to repair? A shoe. You know what is hard to repair? Someone's self-worth. I struggled with school but I had skills. My father reinforced that. I was a slow learner at school but I was good with my hands. From then, I was always working on cars and fixing clocks and watches and shoes." (2016, p. 26)

The success of this concept, which has grown from an initial intake of 37 students to over 200 in four years, is based on this simple connection between self-worth and being useful.

The hard work of holidays

The blurring of work and leisure is not only in one direction. Work has invaded the personal life of knowledge workers. The dominance of work creates a scarcity of leisure. Our time off is precious. We don't want to waste a moment. We respond by bringing our

work habits to our leisure. The following narrative of a recent experience illustrates another factor in my growing understanding of the difficulties associated with being idle.

The unblinking eye stares back at me accusingly from the mirror. I am embarrassed by its baleful stare—the accusation is obvious. The rest of my face, or at least the left-hand side has gone out in sympathy and droops as gravity has finally taken its toll. I look very strange and this is compounded by an unwelcome tendency to drool.

“This is your fault; if you weren’t so busy trying to cram so much into your day, you would have noticed.” “Notice what?” my defensive half responds. “You were too damn tired to go kayaking. You should have just sat on the beach in the sun like the others.”

It is no use arguing with the truth. Three hours hard paddling against prevailing northerly winds for one fish was hardly a good return on effort. And anyway, why am I trying so damn hard at everything when this is a holiday? I can’t even argue that I have too little time, as a six-week break seems generous enough. Holidays are not a time for lists, yet this is what is driving mine. We have to go to Coles Bay for our annual pilgrimage—we need to return hospitality to Jenny and John, Mel and Brian. Then there is family, returning sons and daughters from interstate and overseas requiring accommodation, vehicles and time. Their return brings a hectic construction schedule at the shack prior to Christmas including a new shower so they can stay in comfort. It suddenly becomes apparent that my holidays have little to do with traditional leisure

activities and recreation. I have ended the year in good health and feel optimistic about the fulfilling time ahead. So how have I come to the point of exhaustion paralysis on one side of my face?

A snapshot. On the day in question, we both wake at 3 am. We are jolted awake by an internal alarm—an unpaid bill, a mislaid Christmas voucher. We pay the bill and find the voucher. We look at each other with dawning inspiration. “Hey, why don’t we leave straight away for the coast and then we can arrive there before breakfast!” Yes, we know how to get ahead of the game. We drive three hours to the coast, set up camp with friends and go fishing from a kayak for the afternoon. Great night, much hilarity, blow up mattress, distribute sleeping bags and bed down for the night, rains all night, hard to keep warm and attend to toilet activities occasioned by excessive alcohol in the evening. Finally fall asleep to be jolted awake by my partner who announces it is 8.40 am. We get up and pack before she announces she’d made a mistake, it is, in fact, only 6.40 am.

On the road three hours, return journey followed by stopping for provisions. Another hour-long drive to the shack, where we vacuum and clean for the 5.15 pm arrival of our guests. Festival in town, must go—no time to sit and relax. Sleep. Thank heavens for new shower that warms me in time to cook breakfast for everyone on the barbeque. The next batch of relatives arrives the following day. I go to bed with a stiff neck and some tingling in my face that I attribute to a long morning swim in cold water. The next day the unblinking eye is part of a face that has dropped on the left hand side—frozen in a twisted grimace. I don’t

panic because I know it is not a stroke although the outward appearance of one affords me express treatment in the Emergency Department. Eventually a diagnosis of a frozen facial muscle, Bell's Palsy, and a slow, eight-week recovery. Since the visit to the local hospital, I have plenty of time to reflect. My working life has squeezed out into my leisure activities. The working week is seven days with Saturday and Sunday used to prepare for the new working week. Other leisure activities have been frozen out, so the annual holiday has now become a deficit model based on catching up. The blurring of work and leisure was a two-way phenomenon.

The eye stares back at me still in acknowledgement. It mutters just loud enough for me to hear. "Now that is something worth sharing. That is something worth sharing."

I am pleased to report that I have fully recovered from the physical effects of the palsy but the memory remains alive. The time for remembering and reflecting on shards from the past has run its course. Time to face the future.

A modest contribution to knowledge

This thesis is near completion and it is time to reflect on the journey. The initial focus was the transition to retirement that I was contemplating. Once the project commenced I was confronted with a personal need to chart my journey through the world of work to understand who I was or had become through my working life. The process was both a

recollection of memories and reconciliation with myself through the process of narrative. The fortunate timing of my birth has allowed me to experience the full range of work experiences and contexts from a factory hand to a knowledge worker. The narrative is accompanied by phenomenological reflection that demonstrates both the uniqueness and universality of my personal experiences.

