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Lived spirituality: Exploring the richness of inner work

Neil Boland

ORCID ID

0000-0002-3459-8624

Neil Boland

*Auckland University of
Technology, New Zealand*

*National Tsing Hua
University, Taiwan*

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Abstract

This article investigates and documents inner processes which underlie and support my professional life – a living-educational-theory based on what I term 'lived spirituality'. Influenced strongly by the work of Rudolf Steiner, this living-educational-theory is grounded in personal experience tracked through time and the personal knowledge gained over a period of many years. To shine a light on and into this process, I identify past and present influences – theoretical and philosophical – to weave them more strongly into my living-theory. In considering lived spirituality, I outline the benefits which a regular practice of inner work can have; in this I draw on Foucault's work on the care of the self, parrhesia and askesis. I use Deleuze's notion of the rhizome as a metaphor to explore this development, linking it to how lived spirituality influences my work and, through this, affects others.

Keywords: First-person research; Meditation; Spirituality; Anthroposophy; Steiner; Living Educational Theory research

Picking Up the thread

This article picks up a thread left loose at the end of a previous article for EJOLTS (Boland, 2017b) in which I explored my engagement over time with Steiner Waldorf education through a lens of social justice. The article ended with me reflecting that it was an incomplete account of the process. I wrote at the time:

Reading over what I have written, I see that I would need to write several articles to do justice to the initial aim of showing how my embodied values become evident in my work and have evolved themselves into a living (and developing) theory... I would (or will?) need to write another which looks into the heart of the pedagogy, and how I understand and experience the lived spirituality which Steiner hoped all teachers would embody. (p. 72)

I attempt here to explore some aspects of this – how I understand and experience a lived spirituality and what that means to me, both as an individual and in relation to my work as an educator. As an educator, and as an educator of other educators, I have significant influence over others. I agree with Steiner when he says, "You have no idea how unimportant is all that the teacher says or does not say on the surface, and how important what he himself is as teacher" (1924/1998, p. 40). For this reason, it is important that I validate any claims to self-development or self-understanding. I do this both for the students I teach and supervise but also for the wider community who might engage with what I write.

I will be writing from two perspectives: one interior, one exterior. First, I will try to illustrate how this 'lived spirituality' has developed in a space of intimacy and seclusion and forms a foundation on which my values rest. Secondly, I discuss how this influences my interactions in the social formations in which I work and in how I influence and am in turn influenced by others.

Putting Skin in the Game

Three years ago (Boland, 2017b), I began to express thoughts which had developed during a lengthy period of ingestion, a decades-long period of dialogue with others, reflective engagement with ideas and consideration of experiences, both outer and inner. These thoughts developed into a want and a need to speak out about issues which concern me and also a perceived need to state where I stand in relation to the issues. 'Need' is a strong verb to use in this context – I think it stems from a strong feeling of academic honesty or openness. Who is this person who has influence over others? Where does he stand and out of what does he speak? This 'speaking out' takes the dialogue, which has formerly been contained and private, into a more public realm, speaking and seeing if any responses come back. In this I relate strongly to what Foucault calls parrhesia, or 'truth-telling':

The way in which I apply it here is as the requirement of the individual (me) to speak the truth to themselves and of themselves to others. It can expose the speaker (me again) to danger: the danger of ridicule, of misunderstanding, of ostracism, of loss of face. All these have happened to me at some time or other, at least to a small degree. At the same time, it is a matter of honesty, both to myself and to others about my thoughts and values. (Boland, 2017b, p. 64)

In the 2017 article, I mentioned how this frankness has led to uncomfortable and confronting situations at times when speaking against the flow, and how speaking out can also assist in creating an atmosphere of conversation and exchange (though not necessarily straight away). This is, essentially, what the article is about. Exposing myself to 'danger' is even more possible in this article, in which I will need and intend to bare my soul to a degree, almost certainly putting myself in a position of some vulnerability in the process. For Foucault, the academic has an obligation to act as a *parrhesiastes* – a "speaker of truth" (Flynn, 1994; Foucault, 1980/2016, 1983; Hunt, 2013). Being a truth teller involves risk (Pickup, 2016) but simultaneously offers the truth-teller the freedom of speaking their truth, the freedom of expressing themselves as they are in their depth, complexity and inconsistency. de Beauvoir speaks of the importance of striving for 'truth' and the necessity of leaving safe ground in order to do it: "I tore myself away from the safe comfort of certainties through my love for truth – and truth rewarded me." (1972/1994, p. 16). For Foucault, this truth-telling is required of the academic; to me, this honesty is a requirement of any practitioner working to develop and express their living-theory.

