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The Studiers' Constraint: Whiteheadian Adventures and Matters of Study

In his address, “The Universities and Their Function,” the British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead asserted that “the universities should be homes of adventure shared in common by young and old.”¹ It is this proposition, uttered at the inauguration of the Harvard School of Business, that will make possible a new relay. With that goal in mind, Whitehead’s proposition not only allows for a new beginning, but also needs to be taken up with the dramatization of the event of study in the activities of Campus in Camps, so that their practice may indeed come to matter in a more philosophical consideration of the future of the university as well. In fact, Whitehead’s proposition emphasizes a conception of the university—a home of adventures—as a way of inhabiting the world, which strikingly dovetails with the questions that initiated and animated the work of Campus in Camps, namely how to live with and in ruins, and how to inhabit the permanent state of exception of the camp?

Assisted by Stengers’ work on Whitehead, his proposition will be unpacked and brought to bear on the question of the university. Conceiving of the university as “a home of adventures” raises the question of what Whitehead might mean when he uses the peculiar notion of adventure. Moreover, his statement situates the university as a dwelling for such Whiteheadian adventures as embedded within the world already inhabited by the studiers. From the middle of the chapter onwards, the concept of “matters of study” will be coined to create a reciprocal capture between studying and learning, two educational processes whose dynamics—as we have seen—have often been claimed to exclude each other mutually. In this chapter, I want to argue that learning and studying do not so much render each other impossible, but instead require, intensify, and complicate each other in the course of the aforementioned Whiteheadian adventures.

Ruminations of Common Sense

When thinking of Whitehead's notion of adventure, it is essential to keep in mind his commitment to the idea that thought should not exclude anything.² Stengers explains this commitment by referring to Whitehead's reading of Socrates' activities on the agora as just such an adventure of thought for the fundamental reason that it actively engages the ruminations of common sense.³ What will become clear is that thinking for Whitehead is not predicated on a critical attitude that purifies an argument or extracts certain positions from the debate by debunking and denouncing, but instead on a speculative one that adds to what is already ruminating, that complexifies and densifies, and that is, ultimately, adventurous, rather than revolutionary.

She goes on to explain that in *Modes of thought*, Whitehead goes back to the streets of Ancient Athens to witness the conversations between Socrates and the inhabitants of the polis in order to reinterpret the role of the philosopher: he claims that there are different beginnings of philosophy to be distinguished based on the multiple interpretations that are possible of Socrates' engagement with the public. It is possible to encounter, for instance, Socrates, master of the aporia, who does not pretend to have an answer to the questions he raises, but who only wants to confront his interlocutors with the difficulty, if not impossibility, of formulating a response. Secondly, we encounter Socrates, master of Plato, for whom the aporia paves the way for a learning process during which the Athenians discover a knowledge that transcends the divergent responses that they have suggested themselves. And finally, we encounter Socrates, the martyr, who has been condemned for poisoning the public peace and corrupting the youth.⁴

Whitehead wonders which attitude Socrates could adopt in the face of the ignorance encountered on the streets of Athens. Stengers clarifies that, not excluding anything from thinking, the Whiteheadian Socrates brings a kind of assemblage, a gathering into being.⁵ None of the different responses received, no matter how divergent or partial, are merely denounced or debunked in order to demonstrate one of the interlocutors' ignorance. Instead, Socrates listens to the question of Lysimachus, relays the issue to Nicias, whose answer elicits the dissenting opinion of Laches, and consults Melesias' feeling about the topic. Moreover, he continues to complicate the discussion by bringing in new elements.

In Whitehead's rendering of the foundational myth of philosophy, Socrates is not someone who just confronts blunt ignorance—only himself being aware of his own ignorance; he is rather the one who activates a landscape of diverging

lines of thought, which he aims to transform and not pass judgment on. "If he does not step forward as an arbitrator, judging and excluding, the question of divergence can become a matter of collective concern, that is to say, become a dimension of what, with Whitehead, we can call common sense."⁶ As such, the Socrates staged in Stengers' reading of Whitehead is someone who energizes the ruminations of common sense, who incites the public to express their thoughts and opinions, to object to that which "goes without saying," and to make thinking into a collective event.