The diary of a knowledge worker allows an opportunity to reflect on the reality of the daily life of a person engaged in knowledge work and draw some modest observations about what is at the core of this experience. The breaking down of boundaries between work and leisure is demonstrated in the 'always' on nature of knowledge work. This thesis is evidence of the need of knowledge workers to make a contribution to their chosen field and knowledge generally. Many distinguished scholars have assisted me in this journey and true scholarship requires humility in the presence of those who have come before. Therefore any claims I make are humble.

Chapter 8 An Unfolding

Can you do it? When the time comes?

When the time comes there will be no time.

Now is the time.

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

I have returned to this thesis after a self-imposed hiatus of ten days. Ostensibly the break was to run a course in Melbourne that consumed a full week and as so many others have found before, picking up where I had left off was difficult. This thesis is substantially written and the fear of not having enough material has been replaced by the need for a ruthless editing. I must also write some linking passages that help the reader stand beside me as I write. I now have the task of ensuring that the shards of recollection presented have sufficient substance to contribute to the phenomenological framework outlined in Chapter 1.

This part of this thesis is perhaps the most difficult, as the time has come to explore possible understandings that have emerged from the narrative. An essential part of this editing is removing unnecessary material that has no place in the finished thesis. This raises the important ethical consideration of maintaining the truth of the original source material in the editing process. As van Manen (1990) points out, "...the research process

itself is practically inseparable from the writing process” (van Manen, 1990, p. 167). He goes on to state that the absence of a common research blueprint or design for phenomenological research can cause frustration and lead to writer’s block as “the researcher is unsure what direction to take” (van Manen, 1990, p. 167). His advice on how to navigate this unsettling and difficult conceptual phase of the project is as follows,

To get out of this predicament try to keep the part-whole relationship of one’s study in mind. While it may not be possible to anticipate one’s study with a fixed outline or table of contents, it should be possible to organize with broad brush-strokes the overall sense of the approach required by the fundamental notion or question one is addressing. Compare this approach to what a painter does in preparation of a canvas for the imagery it is to serve. (p. 167)

I have been thinking in a similar vein to van Manen and have relied on the metaphor of the sculptor starting with a block of stone and producing a statue. The starting point is a block of marble. The skill of the sculptor is in removing excess material from the base of the untouched stone that the project commenced with. In this case the observer can see both the raw material base on which a fully integrated final work is developed. In writing terms, my early narratives will maintain their initial integrity and be changed for punctuation and grammar only. In this process I have honoured the integrity of the initial narratives (my block of marble) and have not rewritten any part of them to suit a purpose that has have emerged later in this thesis. van Manen also draws attention to the omission of interpretive and narrative tasks when “studies do little more than present and organize transcripts” (p. 167).

Phronesis

At the beginning of this thesis the concept of wisdom was raised as an aspiration. I have attempted to reflect on a lifetime of work and to use ancient and contemporary thinkers as a guide to understanding the experiences that have shaped the person I have become. I have learned about an ancient term *phronesis* or moral wisdom, and van Manen has introduced me to the Dutch word *mensenkennis*.

Mensenkennis is a kind of wisdom about how people are and how they tend to react in specific situations — the significance of people's frailties, strengths, difficulties, inclinations, and life circumstances. It is a practical type of knowledge about how people's reactions relate to motives, intentions, emotions, feelings, and moods. (van Manen, 1994, p. 3)

Those who possess *mensenkennis* are often sought out for advice by others and tend to get along better with other people. My challenge is to apply *phronesis* and *mensenkennis* to my current situation. There is a moral dimension to my decision and there is a significant impact on other people. I need to be able to do the 'right' thing in the 'right' way.

The Neutral Zone

One of the benefits of being a consultant is that you are constantly exposed to new ways of looking at the world and to fresh concepts and ideas. One of the criticisms of consulting is that there are no new ideas under the sun, only re-packaged and recycled old ones. However at a time of uncertainty about my future work, I have been drawn to

the work of William Bridges, author of *Managing Transitions* (2003). The subtitle of the book is *Making the Most of Change*. I have found the concepts introduced by Bridges valuable when working on change projects. Bridges introduces the concept of a neutral zone between the old, which is being left behind and the new, which is promised but has yet to arrive. The neutral zone concept is essential to understanding why many people fear and resist change but it also provides an opportunity to unleash the creativity and imagination that the old situation has stifled. Bridges (2003, p. 39) begins his chapter with two quotes from others,

It is not so much that we're afraid of change or in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear... It's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to.

(Marilyn Ferguson, American Futurist)

One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time.

(Andre Gide, French Novelist)

Bridges' former career as a Professor of English is evident in his choice of these elegant quotes. He uses Kubler-Ross' five stages of grieving to support his analysis of behaviour during the change process and proposes a range of measures to ensure people are compensated for letting go of the old ways. It is this transition phase that interests me at this time because it is the 'space between the trapezes' where I find myself. It is a difficult time and Bridges identifies the following dangers,

People's anxiety rises and their motivation falls.