In an age of flaming, mobbing on social media, internet trolls and the like, it is possible to interpret parrhesia as this kind of outspoken behaviour, a shamelessness of speech, of speaking out with no care for the feelings of others. This is not what I refer to. Similarly, 'truth' is a difficult word to approach. While it may be wisest to avoid the word completely, I use it here in a sense of lived experience, not a thought-out idea or a head-based concept which is attractive as an academic notion, but an experience lived with the whole body. I talk about this in the section *A question of soil* below. The experiences I am speaking of are ones of liberation, serving those I interact with, of happiness and calm, of encouraging development. They are eufunctional rather than dysfunctional.

When I was writing the article in 2017 for EJOLTS, one of my reviewers (Dr. Pip Bruce Ferguson) noted that, in parrhesia, I appeared to have found my 'academic tūrangawaewae'. Tūrangawaewae is a term in common use in New Zealand, coming from te reo Māori, the Indigenous language:

Tūrangawaewae is one of the most well-known and powerful Māori concepts. Literally tūranga (standing place), waewae (feet), it is often translated as 'a place to stand'. Tūrangawaewae are places where we feel especially empowered and connected. They are our foundation, our place in the world, our home. (Te Ahukaramū, 2007)

This was an astute observation and gave me, as a New Zealander, an additional and important relationship to the concept of parrhesia. What I strive to do in this article is to speak from this tūrangawaewae, from the place where I am most connected, most at home. It is not a location which other people can visit or one which exists on a map; it is a space within me, accessible only to me, ultimately private and secluded; it is a space of inner experience. Deprivatising this inner space is, for me, a bold act of parrhesia and is neither straightforward nor issue-free. It is, however, necessary if I am to document accurately and openly the place from which I teach and live. Aspects of my living-theory lie deeply within me; therefore, when explaining them, I must reach far in to extract them in order to acknowledge them publicly. The act of putting these words on paper is, in itself, an act of exploration for me, choosing the words to describe thoughts, experiences and feelings which

do not want to be defined or pinned down is a challenge. Instead of using my values as a lens through which I view and interact with the world, I initially look at the lens itself. I experience it as a reflexive journey which needs considerable introspection and a willingness to be vulnerable. In this sense, then, bear with me as I strive to deprivatise a section of this reflexive journey.

What a Lived Spirituality Means to Me

As this article is around lived spirituality, I need first to lay out what the term means to me, and also what it does not. I here take spirituality as something separate from religion. Religion (for me) is a defined system of belief or worship (see Thayer-Bacon, 2017). This is not what I am talking about. I use the term spirituality here to define the link between the human being and what I would call the cosmos.¹ This link to the cosmos is an independent attribute. One may choose to follow a particular religion or not, but the link to the cosmos is a spiritual one.

Writers, philosophers and mystics have spoken of spirituality in many ways. The importance of spirituality as well as the difference between it and religion is put clearly by the Dalai Lama. In acknowledging the separation of and difference between religion and spirituality, he says, "[I] do not think that religion is indispensable to the spiritual life." (2012, p. 16), using the analogy of water and tea. In order to make tea (religion) you must have water (spirituality). Tea cannot exist without it. What strikes me when I think through this image further is that tea is not essential to life, whereas water is.

Lingley (2016) describes spirituality in this way:

The defining elements of spirituality ... are an engagement in a search for purpose and meaning; an orientation of faith in regards to something larger than oneself ...; a capacity for self-aware consciousness; experiences of awe, love, and transcendence; an interest in ethical or moral commitments; and a disposition of wonder and inquiry. (p. 2)

This echoes Palmer who states that "spirituality is the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own egos." (2003, p. 377). These are all descriptions with which I can agree.

Foucault (1981–2/2005) connects spirituality with practice:

I think we could call 'spirituality' the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the

¹ In describing this, I encounter the challenge of finding appropriate terminology for non-physical experiences or intimations. I believe it is helpful to move beyond the words themselves to look for the intention of what the words are trying to portray. It is similar to the act of translation from one language to another – not merely a functional relationship between two languages, but one of returning to a pre-linguistic meaning (Berger, 2013) in order to find the corresponding expression. The task here is translating into everyday language experiences or impressions which are, essentially, unsuited to everyday vocabulary (Platvoet & Molendijk, 1999). I believe that what I am calling a link to the cosmos is described by other authors as a connection to something bigger than themselves, to something ineffable which gives life greater meaning. Society or community are greater than ourselves, yet I do not believe this is what is meant here. It is a connection to something greater than the human or the earthly, something beyond humanity or our lives on earth.

truth. We will call 'spirituality' then the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversion of looking, modifications of existence,—, which are not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth. (p. 15)

What attracts me to Foucault's description of spirituality here is that it is active; spirituality is an activity; it is work; it is something you *do*.