Hence, the Whiteheadian Socrates does not interrogate his interlocutors *despite* their responses, but is *in need of* these responses to think and to make thinking a collective affair, and not only strategically or rhetorically to make an already certain point more palatable. He encounters citizens who were already thinking long before he arrived at the agora. This Socrates is engaged in and situated by a common sense that ruminates and that was already ruminating long before his arrival. He adopts an affirmative stance with regard to the diverging lines of thought he encounters and constantly complicates the conversation.

Hence, instead of extracting, the gesture of critique, the Whiteheadian Socrates *adds* to what is already ruminating. Instead of stepping forward as the one who claims to know, or even the one who knows that he does not know, he presents himself as the one who encourages the inhabitants of Athens to articulate their thoughts around an issue of collective concern, a question that makes common sense ruminate, such as the question of how we can train the children to be brave, what it means to live a virtuous life, or, as in the case of Campus in Camps, how to live with and in ruins.

In doing so, the ruminations of common sense are taken up in an adventure that transforms the terms which had been mobilized to articulate the positions of those gathered with respect to the problem that connects them. Think, for instance, of how the common sense of the camp ruminated the right of return, how the right of return afforded a specific experience of the situation—an experience that eventually could be transformed.

Savransky reminds us that the concept of adventure, despite its more romantic connotations, derives etymologically from the Latin *adventurus*, "which signals an exposure to that which is about to happen, that is, an investment in the possibility of an event, where the latter becomes associated with a sense of difference that matters."⁷ An adventure in the Whiteheadian sense opens up a middle space, in between a questioning situation that makes common sense ruminate, and the possible transformation of this questioning situation—from the right of return to the return to the commons.

In that sense, by exposing itself to what the future might bring, thinking, on the condition that it does not exclude anything as urged by Whitehead, can be understood as a “welding of imagination and common sense.”⁸ This entails endorsing a speculative relation toward common sense, instead of one that is critical. Whereas the critical gesture always extracts by cutting away what is supposedly deceitful or illusionary, the speculative gesture adds by welding—a metallurgic operation—the possible to the problems that make common sense ruminate, in view of an adventurous transformation of those ruminations.

Furthermore, whereas a critical attitude would *purify* the scene of reasoning, a speculative attitude *densifies* the scene by continuously adding to the ruminations of common sense. This means that the Whiteheadian Socrates does not extract certain positions from a debate by means of debunking or criticizing. Instead, he aims to articulate specific diverging lines of thought while complicating the reasons uttered by his interlocutors. In doing so, the people the Whiteheadian Socrates’ encounters on the agora start to relate in a different way to the reasons they have given, and what they were talking about becomes a cause for thinking.

It is important to underscore that speculation, here, indeed refers neither to the rationalities associated with financial speculation for future accumulation of wealth nor to the calculation of probabilities in view of control and management. It should instead be associated with a struggle against the probabilities that would make any future predictable or manageable in advance. Speculation in the sense of Stengers and Whitehead means to open up the possibility of a future that is not a mere extension of the present or of what presents itself as inevitable or most probable. Instead, “speculating demands the active taking of risks that enable an exploration of the plurality of the present.”⁹ As such, speculation takes what is already there as its point of departure in the present, the ruminations of common sense, yet seeks to transform what makes common sense ruminate into a cause for collective and differential thinking, instead of a cause for individual, unilinear judgment (“Laches is wrong, and Nicias is right”) or relativistic indifference (“both Laches and Nicias are right when considered from their respective perspectives”).

Judgment and indifference are two positions that do not require taking a risk, as they find security in either a transcendent code, or general relativism. In other words, the adventure neither aims at passing judgment (“they believe, we know”), nor does it produce indifference (“in my opinion, in your opinion”). However, it adds to what is already ruminating in view of a possible transformation of these diverging lines of thinking, “to make sense in common,”¹⁰ a collective and transformative achievement which is of the order of the event.

Put differently, Whitehead's speculative gesture needs to be understood as "a gesture that bets on the possibility of conferring on that which brings us together the power to make us think together."¹¹ It is a risky gesture that wagers on the possibility to create a "we" that is engaged in a collective process of thinking. Welding imagination and common sense requires a common sense that is capable of ruminating, of objecting, and that is recalcitrant:

The Whiteheadian adventure does not aim at awakening, leaving the cave. It is itself a dream, a storytelling: to learn 'inside' the Platonic cave, together with those who live and argue within it. Not in the hope that the false appearances will gradually yield their secrets, but in the hope that these 'appearances,' if they are appreciated in their affirmative importance, might be articulated into fabulous contrasts.¹²

Put differently, the Whiteheadian adventure is a thoroughly collective and transformative process, oriented toward the future. It activates and engages the different dimensions of common sense and affirms them in their divergences, without trying to go *beyond* what makes common sense ruminate. It is oriented toward the future in the sense that it does not try to know or control the future (e.g., to predict based on what is probable), but instead makes those gathered sensitive to the possible that insists in every situation and that makes it possible to resist the futures that present themselves as obvious or necessary.