People in the neutral zone miss more work than at other times.

Old weaknesses previously patched over and compensated for, re-emerge in full flower.

In the neutral zone people are overloaded, they frequently get mixed signals...

In the neutral zone people become polarized... And consensus breaks down.

(Bridges, 2003, pp. 40 - 41)

I can identify with all these conditions in my own neutral zone at this moment but my familiarity with Bridges' work also provides a sense that there is no place for negativity in this time in transition because it invites creativity and innovation as the organisational forces that resist change are weakened and new possibilities and challenges emerge. To harness these benefits Bridges proposes that there should be

... opportunities to step back and take stock

... training in the techniques of discovery and innovation

... experimentation

Embrace losses, setbacks, or disadvantages as entry points to new solutions.

(2003, p. 51)

As a consultant I have advised a number of organisations on the use of these concepts and the processes and interventions that flow from them—is now the time to apply them to myself? As part of this process of separation the particular, all pervasive, intrusion of knowledge work creates both the opportunity and the loss. The opportunity of the new

beckons but the loss of all of that, which is familiar and safe, is ever-present. I have become an expert in a narrow field of human endeavour—negotiation skill. It has taken me the best part of 20 years and the expertise has been hard won. Being self-employed I can continue to work my in area of expertise until I choose not to or when the market place sends me the inevitable signal and there is no demand for the services I offer. This would constitute the slow decline or glide path to retirement that I had accepted as the most appropriate way to exit the workforce.

However, a tantalising new vision has emerged full of mystery, chance and risk. The section written last year about re-designing my life was the first realisation that there was not only a viable but potentially tantalising alternative. I received dramatic evidence of the need to escape. It came, like many signals in life from an unlikely source—*Do Over* (2015), by Jon Acuff, one of the many self-help books that consultants constantly acquire. In the inside cover the author states, “It took me sixteen years to write this book. That breaks down to a brisk twelve words per day. But it wasn’t the writing that took so long... It was the working” (Acuff, 2015).

That simple statement of the crowding out of other activities that is the result of our devotion to work means that our full potential as human beings and our potential for happiness and fulfillment are hostage to an anonymous institution that often cares little for us beyond our contribution to its objectives and market forces beyond our control. If am to learn anything from the shards of memories of my journey through a working life

and the character that is revealed through those shards of memories, then it is that I have been a hostage to the desires of others. I have responded to opportunities as they have arisen but those opportunities have been the design of others. I have made decisions to apply for this job or to leave that one but the decisions have been tactical not strategic. There was no vision or big picture or life project against which to assess any decision. I neither had the wisdom to understand life's potential and to explore distant shores and opportunities nor the motivation or drive to do so. My horizons have been limited and my goals ordinary. Seneca would have approved of my modest expectations against which I could hardly be disappointed.

So what does this insight provide for my choices now? Here I have the opportunity to be brave. No, I need to correct that assertion. There have been opportunities to be brave before but convention and deferment of gratification were my guiding lights. Now is perhaps a significant opportunity for a brave choice, to push the boundaries, to take a risk—to open my arms to the myriad of possibilities. I may have to start at the bottom of another learning curve where my past experiences are of little value. There are increasingly sound reasons based on brain research to make this an intelligent choice. The secret to brain health is to grow new neural pathways by learning new skills rather than merely honing old ones. Norman Doidge first popularised the concept of neuroplasticity in his book, *The Brain that Changes Itself* (2009). Doidge became interested in the concept when in psychiatric practice his patients did not respond to conventional treatments. The conventional view was that their behaviours were 'hard-wired' in the brain and were therefore unchangeable. Doidge had heard of pioneering neuro-science

and began to meet with the researchers who were developing the concept of neuroplasticity. The concept described the observation that the brain

... changed its very structure with every function it performed, perfecting its circuits so it was better suited to the task at hand. If certain “parts” failed, then other “parts” could sometimes take over. The machine metaphor, of the brain as a machine with specialized parts, could not fully account for changes the scientists were seeing. (Doidge, 2008, Loc. 76 of 6728)

Neuro refers to the neuron or nerve cells that make up the brain and “plastic is for changeable, malleable, modifiable” (Doidge, 2008, Loc. 76 of 6728).