This 'doing' of spirituality Foucault links to the Classical term *askesis*. *Askesis*² (Foucault, 1980/2016, 1981–2/2005) is essentially a practice of self-development, of working on oneself, of scrutinising oneself in order to do better tomorrow. It is a progressive training of the self, of the individual through the conscious application of mental techniques and practical exercises. This underpins meditative practice as well as providing a solid basis for guiding everyday life – a way of being. As Foucault puts it:

And, for instance, when Musonius Rufus says that the art of living, *techne tou biou*, is like the other arts, *i.e.*, an art which one could not learn only through theoretical teachings [*mathesis*], he is repeating a traditional doctrine. This *techne tou biou*, this art of living, demands practice and training: *askesis*. (1983, p. 55)

For Foucault, *askesis* involves a sustained working on oneself – *epimeleia heautou* (care of the self) – employing “researches, practices, and experiences” which can include “purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversion of looking, modifications of existence” – “for the subject's very being, [these are] the price to be paid for access to the truth” (1981-2/2005, p. 15). Foucault's differentiation between philosophy (knowing with the head) and spirituality (opening oneself up to potential modifications of existence) is, I think, of fundamental importance here and is explored below.

In my experience, this practice of the 'art' of living, the art of being, strengthens the experience of connection, of coherence, of a lived spirituality. I have chosen here to reference Foucault but what Foucault talks about forms the essential core of Steiner's work – the development of the individual through meditative work. We 'enter into this training ... in the service of self-education, as happens in meditation, concentration, and the exercises received' (Steiner, 1914/2008, p. 8).

I need to say that this work is neither straightforward nor easy to do. In a busy life, or even in the recent stillness of pandemic lockdown, finding time for oneself on a regular basis is a daily challenge. It is all too easy to take a day off which then turns into a week, a month. Other priorities claim attention; the upsets and distractions of life disrupt the quiet space needed to practise inner work. These I encounter every day – I cannot think of a single day when carving out a meditative time did not need a real act of will. Nonetheless, I endeavour to maintain a regular practice and constantly feel the benefit of it.

² *Askesis* here is taken in the Classical sense, not as in asceticism, rigorous self-discipline and severe abstinence which was later practiced by anchorites and in monastic communities.

Following the Rhizome

In exploring how my learning has been and is influenced by others, I find Deleuze and Guattari's (1987/2013) notion of the rhizome to be very useful metaphor. I note that I work with the rhizome here as a philosophical metaphor, which may or may not be biologically accurate.

When discussing the forms a book can take, Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2013) state: "... [t]here is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made." (p. 2). They offer the notion of the rhizome as a possible format for a book, as opposed to the usual arborescent form or 'root-book' (1987/2013, p. 3). The root-book is independent, of itself, closed and uni-directional. It is where what is book is separate from what is not book. A rhizome (see Image 1) "... can be connected to anything other, and must be." (1987/2013, p. 5). It "... has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo." (p. 26); "... it operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots." (p. 22). A rhizome grows in the dark, underground. It is instinctive, unconscious, complex, exploratory, hidden. All these qualities speak to the development of inner faculties and experiences as well as philosophies.

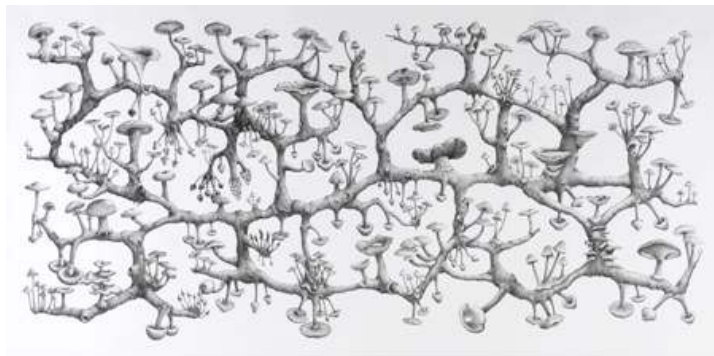


Image 1. Richard Giblett, (2008). *Mycelium rhizome*, graphite on paper, 120 x 240 cm. Collection of the artist. Represented by Galerie Dusseldorf, Germany.

In the EJOLTS article I wrote in 2017, I wrote "The path I have sought to tread is more solitary in that it is an inner journey, not an actual one. It takes place in the soul and in the mind." (p. 59). I want to take the opportunity to correct myself here. I need to change the word 'actual' to 'outer'. An inner journey is undoubtedly a journey, the longest journey; as Hammarskjöld (1963/1964, p. 48) attests:

*"The longest journey
Is the journey inwards.
Of him who has chosen his destiny,
Who has started upon his quest
For the source of his being."*

What Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2013) write about maps and tracings is also relevant in this context. Each of us creates their own 'map', "... detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification." (p. 13). It is unique, the result of countless encounters with groups, individuals, ideas and situations during the course of a life. Each person's living-theory is to me a kind of map in a Deleuzian sense.