Whitehead's proposition concerning the university as a home of adventure does not only put forward the kind of adventures described above as the main activity of the university. It also situates these adventures within a worldly environment by calling the university a home, implying an exteriority, an outside. This part of his proposition raises the question of how the university, *with* its adventurous style of thinking, might constitute a home, how it generates a manner of inhabiting the world, a mode of habitation.

On Habits and Habitats

Thinking of the university in terms of habitation, as a home, as Whitehead's proposition demands, draws attention to the relation between the university and those who inhabit it on the one hand, and the relation between the university and the environment which it inhabits on the other hand. Thinking in terms of habitation, however, does not separate the question of the habits of those gathered from the habitats that might require a slight transformation of those habits. Proposing to conceive of the university as a home of adventures requires

to think of “the mutation of the habits that animate certain ways of response with the constraints and possibilities of transformation that their respective habitats may provide.”¹³ Thus taking up the question of habitation as a central theme allows for avoiding two distinct but parallel pitfalls constituted by isolating or separating either of the two dimensions of habitation—habit or habitat.

The first danger is to reframe habitation as a question of habits, of modes of individual behavior in a world that remains, from the perspective of habits, largely forgotten. When Foucault, for instance, in his later work on ethics, subjectivity, and truth focuses on technologies of the self as “habitual” practices of formation of the self dating back to the Greco-Roman period, he makes himself vulnerable to the first danger of understanding these practices as “exercises of self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself.”¹⁴ Endorsing such a strong focus on the self, and more particularly on a conception of the self as an independent ethical substance to be worked on and ultimately transformed, risks forgetting the connection between self and world.¹⁵ Put differently, by reducing the question of the self to a matter of technologies of the self, Foucault risks remaining indifferent to the worldly or cosmic dimension of habits, and to reduce ethology to ethics.

The second danger would be to reduce habitation to a question of habitats, of designs of environments that would produce specific kinds of subjectivities and ways of living one’s life. Exemplary in this context is Sloterdijk’s theory of the anthropogenic island in which he analyzes different dwellings and designs. Conceiving of architecture as “the medium in which the explication of the human sojourn in manmade interiors processually articulates itself,”¹⁶ he raises the question of which kind of human becoming these dwellings and designs render possible or impossible. His study of the apartment is a case in point in how the architectural surroundings constitute a basis for philosophical reflection on our contemporary condition: “Dwelling itself and the production of its containers becomes a spelling-out of all the dimensions of components that are joined in primal coalescence on the anthropogenic island.”¹⁷ When considered from the perspective of habitation, however, Sloterdijk’s overemphasis on habitats as production sites of human becoming risks to reduce the problem of ecology to a problem of—in a Sloterdijkian turn of phrase—ecologistics by understanding the world as a repository for anthropogenic resources.¹⁸

It requires no argumentation that both approaches have their value for the questions they seek to address, of subjectivity and anthropogenesis, respectively. However, they have little to offer when trying to understand Whitehead’s peculiar conception of the university as a mode of habitation, as both approaches separate

the ethological question of habits from the ecological question of habitats. Stengers argues that the concepts of habit and habitat are strongly interrelated and that it is impossible to come to terms with one side of the problem without immediately taking into account the other. The etho-ecological perspective, as she calls it, affirms

the inseparability of *ethos*, the way of behaving peculiar to a being, and *oikos*, the habitat of that being, and the way in which that habitat satisfies or opposes the demands associated with the *ethos* or affords opportunities for an original *ethos* to risk itself.¹⁹

In that sense, reading Whitehead's proposition through Stengers etho-ecological lens draws attention to the interrelatedness of habits and habitats, how habitats may propose certain kinds of behavior, while leaving to the being inhabiting the habitat the freedom to dispose or even oppose.