Doidge travelled to meet researchers in this emerging field and observed many demonstrations of the plasticity of the brain. He met

Scientists who enabled people who had been blind since birth to begin to see, another who enabled the deaf to hear... people whose learning disorders were cured and whose IQ’s were raised... saw evidence that it was possible for eighty-year-olds to sharpen their memories to function the way they did when they were fifty-five. (Doidge, 2008, Loc 87 of 6728)

Doidge followed his initial work with *The Brain’s Way of Healing* (2015), which documents further developments in the field. A local doctor who specialises in the treatment of Parkinson’s Disease, a movement disorder, reminded me of his work when he referred to the case of a South African who had cured himself of the symptoms of the disease by consciously walking to overcome the shuffling gait characteristic of sufferers. Doidge

spends a chapter of his latest book discussing this case. The local doctor had come across another miraculous cure of a local man who had overcome the debilitating symptoms and slowed the progression of the disease through exercising his fine motor skills by making wooden chess sets. Both these ‘cures’ have been controversial and challenged current thinking.

Consequently I re-visited the Doidge books and was drawn to the following passage, which highlights the potential downside of neuroplasticity.

...neuroplasticity isn’t all good news; it renders our brains not only more resourceful but also more vulnerable to outside influences. Neuroplasticity has the power to produce more flexible but also more rigid behaviours — a phenomenon I call “the plastic paradox.” Ironically, some of our most stubborn habits and disorders are products of our plasticity. Once a particular plastic change occurs in the brain and becomes well established, it can prevent other changes from occurring. (Doidge, 2008, Loc 97 of 6728)

I have just celebrated my 66th birthday and I am acutely aware of the loss of flexibility in my joints and muscles as I join much younger people in classes designed to improve mobility. As I am the oldest by two decades, the yoga and Ti Chi exercises are excruciating for a person whose has spent too long staring at computer screens and using keyboards. As a result I have a permanent turtle-like posture. Every masseuse comments on the tension in my neck muscles and my stooped posture. While I have maintained

cardiovascular fitness it has been at the expense of suppleness. The obvious analogy to loss of mental function proceeding at the same rate as physical decline has become important in my consideration of designing a life that maintains and improves both physical and mental functioning. The cocktail referred to by Gill in the previous chapter is bitter indeed.

My search for meaning

There is a time in life when ‘busyness’ and obligations to others can no longer drown out the fundamental questions of existence. They are particularly insistent when it is apparent that the path you have chosen is secure. All the major decisions have been made—you have chosen a life partner, an occupation, a place to live, your friends, a set of personal views and a family. Your parents would describe your situation as ‘settled’. And they would view this as an accomplishment for themselves—their work is done. But you are not settled. This is because the existential questions now emerge and they are ‘unsettling’. It as if you have awoken and begin to question all that you know and believe as true. You have trouble relating to or understanding your place in the world. This emerging questioning is captured by the following lyrics by David Byrne.

You may find yourself behind the wheel of a large automobile

You may find yourself in a beautiful house, with a beautiful wife

You may ask yourself; Well... How did I get here?

You may ask yourself

What is that beautiful house?

You may ask yourself

Where does that highway go to?

You may ask yourself

Am I right?... Am I wrong?

You may say to yourself

MY GOD!... WHAT HAVE I DONE?

What follows is a period of questioning of all that was once settled and known. The fundamental questions are universal concerns first posed by Socrates and are re-stated by Gini in *Seeking the Truth of Things* (2010), "...we are constantly asking ourselves three fundamental questions: Who am I; what do I owe others; what ought I do" (Loc. 233). Gini goes on to state that it is the process of questioning that is the Socratic gift to man as the answers are less relevant than the questions.

In the end, the Socratic method is as much about the process as the product, as much about the journey as the destination. In fact I think it is fair to say that what Socrates left us was not a series of answers but a series of questions and a purposeful way of thinking. (Loc. 241)

There is comfort in certainty that the philosopher abandons when they begin the search for answers and more questions. The essence of philosophical reflection is to welcome the discomfort and embrace it as essential to the philosopher's practice.

Purpose and meaning

The fundamental questions of, “Why am I here?” and the related, “What is my purpose?” become essential to the concept of self and the choices that have been made. If we know the why of our lives then the subsidiary question of “What do we need to do?” becomes far simpler. In this section I am going to draw on the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Mark Rowlands and Theodore Zeldin.

Csikszentmihalyi in *Flow* (1992) reflects on the difficulty of defining meaning, since any answer runs the risk of being circular. He proposes three different definitions with the first being a sense of order in the world where phenomena are not random but fall into “recognizable patterns directed by a final purpose” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 216). A second sense is that people “reveal their purpose in action” and the third a “relationship between events, and thus it helps to clarify, to establish order among unrelated or conflicting information” (p. 216).

Csikszentmihalyi then uses these definitions to advance his central thesis of ‘flow’ experiences, where people are challenged but have the opportunity to exercise skills and achieve mastery in a particular field. He developed a theory of optimal experience around this concept of flow.