In contrast, a 'tracing' is a copy of another's map; it is fixed, unchangeable, non-organic and at the same time to me is non-authentic:

The tracing has already translated the map into an image; it has already transformed the rhizome into roots and radicles. It has organised, stabilised, neutralised the multiplicities according to the axes of significance and subjectification belonging to it. It has generated, structuralised the rhizome, and when it thinks it is reproducing something else it is in fact only reproducing itself. That is why the tracing is so dangerous. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2013, p. 13)

In realising a constantly evolving epistemological outlook, I recognise that I avoid importing others' tracings due to their non-adaptability. I confess to what amounts to a near-allergy if I am asked to accept some outlook which is not mine. What I do is try to understand and, so far as I can, experience what these tracings can tell me of others' journeys and how (and if) they resonate with me. I adopt Nietzsche's approach: "[R]ead well, that is to say, ... read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers." (1886/2013, p. 17). This tentative experience can lead to me transmuting aspects of others' outlooks so they become part of my own rhizomic map and so expand my living educational theory. This transmutation process is then what happens within me over time. I identify below how the effect of this process then affects my teaching and, in turn, the learning of others.

As I seek here to show, even to a limited degree, myself 'in becoming', "... show my I's intention to produce something valued which is not yet in existence ..." (Whitehead, 2018, p. 27) I need to undertake some values-driven archaeology (Foucault, 1969/2012) to trace the outline of my inner rhizomic development, for "... it is only watching a person through time ... that we are able to judge that person's authenticity." (Whitehead, 2018, p. 42).

If you expose a rhizome some decades into its development, it would be all but impossible to discern where the growth first began; it needs watching through time, as Whitehead says above (2018). If you spoke to me now, I don't believe you could tell where this growth started, but if I had to put a finger on the point at which this began, it would be in my early teens when I frequently had what I would now term as spiritual or non-physical experiences. It is not important here what those were, but *that* they were.³ I became used to there being at times two sets of experiences, one 'ordinary' and sense based, and the other 'non-ordinary' and not grounded in the everyday senses. I had no idea what this was at the time. I mentioned it to no one and life continued. It was just how things were and I did not explore it. When I came across the work of Steiner⁴ when I was 21, I discovered something

³ For reasons of length this is not discussed here. If the reader is interested in reading further, see Boland, N. (2019). *The mood of the fifth: Exploring interbeing with(in) the refrain* (pp. 153 seqq.) [PhD thesis]. Tuwhera. Auckland, New Zealand. <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/12433>

⁴ Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was an Austrian polymath. After establishing himself as an academic, he began to speak and write of and out of his spiritual insights from about the age of forty, developing a body of work which he called anthroposophy, or spiritual science. His work has found resonance in many fields and, a hundred years later, has given rise to the Steiner Waldorf school movement, Camphill homes for children and

which was intriguing. I was both attracted to it, while simultaneously wanting to keep it at a distance. In retrospect, the reasons for me wanting to keep a distance are those I have given above of having a strong reaction against taking in/taking on a Deleuzian tracing of anyone else's work before I had worked it through and made it my own. During my twenties, as I slowly became more familiar with Steiner's writing (see Boland, 2017a-c), I began to feel more at home exploring his epistemology-ontology and its practical applications, especially in education. I also began to develop a habit of meditation. This continued throughout my thirties and forties as a teacher, becoming a consistent, introspective practice of inner calm.

This was a world that was mine alone; I never thought for a moment to share it with anyone else. Then, when I was 50, I became a university lecturer in education with responsibility for some courses in Steiner education as well as 'mainstream' teacher education courses. My first few years lecturing in Steiner education were spent covering what I thought I 'should' cover – I think I did a decent job but it did not flow from me in the deepest sense. I was trying to meet what I thought were someone else's expectations – in effect, I was enacting a Deleuzian tracing, despite having spoken against them. Gradually, my practice became more individual and I began to adapt my teaching to reflect what was important to me – stressing the centrality of inner work and the importance of questioning what is commonly accepted for anyone looking to work in a Steiner setting or with the ideas of Steiner, in order to gain a personal and independent relationship with Steiner's ideas and approach to the world. This has strengthened as time has gone on (Boland, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2020a).

Beyond the works of Foucault, Deleuze and Steiner, a fourth key influence needs to be mentioned. This is the work of the Illuminationists, foremost among them the 12th century Iranian-born Sufi mystic, Suhrawardī (Marcott, 2012; Nowrozi, 2012; Walbridge, 2005). Reading these highly formed, in-part ecstatic documents from a different time and a different culture, I am drawn into an esoteric landscape which is immediately familiar although described in different terms and with different images. It was a revelation to me (should I say illumination?) to read an account at once so remote and so close. The impact on me of reading something so intimately familiar yet clothed in completely different words is illustrated by my reaction at the end of the first day I read any of Suhrawardī's work (in Corbin, 1953/1977): I went to sleep curled up, holding the book tightly to my chest – something I had certainly never done before. I had discovered a companion as well as a guide.