John Dewey has perhaps most famously written on the interrelatedness of habits and habitats. In his reflection on the meaning of environment in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey begins with assuring that the environment denotes something more than the surroundings which encompass the human being. He asserts that the environment has to be understood as "the specific *continuity* of the surroundings with his [the human being] own active tendencies."²⁰ As such, Dewey affirms that the living being and its environment are strongly interrelated, co-dependent, and share their existence in the same lively milieu.

Drawing on a few examples, Dewey goes on to explain that the activities of an astronomer, for instance, "vary with the stars at which he gazes or about which he calculates."²¹ Likewise, the archaeologist relies on the relics, inscriptions, and ruins that constitute his environment, which he requires in order to get access to the epoch of his concern. Stressing the *continuity* between living beings and their environments, Dewey defines a habit as "an ability to use natural conditions as means to ends. It is an active control of the environment through control of the organs of action."²² In other words, a habit determines the way a living being goes about in his environment. Furthermore, education, in the Deweyan sense, should then be understood as "consisting in the acquisition of those habits that effect an adjustment of an individual and his environment."²³

Dewey emphasizes that a distinction is to be made between passive habits, ways of doing that are wrought within the organism, and active habits, ways of doing in which the individual takes control over his environment. He gathers the passive habits under the denominator of *habituation*, which he defines as "our adjustment to an environment which at the time we are not concerned with modifying."²⁴ It is the way we get used to our surroundings—clothing, home,

city—by unconsciously making use of what they offer in our daily lives. “We get used to things by *first* using them.”²⁵ The active habits are part of a process of what Dewey calls *adaptation*, which he defines as “quite as much adaptation of the environment to our own activities as of our activities to the environment.”²⁶ With this concept, he stresses the fact that both individual and environment are engaged in a process in which each part affects transformations in the other. In other words, and drawing on Haraway, the Deweyan etho-ecological perspective can be understood as reflecting the process of symbiogenesis, a becoming-with of the world and the being that is part of it.

Dewey’s writings on the relation between being and environment become problematic, however, when he asserts that “the environment consists of those conditions that promote or hinder, stimulate or inhibit, the *characteristic* activities of a living being.”²⁷ He gives the example of water, which provides an environment for a fish, since “it is necessary to the fish’s activities—to its life.”²⁸ He goes on to explain that the north pole is “a significant element in the environment of an arctic explorer, whether he succeeds in reaching it or not, because it defines his activities, makes them what they distinctively are.”²⁹

Nevertheless, what if, as of this moment, the water that constituted the habitat of the fish becomes increasingly polluted with oil and plastic? What will be the “characteristic activities” of the fish? What should the arctic explorer do as the prospect of a summer without a north pole becomes more likely every year? Developments such as the pollution of the oceans and the breakdown of ecosystems due to extinction pose a challenge to Dewey’s understanding of the environment as those conditions that make the “characteristic activities” of a living being possible or impossible. Instead of explaining what the characteristic activities of a living being are, the developments above raise the question of what a living being is *capable of*.

Stengers dramatizes the question of what a living being is capable of by drawing on the transformation of the “characteristic activities” of amaranth—a resistant weed. Due to the extensive use of *Roundup* on soils destined for the propagation of genetically modified soybeans, amaranth had become capable of resisting the eradication its natural habits, its characteristic activities, would have caused. Given this radical shift in its living conditions, the poisoning of its habitat, the amaranth had to adapt itself to its new, supposedly lethal environment. In doing so, the plant has actually become capable of surviving in an environment that was designed for its extermination.

Stengers explains that “the possibility that an amaranth becomes tolerant of *Roundup* is therefore an ‘adaptation’ that its population has been capable of at

the moment the environment had become lethal. The science *made in* Monsanto has neglected what the aim of survival made the population of amaranths capable of.”³⁰ It is important to emphasize that this is not an intentional, let alone critical, action on the part of the amaranth as an active subject. Rather, this species has become a site where an unforeseen event could take place, a new contingent articulation in the becoming of the world.

As such, this presents a strong case of an etho-ecological event, which shows that the inseparability of *ethos* and *oikos* does not equal their dependence. No habit is entirely contingent on its habitat, and no habitat can transform in any predictable way the habits it engenders. The ruination of soils due to Roundup did not determine the eradication of amaranth. Instead, it made the species capable of resisting such an eradication, altering or modulating its sensitivity to its threat. Stengers makes clear that “the environment proposes but that the being disposes, gives or refuses to give that proposal an ethological significance.”³¹ She adds, however, that at the same time, an *ethos* never contains in itself, *a priori*, its own meanings, let alone that it can master its own reasons. In other words, the question of what a being is capable of, in response to its environment, is subject to the highest unpredictability and its achievement of the order of the event.