The state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 4)

He then goes on to integrate the three elements of meaning with the flow concept through setting a life goal to focus attention, to convert that goal into challenging actions, to give a sense of direction and purpose, and to apply personal energy to those actions. He uses Napoleon and Mother Theresa to illustrate the irrelevance at this point of the broader ethical question of what the consequences of their life's work might be. In one case, death and chaos to millions in the pursuit of imperial grandeur, and in the other, relief from pain and suffering for the powerless. To Csikszentmihalyi it is not the goal that is important but the “subjective order that a unified purpose brings to individual consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 217). He proposes that the meaning of life is in fact, meaning—his ironic circularity. He says, “Whatever it is, wherever it comes from, a unified purpose is what gives meaning to life” (p. 217). He combines this sense of purpose with the concepts of resolution giving action to the goals and harmony as the sense of order and fit that encompass the range of activities in pursuit of the purpose.

Zeldin in *The Pleasures of Life* (2015), takes a different approach to this question of purpose and in doing so he shines an unexpected light on the work of Maslow whose Euspsychian management lies at the heart of this inquiry. Zeldin the author of *An Intimate History of Humanity* and *A History of French Passions* has a well-developed reputation for offering an alternative viewpoint to prevailing orthodox thinking. I was gratified to discover the following quote when re-reading *The Pleasures of Life*,

I can never have enough of the practical knowhow which enables me, for example, to grow vegetables or repair broken objects; I delight in the company of those who

have mastered many such skills and find unexpected solutions to the myriad of dysfunctions that afflict daily living. (Zeldin, 2015, Loc. 5213 of 5426)

I must have read this piece before I wrote the section ‘The year I re-designed my life’ but the aspirations I expressed there include the useful activities so admired by Zeldin. However, at the time, I am certain any influence must have been entirely subconscious as I was surprised to re-discover the quote on re-reading the book.

Zeldin’s approach to the question of purpose and meaning are covered in his final chapter ‘What does it mean to be alive?’ He begins by reviewing the universality of religious traditions that focus on the after-life as the ultimate salvation, leading to the belief that the purpose of life is in fact, death. He attributes this focus to the shortness of ancient lives but is less meaningful “when marriage can be postponed to the age of thirty and it is increasingly possible to survive for almost a century” (Zeldin, 2015, Loc. 5263 of 5426). He describes as a “subversive rebellion” the notion that the meaning of life was predetermined by the nature of god and was imposed. He proposes that each individual has to form their own view on what they should do with the “gift of life”. For Zeldin there is no universal answer and it is up to each individual to give purpose to his or her own lives. He then uses the idea of progress to give “significance to the personal struggle” that each individual faces. To merely follow as generations before have done is not sufficient, “Now you have to better yourself”(Zeldin, 2015, Loc. 5278 of 5426). The question then becomes “But how do I choose which path to follow to better myself?”

Zeldin then introduces Maslow and his hierarchy of needs and states, “His [Maslow’s] achievement was to compress into five straightforward ambitions that everyone could identify with the vague aspirations for a better life of a generation that did not know what to do with its freedom” (Loc. 5289 of 5426). Zeldin goes on to explain how Maslow was alarmed at how his work was appropriated by others with little understanding of the ‘shaky’ empirical foundations that the work rested on. This strange phenomenon of an author’s work being widely adopted as accepted wisdom without any understanding of the empirical basis on which the ideas were developed and the author’s subsequent doubts as to the value of the work is covered in Chapter 4.

My purpose in this chapter is to explore Zeldin’s advice on living a full life. He is not convinced that pursuing self-realisation is a worthy project. Although adopted by many nations as an official orthodoxy “aiming to liberate individuals from the obstacles that prevent them from being ‘truly themselves’”, it may not be humanity’s final goal (Zeldin, 2015, Loc. 5347 of 5426). Zeldin believes that this is a “friendless journey” with only a “solitary ego for a companion” (Zeldin, 2015, Loc. 5342 of 5496). He uses the metaphor of a healthy body requiring cells to establish links with the other cells around it. Cells die when they fail to establish contact with other cells. The solitary cell dies. Zeldin sees this process of “perpetual renewal” as “like autumn leaves falling off a tree”(Loc. 5370 of 5426). He uses this metaphor to encourage people to constantly renew their ideas through conversations with others and to be open to these possibilities. He explains, “Each meeting between two people that is not merely superficial is an opportunity to enlarge it beyond the banal, through discovery and invention” (Loc. 5374 of 5426).

He warns against the “rigidity of the mind”, *rigor vitae*, which he sees as more dangerous than *rigor mortis* because it “gives the illusion of being alive.” He sees more “opportunities for interaction between individuals than there have ever been, but also more obstacles”(Loc. 5303 of 5426). He proposes that public libraries become the repositories of the life stories of ordinary people so that

They can record what their lives signify and what they would like others to know about them; and be the place where it is possible for them to discover how they can benefit from the hopes and talents of neighbours they know only superficially or not at all. (Loc. 5399 of 5426)

He states that already a large library has agreed to host this project and says that his book is his contribution. It may not be too self-important to see this thesis as my own contribution.