As the rhizome continues to grow, to encounter, change, suffer die-backs and expand into new territory, it remains underground. The authors I have mentioned inform my work and understanding. How they interact with each other matures over time. This is something which happens as if of itself, in quietness and often unobserved, put here beautifully by Virginia Woolf:

Wait for the dust of reading to settle; for the conflict and the questioning to die down; walk, talk, pull the dead petals from a rose, or fall asleep. Then suddenly without our willing it, for

adults with special needs, anthroposophical medicine and its pharmacological associates, Weleda and Wala, biodynamic agriculture and others.

it is thus that Nature undertakes these transitions, the book will return, but differently. It will float to the top of the mind as a whole. (1935/2015, p. 6)

Over time, I have begun to realise that I sense a (personal) requirement to speak of this inner journey in my writing and to explore what it means for me as an academic (Boland, 2019, 2021). I confess that this has an ulterior motive. I hope that others will do the same and so a body of exploratory work can be built up which can be discussed and critiqued (da Veiga, 2014). This new step is still uncomfortable and riven with uncertainty, yet it feels 'right' in other, likely parrhesiastic ways.

A Question of Soil

All the influences mentioned in the section above interact and interrelate, mix and clash in this rhizomic structure within me. It stands to reason that rhizomic growth is strongly related to the fertility of the soil it grows in. I would like to take a moment, then, to talk about how the soil of a lived spirituality is tended or made more fertile.

Many authors over time have talked about the importance of stillness in inner life. Steiner calls it "quietness of soul" (1914/2008, p. 9) or "the great stillness" (1906 & 1923/1983, p. 15). The *Tao Te Ching* talks similarly about "great stillness" (Lao-tzu & Mitchell, 2009, p. 15):

*Do you have the patience to wait
till your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
till the right action arises by itself?*

This is, essentially, a preparation for the habit of meditation, though it does not need to be called meditation or to follow any school of meditative practice. Over years I have developed my own meditative routine to help "turn the perceptive faculty inward and hold it to attention there." (Plotinus, c. 250 CE, p. 214), Marcus Aurelius's *anakhōrēsis* (withdrawal into oneself) (180/2008, IV, 3) – which is as much a part of my day as an early morning cup of coffee. It relies on stillness and in turn generates stillness, allowing me to sense what I would otherwise likely miss – what is "heard, half-heard in the stillness" (Eliot, 1942/2014, p. 59). The author Franz Kafka puts it nicely, in terms refreshingly far removed from those usually applied to meditation:

You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait; be quiet, still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice; it will roll in ecstasy at your feet. (1931/2006, p. 108)

As part of this daily routine, I practise what Steiner called the *Six basic exercises* (Steiner, 2010; van Gelder, 2011), practical activities or mental attitudes which work towards the cultivation of concentration, willingness to act, equilibrium, positivity and openness. The longer one practises them, the easier they begin to be, to maintain. It is not a journey in which, in my experience, there are 'dark places' which I am editing out or ignoring. Working on concentration, openness and equanimity leads consistently away from dark places rather

than towards them. 'Waiting for [the] mud to settle/and the water is clear' is, in my experience, a place of tranquillity rather than anything else. I am not attempting an auto-psychological assessment here, but describing an inner path and how it plays out in my work and influences my students.

It is the daily tending of this inner earth which (I think) strengthens and encourages the progress of the rhizome. The stillness of regular meditative practice creates conditions for connections and links to be made between disparate and diverse authors, traditions and understandings. de Sousa Santos (2014) calls for an ecology of knowledges, a rich intermingling of diverse and complementary (and sometimes conflicting) understandings – a multiangulation of positions – perhaps reminiscent of bricolage, or as Theyer-Bacon calls it, "weaving the warp and weft of an ontological–epistemological net." (2017). I can very much identify with this.

I now shift the interior focus I have adopted so far to look outwards to consider how my values have been shaped by this interior process and how that plays out in my work.

What Are My Values and How do I Work to Refine Them?

Palmer talks about "an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self." (2007, p. 13) – which he names *identity*. This 'mystery of self' is unpacked above, in so far as limitations of space allow. But for the educator, besides identity must be considered *integrity*, by which "I discern what is integral to my selfhood, what fits and what does not – and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge within me." (p. 14). It is out of these – which I call values – that I work.

These values find their foundation in or on the interior rhizomic network of influence(r)s and associated practices which has been built up over years and is connected strongly to the past. At the same time, I use them to direct my work towards the future, towards what I consider important. Essentially, this involves contributing minutely towards making the world a better place for all its inhabitants to live in. I am under no illusions that I can do little towards this end, but it is nonetheless an important goal. It involves working towards notions of sustainability in its many forms – social sustainability, economic sustainability, environmental sustainability (Boland & Dobson, 2020) – as well as social justice, anti-oppression and anti-discrimination (Boland, 2017b, 2020b).