If we are to follow Whitehead's proposition that the university is a home of adventures, this co-dependency of *ethos* and *oikos*, habit and habitat, needs to be taken seriously, starting exactly from the indeterminacy given in the fact that we never know what a living being is capable of. Put otherwise, it means to conceive of the interrelatedness of being and environment not as a closed loop of stimulus-response reactions, but as an open system prone to the highest unpredictability. More precisely, Whitehead's proposition raises the question of how the university as a habitat for adventures might provide an occasion for transforming existing habits of thought by giving something the power to make us think. This means that this problematic something that is made present in the environment affords an *ethos* of study the possibility to risk itself, to become engaged in a Whiteheadian adventure that might transform the terms in which the problem was initially posed.

Sympoiesis or Taking Care of the Consequences

Following Whitehead in considering the university as a home of adventures, the question arises how this concept relates to the idea of the university as a welding of experimental and diplomatic uses of reason, as suggested earlier. Taking

up this line of thought, it seems as if the university should not only foster the coming into being of scientific inventions and facts by way of an experimental use of reason, but also ought to take care of the consequences these inventions and facts might elicit within a world that might have profoundly changed with their coming into being, offering an occasion for slowing down.

Taking care of the consequences, considered a pragmatic art here, refers to how these inventions and scientific facts relate to the world, how they can be received by the world, how they possibly respond to problematic situations that make common sense ruminate.³² In other words, the university is not only the site where the question how to learn something new finds its home (the question that makes scientist-practitioners converge despite the variety of scientific practices), it also raises the question how to learn *anew*: how to live together *with* that which in the course of scientific practices has come into being?

At this point, the invention of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) might provide a clarifying illustration. According to Stengers, common sense is precisely what could object against specific uses of scientific findings such as GMOs. The invention of GMOs requires a milieu where this scientific fabrication might come to matter in one way rather than in another, and thus where its meaning might be something of concern. The activists gathered around the issue of GMOs, for instance, do not just criticize or debunk these crops as such, they primarily raise the question of what consequences the production of GMOs plays into, of how GMOs differently affect the lives of subsistence farmers, unruly weeds, Monsanto shareholders, and butterflies and bees. Thus conceived, it means taking care of the consequences that the invention of GMOs entails, and slowing down around social injustices or environmental impairments that possibly could come into being due to their invention.³³

Tying together an experimental use of reason aimed at creating something new, and a diplomatic use of reason that takes care of the consequences made possible, the Whiteheadian university actively takes up a role in worldly becoming. Its mode of habitation cannot, in contrast to Dewey, be understood as merely a process of either habituation or adaptation—no matter how mutual and interdependent these processes might be understood. Rather, and taking my cue from Haraway, its mode of habitation comes close to what she calls a process of *sympoiesis*, a thoughtful and inventive making-with that engages multiple beings reciprocally captured by one another, in transformative and adventurous processes of becoming.

It is essential to demarcate *sympoiesis* from two other concepts, the one more biological, the other more sociological, for which it might be mistaken.

First, it differs from symbiogenesis. Whereas symbiogenesis tries to grasp how different parts of the world conceived as an organic and dynamic whole develop together, mutually interdependent, sympoiesis foregrounds and makes explicit the active part each element can play in the process due to interventions that are always local, precarious, and partial. Neither should it be mistaken for autopoiesis, a concept used to describe self-producing autonomous units with centrally controlled, homeostatic, and predictable spatiotemporal boundaries. Sympoiesis, in contrast, denotes “collectively-producing systems [that] do not have self-defined spatial or temporal boundaries. Information and control are distributed among components. The systems are evolutionary and have the potential for surprising change.”³⁴

What the GMO-activists do when coming together around this issue of collective concern that not only has a scientific but also a political bearing can be understood as a way of taking care of the consequences, a process of sympoiesis or making-with in thoroughly entangled configurations in which there is no criterium to be found in an imagined past or a predicted future, which might allow to fixate and stabilize the meaning of what has been brought into being, or to authorize a judgment on how it should be used. Indeed, GMOs—or any other scientific invention, discovery, production—are neither good nor bad in themselves.