Zeldin’s prescription for the full life is to maintain a flexibility of mind and to appreciate that every person we encounter may have something to share with us, as we may with them. By fully participating in our community can we both grow and contribute to the growth of others. This reciprocal process of exchange is part of the drivers of individual and societal growth. As I was writing this personal conclusion to Zeldin’s guidance, I received a confirmation in some writing by Marc E Agronin, a geriatric psychiatrist, in an article, ‘It’s Time to Rethink the Bucket-List Retirement’ (2016), in the *Wall Street Journal*. Agronin has found those who pursue the bucket-list of

exotic places to visit often find themselves “depressed and disconnected”. He uses the experience of a patient who

... spent several months and considerable treasure each year after retirement travelling to a bucket list of exotic locales, but found themselves increasingly alienated from family and friends who did not share their adventures. Their children complained that they seemed interested in spending more time with itinerant acquaintances than with their grandchildren. (Agronin, 2016)

Agronin goes on to explain that older people are naturally happier and don't need to chase happiness through 'doing' but to enjoy just 'being'. This contentment is the result of “lower expectations and ambition, less emotional volatility, increased gratitude and acceptance and enhanced problem-solving skills” (Agronin, 2016).

The third author I have sought out to provide guidance is Rowlands, whom I first encountered in *The Philosopher and the Wolf* (2010) and then in his paper, “The Immortal, the Intrinsic and the Quasi Meaning of Life” (2016). I draw upon Rowlands' insight in Chapter 4. His Sisyphus example illustrates for me the futility and pointlessness felt by employees in some occupations. He returns to Sisyphus in his paper and greatly expands on the theme. He contends that it is not the back-breaking nature of the task that makes Sisyphus' fate but the sheer futility of it. If the massive stone were replaced by a small pebble the punishment is no less unpleasant. Using the earlier works of Albert Camus and Richard Taylor (1970), Rowlands now introduces a delusion that requires Sisyphus to find his labour both fulfilling and enjoyable. What is now lost is his dignity as he now has

the “status of a deluded dupe.” It is the impossibility of success that is now the source of futility. His labours are now devoid of purpose and are therefore meaningless. Rowlands drives home his point, as he says, “The message embodied in the myth Sisyphus, then, is that the meaningless life is identical with a purposeless life” (2016, p. 7). He sees the myth as an “allegory for the life of the average human being.” He goes on to quote Taylor in this devastatingly nihilistic quote.

Look at a busy street any day, and observe the throng going hither and thither. To what? Some office or job where the same thing will be done today as were done yesterday, and are done now so they may be repeated tomorrow. And if we think, unlike Sisyphus, that these labours do have a point, that they will culminate in something lasting and, independently of our own deep interest in them, very worthwhile, then we have not considered the thing closely enough. Most of the effort is directed only to the establishment of home and family; that is to the begetting of others who will follow in our steps to do more of the same.

(Taylor in Rowlands, 2016, p. 7)

Rowlands then states the existential problem as “Our lives lack meaning to the extent they lack purpose” (2016, p. 8). He then establishes a number of scenarios to test the “bankruptcy of purpose” of Sisyphus. He commences by giving him a purpose where each of the stones labouriously transported are used to construct a magnificent temple. His life’s work now complete, what is left for Sisyphus? Rowlands then proposes a number of options but suggests, “none of them seem particularly attractive” (p. 8).

The first option is to bask in the afterglow of his considerable achievement but his purpose is now gone and his life is therefore devoid of meaning. The second option is to only choose purposes, which are unachievable in a single lifetime. This would condemn Sisyphus to eternal failure by definition, which is not an attractive option. The next option is for Sisyphus to develop memory loss so that he forgets that he has achieved his purpose and labours on regardless. Again this is an absurdity. Rowlands then proposes Sisyphus organises his demise to coincide with the achievement of his purpose. Again the flaws of an earlier-than-planned death or a delayed departure render this option implausible.

A potential solution is proposed by Rowlands, the choosing of a new meaning in life—giving purpose to replace the one recently achieved. This solution assumes a new purpose can be found but then the problem becomes one of comparison between the two purposes. What if Sisyphus finds the second purpose far more fulfilling than the first? All the time and effort expended on the first has now been wasted. The converse is equally unsettling because if the second purpose is not as good as the first then life proceeds but with diminished meaning.