So far in this article, I have explored what lies inside me; it is not visible to anyone else, not to family, to colleagues, to students, to those I care about. While it is not something I commonly discuss (and I realise the irony of keeping such experiences private while here expressing them in a format in which they can be openly accessed), it is essential and foundational to all aspects of my life.

I put my hand up to many hypocritical moments when I do the opposite of what I say I value. I make mistakes, hurt people I do not mean to hurt, act or speak out of ignorance. There are countless times when I have wanted to speak out, but instead remained silent. I mention this not as penance, *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*, but in order to learn and do better. The Stoic Seneca (c. 40 CE/1958) speaks of reviewing each day before sleep – *totum diem meum scrutor* – I examine the day just past as *speculator sui*, an observer of myself, to

see how I can improve tomorrow and resolve to do better (Wildberger & Colish, 2014). The same is found in Steiner (1904–1909/2007):

Every evening before going to sleep we should go back through our day from the end to the beginning ... When we have done something bad we should not regret, but rather think: at that time I was not able to act otherwise; how, however, I can do it better and want to do it better in the future. (p. 163)

Either way, it is done for the purpose of self-improvement or self-care rather than regret and remorse.

In reviewing the day, Seneca does not pursue the examination of his conscience by himself; he does it in the presence of his wife. The non-private nature of this I find echoed in Foucault's exhortation "to publish the truth about oneself" (1980/2016, p. 26) and Whitehead's call for academics to "make a claim to know their development" (2018, p. 9) in "a dialogical form which enables [it] to be presented for public criticism." (p. 14). Writing this article is then a Foucauldian self-publication, opening myself up to the public gaze and offering myself for criticism. It is not something I do lightly.

So, the rhizome travels and develops underground. At periods, however, it sends up a shoot into the light and which can be seen by others. What do these shoots then look like in my work life?

How This is Expressed in My Professional Work

There are two ways I can approach this section: what is expressed outwardly in my professional work and what is expressed by other means. Outer first.

There are times when I work with students or with teachers when I need to, when I do speak concretely about the value of cultivating a quiet part of every day for contemplation – the words change according to the situation. If the term 'meditation' is not going to frighten the horses, then I'll talk about meditation but, as mentioned above, the word interests me less than talking about the practice. Similarly, I have spoken about the kernel of the human being, what I would call an inner core, the spiritual essence of a person, in lots of different ways in different contexts, whether that be Steiner education, mainstream initial teacher education, postgraduate studies, or teacher professional development. Doing this can open the door to rich and deeply inquiring series of conversations over extended periods of time.

It is harder to put my finger on specific non-outer expressions of lived spirituality. The more lived spirituality becomes a way of being, a "modification of existence" (Foucault, 1981–2/2005, p. 15), the more it enters every aspect of life and can be seen in everything. For me, spirituality is a process, a transformational practice – usually slow, steady work with very occasional breakthroughs. Encouraging transformation in others has become a more conscious technique than earlier in my professional life. I have come to realise that, for me, it is a question of encouraging people to experience their boundaries and push against them. We can 'know' many things but while this knowledge remains only in our heads it is, for me,

not embodied, not lived, not living. Such knowledge does not necessarily change us; we have the thoughts but don't live the thoughts. I am drawn to Foucault again (1981–2/2005):

...when the philosopher (or scientist) ... can recognize the truth and have access to it in himself and solely through his activity of knowing, without anything else being demanded of him and without him having to change or alter his being as subject. (p. 17)

This is what in 'Steiner' terms would be called 'head knowledge'. There is then a step for it to become 'heart knowledge', 'heart thinking'. Steiner indicates that this is something which becomes more marked with age, when thoughts have the possibility of being united with feeling, they "have transitioned from feeling will to feeling thinking or thinking feeling" (Steiner, 1919/2020, p. 159) – embodied, lived and experienced thoughts, when our "hearts are beginning to have thoughts" (Steiner, 1924/2007, pp. 53–54). Interestingly, 'head knowledge' can also be of Steiner's work; being able to quote Steiner at length without [the speaker] having to change or alter his being as subject is sadly not uncommon; this is in effect speaking out of a tracing of Steiner's work, without having internalised to become part of one's own map. Embodied knowing is something which Steiner identifies as associated with artistic endeavour and artistic imagination:

I wanted to point out an area which is only grasped by artistic imagination and must now be taken seriously by humankind, because that is the stage which humanity must rise to in order to unite itself with the supersensible; it cannot be grasped by the brain. (Steiner, 1919/1989, p. 94, Trans. author)

This way of thinking or of sensing is something I increasingly aim for. Earlier I hoped to do it, was happy when it happened, but now it has become much more of a conscious focus. In doing this I find that I work on a much more intuitive level than I formerly have as a university lecturer. I push more frequently into the unknown with students, deal more with intangibles, lead them closer to the limits of their thoughts and out into new territory. It is something I always had the possibility of doing, but I acknowledge that there has been some kind of step taken by me as lecturer to do it now on a much more regular basis. I then wonder what has changed that this has come to the fore now. Thinking this through at length, I am left with the transformative experience of completing a Ph.D. and what I went through on that journey:

I began [my doctorate] aware that I worked with two kinds of experience: the sensory and the supersensory. They were both experienced by me as subject, but came from different places. I thought of them to myself as separate, as separate aspects of myself. I worked extensively with the image of the abyss and the divide between the material world and what I would call the spiritual—a duality. We hold this duality within our organisation. Yet to gain a full picture of the world and ourselves as subjects we somehow need to change seeing these two realms as separate and opposed and work from a monist outlook "uniting what is spiritual with what is material", advocating "descend[ing] into the depths of our own being" (Steiner, 1894/1995, p. 26).