Taking care of the consequences thus renders important and amplifies the “It depends!” that lets itself be heard as a response to the question of whether a particular new articulation in the becoming of the world is good or bad. What it requires is an environment in which its consequences can be taken care of, whereby again, it needs to be stressed that this does not mean stabilizing or controlling the invention’s meaning. However, it also obliges us not to leave it up to the market of the knowledge economy to determine how the invention will be used and signified. Situated by what makes common sense ruminate and adding to it, the new that is being learned in the university transforms our relations toward the world and those inhabiting it.

Put differently, the university as a home of adventures does not refer back to political framings of times long gone to deal with the problems of the present (“we are at war with a virus”), nor is it likely to propose easy quick-fixes that promise to take away a problem without affecting our ways of living (e.g., solar panels, LED-light bulbs). Instead, the university gathers a collective of studiers to inquire something that makes common sense ruminate, a questioning situation like what the right of return might mean for a refugee having grown up in exile, or how GMOs differently affect the lives of those who are put at risk by their

invention. In that sense, and referring to Haraway, the Whiteheadian university is a place of “staying with the trouble”:

In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.³⁵

Ultimately, Whitehead’s proposition concerning the university, read through Stengers’ etho-ecological lens and Haraway’s concept of sympoiesis, allows for conceiving of the university as triggering a certain kind of transformation in the way it affects not only the world but also those who live in it. Noteworthy is that the event of this transformation accepts neither any cause that would make its happening probable or predictable nor any criterium that would justify, legitimize, or authorize it. In that sense, there is no external, transcendent position or perspective that would allow for passing judgment on the event. If there is indeed no such form of transcendence, the question remains toward what the adventurous process of study is situated, what incites it, and what makes those events of transformation without transcendence possible.

Matters of Study

Looking back at the studiers in Dheisheh, the children and grandchildren of the refugees who activated the common sense of the camp by raising the question of what the right of return might mean to them, it is clear that what allowed them to slow down and study this question were various exercises in the camp, ranging from collecting the stories of older inhabitants, making maps of the empty spaces, taking pictures in order to compare the camp with the neighboring city, and refurbishing a desolate public square. How can we understand the specific efficacy of these matters of study—pictures, drawings, notes, maps, schemes—in acquiring the power to draw diverging lines of thinking toward a point of entanglement where they could be transformed? Being a passage point that forces one to slow down, an attractor that pulls divergent perspectives together, matters of study are catalysts for thinking collectively, sympoietically. Still, in order to get a more definite sense of the notion, it is

important to separate it from other “matters” that have in recent years been topics of debate, more precisely matters of fact, matters of concern, and matters of care.

The construction of the first one, the *matter of fact*, coincides with the invention of modern science, at the moment when Galileo devised the experimental apparatus of the inclined plane in order to describe the motion of falling bodies. Not only did Galileo create a relationship between the point of departure (in terms of height) and the point of impact (in terms of distance) to describe how bodies fall, he also mobilized this experimental achievement in order to exclude the philosophers and theologians from the scientific territory he had just founded. In that sense, the experimental achievement was recruited in order to convince opponents with scientific proof (“the experiment speaks for itself”) or to expel those who ask the wrong questions (“the question why bodies fall is subject for speculation, not for science”). Scientific evidence is here referred to as a matter of fact, a truth that cannot be questioned because it has been verified drawing on quantifiable measurements (e.g., height, width, speed, IQ). Those who object against what is a matter of fact are either forced to recognize that they were wrong and have to respect the objective truth of the fact, or run the risk of being expelled from the realm of “rationality” (narrowly understood as respecting what has been scientifically proven). Put differently, the logic of matters of fact sets an operation in motion that splits those who know (and know how they can know, what counts as knowledge) from those who believe, whose sense of reality is based on purely subjective impressions and sensations, and that separates the sphere of science from the sphere of politics, objectivity from subjectivity, and fact from value.³⁶

By conceiving of scientific findings as a *matter of concern*, instead of a matter of fact, Bruno Latour attempts to remediate this bifurcation between science and politics. While a matter of fact presents a fact “as it is,” as if it can be found in a natural world that is “out there,” distinct from human subjectivity and intention, a matter of concern renders the web from which the matter of fact emerged explicit. Think, for instance, of the inclined plane that made the tracking of the motion of falling bodies possible. “A matter of concern is what happens to a matter of fact when you add to it its whole scenography, much like you would do by shifting your attention from the stage to the whole machinery of the theatre.”³⁷ In contrast to the matter of fact, which gives an objectified version of the thing or finding, cut loose from the social, material, and technical conditions that had made its fabrication possible, the matter of concern acknowledges the constructed nature of the fact. In opening up its black box, it also gives it the

power to gather a thinking public, instead of an ignorant or superstitious public that needs to be convinced by what is scientifically proven.