Because of these problems with purpose Rowlands suggests that they are inherent in the legend of Sisyphus and suggests that the problem lies with the choice immortal being used for the example. He interposes Tantalus as the source of resolution for this dilemma. The gods punished Tantalus by condemning him to be chained to a tree where

both the water and fruit were just out of his reach. Is this analogous to our lives, where what we truly desire is always just out of our reach? He introduces the terms 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic' value to explain the logic of work. Work has an instrumental value only in so far that it enables us to gain something of intrinsic value, $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D$. You do A to get B, which leads to C and so on until you get to D, which has intrinsic value. If however D lacks intrinsic value then A, B and C are without value because their value depended on the intrinsic value of D. This is the fate we share with Tantalus, where everything we do leads to something else but intrinsic value is always deferred and never achieved. When we arrive at our destination it turns out that it was not where we wanted to be and our real destination is still to be found.

Work and play

The distinction between work and play can now be defined in terms of instrumental and intrinsic value. Work is what we do in order to achieve something else and therefore has an instrumental value, where play is something we do for the intrinsic value in it. Rowlands sees the distinction "between work and play as often subtle and shifting" (2016, p. 13) but in essence, work is something we do to achieve something else, while play is what we do for its own sake. Rowlands contends that a life of all work is one of endless deferral with the true purpose always around the corner. In using Tantalus, he has managed to define the meaning of life as play, "Play is what makes life worth the trouble" (p. 15). Play is defined "any activity performed for its own sake" (p. 19).

Activities can include writing a novel or scientific discovery and “ranges over a vast array of activities” (p. 20). Rowlands makes the important distinction that you engage in these activities not for the prospect of pleasure at the conclusion. In fact, such an attitude is seen as a reason that you “will not play the game very well, and so will not get the experience [of pleasure] anyway” (p. 21). Enjoyment is seen as completing the activity. Rowlands sees pleasure as an instrumental activity, “One wants it, precisely, to distract oneself from just how much of one’s life has become an outpost of work and therefore a life dominated by what one values only instrumentally” (p. 21).

Rowlands now introduces the concept of joy, which is characterised as “the recognition of what one values intrinsically”—the recognition that we are “doing something that is worth doing just for what it is” (2016, p. 23). There are similarities here between Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow and the joy that Rowland enunciates. Love and joy are seen as correlates by Rowlands, where the intrinsic value of an activity or an individual “has met or exceeded a certain threshold of intensity—are what redeem life. They are the reason we spend so much of our lives doing things we would really rather not do, and they are what makes this “worth the trouble” (Rowlands, 2016, p. 25). In the remainder of his paper, Rowlands explores the Subjectivist and Hybrid theories of the meaning of life that attempt to address the measure of what is the objective value of a life’s work. Here the concept of ‘human flourishing’ is explored with the individual’s mix of interests and capabilities being the determinant of what represents flourishing for them. There are again echoes of Maslow and the necessary requirement to develop

individual capabilities to their fullest. Rowlands expresses this requirement about individual development in the following statement,

That meaning in life is — often, and perhaps typically — a matter of development of individual capabilities is, in effect, conceded by hybrid theorists such as Wolf, who argues that being subjectively gripped by an activity is an essential component of a meaningful life. We are seldom subjectively gripped by our species norm capabilities. No doubt, we should be more grateful. Nevertheless, species norm capabilities correspond to the basic needs of humans. There is more to the meaning of life — than satisfying basic needs. (2016, p. 31)

The exploration of meaning with these thinkers has given glimpses of possibilities and potentials as yet unrealised. It is time for them to become tangible.

A paradox emerges

To contemplate the possibilities of something worth doing in the future I first have to commit to doing nothing. It is only from this nothing, this absence of activity and obligation can the new, the tantalising, the suppressed eventually emerge. It will be a period of deliberate idleness. Svendsen (2008) quotes G. K. Chesterton on leisure.

I think the name of leisure has come to cover three totally different things. The first is being allowed to do something. The second is being allowed to do anything. And the third (and perhaps most rare and precious) is being allowed to do nothing.

... As for the third form of leisure, the most precious, the most consoling, the most pure and holy, the noble habit of doing nothing at all — that is being neglected to a degree that seems to threaten the degeneration of the whole race.

(Svendsen, 2008, p. 70)

Idleness is being revived as an antidote to the over-work culture exposed by Bunting (2005). There has been renewed interest in Bertrand Russell's essay 'In Praise of Idleness' which was first published in 1932 and has recently been reissued by gift book writer, Bradley Trevor Grieve, in 2016 who provides the following testimony in the preface to the current edition.

Russell's message changed my life. Not immediately, perhaps — at least not visibly.

But I started to look at my spare time differently, and my time on earth in general. I tried to cut back on passive entertainment and move towards more active interests.