The feeling I voiced above of being carried through and beyond feeling this separation is perhaps the truly liminal experience I need to identify here. I no longer regard them as separate sides to my experience; they are joined at every moment. (Boland, 2021)

This has, for me, been a major shift – outwardly imperceptible, but inwardly transformative. For me it links to Csikszentmihalyi's notion of flow (2004, 2014) which I value for its integral nature, a way of theorising lived experience which unites and joins rather than separates and analyses. Regardless, this invisible change has made a difference to my teaching.

In saying this, I have immediately to reject any impression I might give that I live and work in an ideal state of intuitive, inspired flow. Of course that is not the case. Those who know me can tell you that there are plenty of occasions when the opposite is true. There are times when I take the easy way out, the path of least resistance, the lazy short cut. If I were terming it more harshly, the cop out. I decide which occasions I am willing to push for what I think, to 'fight' as it were for what I see as important – there are many occasions when I do not. I can frustrate myself through this stepping back, backing off, yet I can also justify it as if I was to push for what I thought was right or appropriate every time, I would be the most inflexible (and unwelcome) colleague and doors would undoubtedly be shut for me. I know I do not achieve the ideal balance in this, and not infrequently stay silent when I should likely speak out, but I do believe that I have got a little better at it over time.

My Influence on the Social Formations in Which I Live and Work

I work in a School of Education within a large university in New Zealand and am active across programmes – undergraduate and postgraduate – as well as in Steiner teacher education and professional development worldwide. It is a privileged position which gives me at least as many opportunities to extend my own understanding as I afford others to extend theirs. I look here at how my inner journey can have a positive influence outwardly in the learning of others and how the "... experiences and implications of [my] living values [can] carry hope for the flourishing of humanity." (Whitehead, 2020).

I know that there are ways in which I affect those around me, both as lecturer and colleague of which I am only slightly aware. In the course of lectures that Steiner gave for those who work with children in need of special care, he made the following statement:

You have no idea how unimportant is all that the teacher says or does not say on the surface, and how important what he himself is as teacher. (1924/1998, p. 40)

This is a remarkable sentence in several ways. Firstly it reveals how current foci on student academic attainment and measurable outcomes are possibly overvalued when assessing the effectiveness of teachers, schools and educational institutions. It also asserts the 'soft power' of the educator, aside from what is taught – the manifold ways we learn from example, what Vygotsky would perhaps call the zone of proximal development.

So, for this section I am grateful to some former students and colleagues who were willing to be interviewed and answer some questions. The first is of a conversation with Elliot Thomas whom I taught as an undergraduate and later postgrad and who teaches in a local intermediate school.

I asked him the rather challenging question, "Are you able to discern any influence that I have or have had on your work?" This is not a question I would otherwise ask anyone. I

find this conversation (and the one below) enlightening, in that they invite people I know and have different relationships with the opportunity to express things I imagine they would otherwise never say to me. It is a different form of parrhesia – becoming a truth-listener rather than truth-teller. This idea and experience of being a ‘truth listener’ was initially awkward. This was due to the need to place myself in a position of vulnerability and open myself to the possibility that would hear things which I did not want to, regardless of the fact that I was speaking to people I know and trust. At the same time, I found this position of vulnerability a powerful gesture of reception which involved me putting myself in a position of almost child-like trust. I opened myself to what was going to be said and tried to receive it in the way in which it was meant. Any uncertainty was soon dispelled by the answering openness and straightforwardness of both conversation partners.



Video 1: In conversation with Elliot Thomas

<https://youtu.be/G9763DvA0vE> (Boland, 2020c)

I appreciate the way Elliot tries to articulate his notions of ‘something greater’, a feeling of connectedness, obviously striving for words which are not always easy to find, and the realisation of the importance of who the teacher is as a human being, what they bring with them to the teaching encounter. This is important, both within initial teacher education (ITE) and teacher development. In my experience, it is rare that the development of self-aware, spiritually intelligent teachers, who are lifelong learners and can influence the development of the same qualities in their students, is mentioned as a goal in ITE. I believe it is important that this facet of human experience is offered to teaching students, as school students may ask them to touch on or explore these deeper questions at some point during their teaching career. It being so frequently unrepresented in teacher education is, to my mind, a lack.