Hence, a matter of concern does not only open the black-box that had produced—*ex nihilo*—a scientific fact, but also entails a different way of bringing in the public. It brings together those for who the coming into being of this fact might be of concern, who might undergo the consequences of the transformations it effectuates in the world. Therefore, Latour suggests the idea of a Parliament of Things, an assembly that gathers different representatives of the public around a particular issue of concern. More specifically, the Parliament of Things gathers these representatives not as experts or technocrats, as those who can claim a kind of knowledge that would authorize them to speak for all, to have the final say, and to impose their decision on all the others. Instead, it is as representatives of the industry, the people, the planet, the state, and all the other singular actors concerned about this issue that they gather in the Parliament of Things.³⁸ Discerning matters of fact from matters of concern as two different ways of presenting scientific findings that entail another relation to the public, Latour thus makes an effort to rethink the relations between science and politics to omit the kind of expertocracy that would proclaim that the facts speak for themselves, authorizing decisions that are thoroughly political (e.g., “the figures show that ... and thus,” “research proves that ... and thus”).

Thirdly, with the *matter of care*, María Puig de la Bellacasa adds a layer to the matter of concern as conceived by Latour. Although concern and care are strongly related, speaking in terms of care draws attention to the active and ethical engagements that sustain such a matter: “One can make oneself concerned, but ‘to care’ contains a notion of *doing* that concern lacks.”³⁹ Grasping something not just as a matter of fact or a matter of concern, but as a matter of care emphasizes the embodied and embedded actions of those brought together in this web of interrelatedness, actions that are therefore subject to ethical reflection, always situated by the specific matter of care at hand.

Whereas the matter of concern is foremost a notion that explains how things are constructed and how they gather a concerned public, a matter of care more explicitly addresses our co-dependent existential participation in the possible becoming of these constructions and how they require, most importantly, an attitude of ethical consideration. Thinking with care, as Puig de la Bellacasa explains, underscores “those *doings* needed to create, hold together and sustain life’s essential heterogeneity.”⁴⁰ To that extent, matters of care underscore the ethical reflection that is required by every process of sympoietic co-becoming, in order “to think about how things could be different if they generated care.”⁴¹

In other words, whereas a matter of fact can be used as a bat to shoo away the irrational people who ask the wrong questions, or to persuade those who still need to be convinced, a matter of concern visualizes the ontogenesis of what was hitherto a matter of fact. In doing so, a matter of concern enables a political debate in which scientific facts can find their place without being assigned the role of unquestionable proof. A matter of care, then, intensifies the matter of concern in the sense that it foregrounds our doings with regards to the matter at hand, that it is, in fact, precarious and, therefore, in need of care.

Looking now at the studiers of Dheisheh, or the GMO-activists, one could argue that the issues and questions they try to address not only are a matter of ethical consideration, of thinking with care, but also and foremost require to be *studied*, to be given the power to make us think, and initiate adventurous processes of which the unpredictable effects might open up different possible futures. Therefore, putting forward a matter of study is also a way of intensifying Latour's idea of matter of concern. What is intensified referring to study, however, is not so much that the issue itself is of concern, or requires care—which would indeed be true as well—but that what is of concern and requires care is given the power to make us slow down, to hesitate and think, so as to become susceptible to other possible futures that might make their insistence felt.

More concretely and referring to Campus in Camps, this means that within the gathering of studiers, something, a matter of study, needs to be made present that turns those gathered into a studious public, a *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*. One could think in this respect of maps, sketches, notes, photographs, comparisons, stories, schemes, or drawings around which the studiers can actually—materially, technically—gather, and which can make them think about a questioning situation that requires a response. The emergence and presence of such a matter of study slows down the discussion between the studiers because it obliges to ask questions such as “Where do you see it?”, “Why do you say that?”, “How do you draw these relations?” In doing so, the matter of study affords the possibility of hesitation, of reconsideration, instead of jumping to conclusions.