(Russell, 2016, Preface)

There has been a magazine dedicated to the pursuit of idleness since 1991, *The Idler*. The founder, Tom Hodgkinson, also established the Idler Academy of Philosophy, Husbandry and Merriment, offering real world and online course in the classical liberal arts and practical skills. The website (idler.co.uk) lists courses on elocution, the history of British building and growing vegetables and herbs. I had a copy of Hodgkinson's book, *How to be Idle* (2004) but I had been unaware of the magazine and academy until an article in the *New York Times* magazine, 'The Amateur Cloud Society That (Sort of) Rattled the Scientific Community' by John Mooallem came to my attention. Here I was to find both paradox and inspiration.

The beautifully illustrated story recounted how the co-founder of *The Idler*, Gavin Pretor-Pinney had, after ten years working on the magazine, been “burnt out running a magazine devoted to doing nothing.” He took an extended break without a plan and went to live in Rome. He became interested in religious art and particularly the artists’ depiction of clouds. In the clear blue Roman sky he missed the clouds he had taken for granted in England.

Clouds. It was a bizarre preoccupation, perhaps even a frivolous one, but he didn’t resist it. He went with it, as he often does, despite not having a specific goal or destination in mind; he likes to see where things go. (Mooallem, 2016)

Ten years on, the Cloud Appreciation Society has 40, 000 members, his book, *The Cloudspotter’s Guide* (2006) is a best seller and as a result of photos posted on the website, the Society appears to have discovered a previously unclassified cloud formation, the *asperatus*. Pretor-Pinney’s decision to do nothing has led to something important—something that helps us look at clouds afresh. Both *The Cloudspotter’s Guide* and *How to be Idle* had been sitting on my bookshelf—unconnected. Now they sit, like shards of mirrors, in felicitous synchronicity.

An enfolding

I have assembled the shards of memory and examined them. Some have been sharp—enough to wound as past failures and errors are exposed. I have been witness to the broader society refracted in Drucker’s prism. I have glimpsed new pathways to the

future with the clarity provided by phenomenological reflection described by Rehorick and Bentz (2008). I have seen the unmisted truth in Plath's mirror and it is time.

Time perhaps to dance one more time in the green bay. It was never an objective in writing this thesis that it would have any utility other than a contribution to scholarship. I did not envision a memoir because the depiction of a working life is but one part of me. I never envisioned that it would serve as a guide to what my future direction could or should be. The process of recollecting those memories and experiences while I still can has raised as many questions as it has answered. The process of writing, of remembering and trying to understand has changed me irrevocably. Life cannot be the same after this experience. It has forced a consideration of whether I have gained sufficient wisdom—*phronesis* to better live the life that remains.

The limitless horizons of youth are narrowing, the vigour and endurance are diminished, the luxury of having time as an ally is long passed. If I have learned anything from the experience it is the need to be realistic about the future. It is limited. Some of my thoughts and aspirations expressed earlier in 'The year I re-designed my life' are naïve. It is important to learn new skills, to maintain curiosity about all around me but to focus that curiosity—to limit the scope of future endeavour. Focus on the few, harness the energy and the will in their pursuit. I cannot walk away from that which is familiar and known and all that I have learned as a worker. As tempting as it is to close

the pages on my professional career, it would be a waste. A gap year maybe—but a full stop, no! But I will not go gently.

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning
They do not go gentle into that good night
Good Men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

How will I know that I am wiser—through dancing in the green bay of this journey, having raved about the constraints of traditions and epochs, raged against running out of lifetime, lamented my frail deeds?

Wisdom manifests itself in me through thought and action and question. Let us recall describing the unique human attribute of asking questions. He points out that it is the questions that remain, not the answers. “Although there are philosophers who give

answers, it is usually the questions not the answers that have survived” (Scruton, 2013, p. 53).

I am perhaps wisest in my inexorable, perplexing and ironic questioning. How might I best use my skills and experience now? What contribution might I make to the body of knowledge that has been my professional focus? How might I maintain the energy and enthusiasm to make a difference to the community of relationships I inhabit? What is important for me to continue to do? What ought I stop doing? What might I focus on in order to have an impact while remaining curious about all in the world?

What I do know is that I am grateful for living in a period of relatively uninterrupted prosperity and peace. I am thankful for a genetic inheritance and a nurturing childhood that have contributed to my current health. I rejoice in the opportunity this thesis has provided to meet philosophers and study their contributions to knowledge. I acknowledge the contribution every teacher has made to my education in quality schools and through universities. I acknowledge the opportunity to devote time and energy to this thesis away from the daily pressures of earning a living (not always but sufficient). I have witnessed the growth of the Internet and benefitted from the availability of knowledge that was previously available only to a few.

I have a new vantage point of clarity and wisdom. The work of this thesis has taken me into my past—my past is now passed and unfolded. Rich sedimentations of its

sources enfold anew to create a future landscape for me to enter. My past now lies before me.

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