What I think I do, in multiple ways and in multiple fora is acknowledge and valorise aspects of life other than the physical in ways which allow others to develop an understanding of diverse ways of being. This would then include what Gardener calls "existential intelligence" (2020), the development of inner and philosophical capacities and interests, which in turn forms a point of active resistance to what Facer calls the "neurotic comparison of statistical evidence" (2011, p. 21) and the managerial quantification of educational 'attainment'.

The idea that I have helped someone find their way towards being able to articulate this in their teaching journey is humbling, encouraging and, I must admit, satisfying.

The second video I include here is a conversation with Dr. Anita Mortlock, ECE lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington. I first met Anita as a student on the same

postgraduate courses in Steiner education as Elliot. Shortly after this we became critical friends on a Ministry of Education-funded project into creativity in early childhood settings, which involved working with two groups of teachers on their own creative processes.

She includes a few themes I have mentioned in this article. They include the notion of constantly challenging people to extend their thinking, the importance of teachers working on their inner life, embodying 'lived expression, lived feelings', and trying not to judge and to be open to people. That openness can involve discomfort, indicated by "asking the difficult questions" in order to move the process onwards. The full video is below:



Video 2. In conversation with Dr Anita Mortlock
<https://youtu.be/P9aWjLTz0GM> (Boland, 2020d)

One of the participants in the creativity research project I am currently working on with Anita had to decide what medium to choose for her artistic inquiry. She elected to meet her fears head on, confronting what she acknowledged later were "artistic wounds" (Olson, 2009) from earlier in her life. "At the beginning of the project, my artistic anxiety was immense. Fear was real, and felt in my body, crippling." and "I started with [drawing] because I find it excruciating!" Through weeks and months of diligent, not-always-easy practice, what I would call the inner nature of artistic endeavour began to appear within her work, as she took what had been for her the most painful medium and began to use it to explore herself, her feelings and experiences. This to me is a fine example of artistic askesis – a steady working on oneself, in the end leading to inner transformation:

I never expected the richness and depth of the journey within myself. To begin with there was an external focus for me. I [initially] looked at creativity as being an output of art, performance, words, concepts, design and then I went through a process where the external was not important or a focus anymore. I came to realise over the duration of the research project that creativity is a rich inner journey, an honouring of self where inspiration comes and then flows outward. The more I focus on inner processes like contemplation, meditation, art, the deeper connection I have with others. (Boland & Muñoz, 2021)

I consider this shows what can begin to happen when people engage and seek to explore, through diverse practices, what lies within them, when the subject chooses to put skin into the game, to put their own being forward as potential material for transformation. To quote Foucault again, "The truth is only given to the subject at a price that brings the subject's being into play." (1981–2/2005, p. 15). Doing this entails risk and demands courage, but when structuring any participant-guided programme which hopes to be

transformative, I recognise the possible rewards and strive to keep the process, and the participants, safe.

Conclusion

In this article, I see that I have dwelled more than I first thought I would on the unseen progress and development of the rhizome under the earth as it slowly grows, becoming ever more complex, expanding its territory. In doing this, it sends up shoots (professional practice). These shoots do not indicate where the growing tip of the rhizome *is*, they indicate where it *has been* – for it is always moving on as its journey continues.

Writing this article has given me a renewed appreciation of the importance of identifying and naming influences in my life, in my thought, in order to bring them to consciousness and realise how they shape my practice and inform my way of being in the world. Put more philosophically, the act of engaging with Foucault's ideas on the archaeology of knowledge, realising the degree to which one's thoughts and values comprise untidy and complex discursive interrelationships, of influences "repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden far from all view, in the dust of books" (1969/2012, p. 27) has great value for anyone looking to create their living-theory. What we think of as a unified position or our stated outlook may in fact be an unidentified trove of 'discontinuities' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2013) awaiting excavation at some future moment. I realise anew how important such archaeological work is.

Plato talks in *Alcibiades* about *epimeleisthai heautou* (to take care of oneself, to be concerned for oneself, to care for the self), as "a form of vigilant, continuous, applied, regular activity much more than a mental attitude." (Foucault, 1981-2/2005, p. 84). This strikes a chord with how I would describe my living-theory, my way of being in the world and my professional identity. This then builds what Musonius Rufus calls a *techne tou biou* – an art or craft of living. Developing this craft is a process everyone undertakes although, as practitioners of Living Theory, we investigate then articulate what it means for us. As I consider my own *techne tou biou*, I am left thinking of a line I learned at school. The beginning of Chaucer's the *Parlement of foules* (c. 1382/2017) reads, "The lyf so short, the craft so longe to lern." As I deepen my understanding of my living-theory and try to embody what I term 'lived spirituality' more deeply, I realise that I am walking a path I began a long time ago and which will not end. Enacting a living-theory is a life's work.

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