In other words, matters of study operate as constraints on the thinking of those gathered around it. Therefore, through the way they gather and referring to the kind of enunciations afforded in this gathering, matters of study differ slightly from matters of fact, matters of concern, and matters of care. This means to acknowledge that the questioning situation around which the university gathers cannot be given a response based on scientific expertise, narrowly understood, solely. Nor does a response based on political arguments or ethical considerations

suffice. Instead, the question itself has to be given the power to gather a public that studies it, that slows down and takes care of the consequences.

Transformation without Transcendence

Following Whitehead's proposition concerning the university as a "home of adventures," this chapter has attempted to articulate the processes of educational transformation that are at play in the course of practices of study. Transformation here should not be understood as a merely individual affair, such as certain narratives of learning (as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competences) and personal growth imply, but as a thoroughly collective and even worldly event, constituting a new articulation in the becoming of the world.

Moreover, endorsing Whitehead's idea of adventure entails a conception of transformation or becoming that is radically open-ended, and that does not require any a priori criterium that would authorize, legitimize, or justify one course of events over another. The Whiteheadian adventures constitute a transformation without transcendence, not following the logic of probability but assuming radical possibility. Indeed, the Whiteheadian universe is one in which "the fairies dance and Christ is nailed to the cross."⁴² and, as such, does not need conditions that might make something possible that would not have been possible before—the critical endeavor of defining conditions of possibility. Rather, in a thoroughly creative world, a pure becoming, where in principle everything is possible, the question is not so much to the conditions that would allow for this or that event to happen, but instead to the *constraints* that are required in inheriting the achievement of this or that event without determining where it will lead.

In that sense, matters of study operate as a constraint on the thinking of those gathered around a questioning situation and transform the relationships that each entertains with what is of concern. Five features can be distinguished that spell out the specificity of matters of study as a crucial ingredient in processes of transformation without transcendence. In that sense, these five features intensify Whiteheadian adventures by turning them from instances of pure becoming into events of situated study.

The first feature has to do with the questioning situations that make common sense ruminate, and that require study. Matters of study change the nature of the conversation that can be held over these issues due to the fact that they make the issue present in a specific way, for instance, via drawings, maps, or

notes. In that sense, they not only invest the situation with new meanings, they are also a way of artifactualizing the situation, making it palpably, materially present, and granting it the power to object in the exchanges between studiers (*artifactualization*). Secondly, matters of study knot together a variety of diverging lines of thinking—the spectrum of hopes, fears, dreams, and doubts that studiers might have concerning the issue at hand—without unifying them, without pacifying the ruminations of common sense by making them bow down in front of a law or principle that transcends them all—an eternal peace that washes away divergence (*association*). Instead, matters of study effectuate partial connections that bring different diverging lines of thinking into proximity while intensifying a sense of the possible—the third feature—that is required for the transformation of this divergence to take place. Matters of study make attentive to the lure of the possible, the fact that there is no necessity in the given order of things, and that everything is susceptible to transformation and change (*possibilization*).

To that extent, matters of study, fourthly, can be grasped as a passage point in a process of transformation without transcendence. As a passage point, matters of study do not announce or prefigure the coming into being of a new order that takes away all discords; instead, they activate, gather, and transform the hopes, fears, dreams, and doubts concerning the questioning situation made present as a matter of study. Think, for instance, of how the contradiction between the right of return and the experience of living together in the camp had been transformed into a productive contrast in the course of Campus in Camps' practice of study (*transformation*). Lastly, the matter of study is not just a material object, yet at the same time cannot be understood without taking into account the concrete ruminations of common sense that it gathers, makes present, and transforms. In that sense, at the end of the study process, the matter of study—the photographs, the maps, the sketches, the schemes, the notes—will only remain as a testimonial residue of the reaction that has taken place and that has transformed the hopes, fears, dreams, and doubts of all those gathered around the matter of study (*materialization*).

To conclude this chapter and taking relay from Stengers, who in turn took the relay from Marx' Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, we could argue that the wager of engaging in practices of study is to change the world, not just to understand it—at least, that is, if the world, if *this* world, is given the power to change *us*, to force *our* thinking, and become affected by *it*.⁴³ And it is precisely through matters of study that this world, this myriad of questioning situations in need of change, can be made present and give the power to change *us*. Put differently,

to engage in Whiteheadian adventures is to know no other constraint except for the matters of study that situate these adventures and allow for a transformation of the situation, including those who are affected by it. This means to become able to learn anew, to establish new ways of relating to that which has been granted the power to gather a collective of studiers and make them think, and the university, ultimately, is the home for such adventures.