

## **In the Midst of Things: A Freudian Turn to Otherness for Educational Theory**

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### **Abstract**

A Freudian turn to otherness is introduced to discuss experiences in learning as stepping away from the attractions and defenses of certainty, regimentation, omnipotence, and compliance and stepping toward encountering the relativity of unknown life. I picture life in education as *in media res* in order to regard learning as getting to know imperceptible and hardly expressible yet deeply influential impresses of experiences. Such an approach calls upon a problem and an interest in surrendering to the excesses of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The interest belongs to receptivity to unknown life. The problem is that excess involves unknowability not easily claimed as these are situations of otherness that broadcast human incompleteness, dependency, and uncertainty.

Part one considers a theory of learning through its difficulties, failures, and receptivity. It asks, how do responses to the unknown affect the fields of education and psychoanalysis? Part two presents four psychoanalytic entanglements of learning *in media res* and so, *as situation*: 1) the emotional situation (Bion); 2) the anthropological situation (Laplanche); 3) the transference situation, (Klein); and 4) the ethical situation (Togashi). They propose scenes of otherness as natality, inherited histories, the limits of language, and primal unspoken wishes for love and fear of breakdown. This view of life follows from Sigmund Freud's discovery of the unconscious as the heart of subjectivity with his insistence of consciousness as the exception to mental life and human activities. The argument then develops a Freudian philosophy of learning to characterize the *umwelt* of education as affected with the Kantian thing that can be neither controlled nor known yet can, nonetheless, be the most important threshold of existence.

### **Key words**

Freudian thought, otherness, emotional situations, learning, ethics

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### ***Umwelt: An Atmospheric Education***

A great deal can happen to our conceptions, hopes, questions, and awareness of experience in education if we work within Sigmund Freud's discovery of otherness as the heart of learning that issues from his insistence that consciousness is the exception to mental life and human activities. We can become interested in the unconscious in the midst of things. *It* appears when least expected, veers from dreams to the dailiness of loss of attention, and is inexplicable in tendencies, variabilities, and entanglements. I understand these situations as creating a perpetual "*umwelt*" of education whereby untold experience is a feature of atmospheric life and is itself in antagonistic with this life (Jacobson 1964). How all this may be accepted and studied is the heart of my research.

A Freudian turn for education involves a way to think of learning and its myriad relations to knowledge, others, and objects as stepping away from the attractions and defenses of certainty, regimentation, omnipotence, and compliance and a step toward encountering the relativity of unknown life. Education is treated as the steps toward that which is not known in order to regard learning as getting to know imperceptible and hardly expressible yet deeply influential impresses of experiences, all of which call upon an interest in surrendering to the excesses of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Such excesses, or what is left over from the immediacy of felt encounters, are not easily claimed since these situations broadcast human incompleteness, dependency, and uncertainty. Otherness plays along these lines of human incompleteness.

My discussion has two parts. Part one considers difficulties, failures, and response. I ask how do responses to unknown life affect the fields of psychoanalysis and education? What kind of education can then be thought? Part two attempts to picture life in education through four psychoanalytic entanglements that propose learning *in media res* and so, *as situations*. These entanglements are: 1) the emotional situation (Bion); 2) the anthropological situation (Laplanche); 3) the transference situation (Klein); and 4) the ethical situation (Togashi). I treat them all as relational scenes of otherness and themselves as enigmatic features of learning. All propose scenes of existence as natality, as inherited histories, as the limits of language, and as primal unspoken wishes for love and fear of breakdown. All these forces compose the *umwelt* of education as affected by a Kantian thing that can be neither controlled nor known yet can, nonetheless, serve as the most important threshold of existence.

## A Special Charge

Psychoanalytic theory admits into its practices, knowledge, and representations the fluidity of otherness as an unknowable quality of human psychology. Otherness is also considered as its own method needed to dissolve the façade of certainty and the fixations to timelessness. Freud's sudden and disruptive discovery of his own otherness occurs in the midst of dreams. There, meaning is inexhaustible, inadmissible, objectionable, and inexplicable. For these dimensions of thinking, there are no objective means to measure, depict, predict, or stabilize the causes of either subject or object. Due to a constitutive uncertainty that permeates understanding, reasons too are affected and can become mired in tautologies, anxiety, defenses, and language games. And while all of this affects psychoanalysis, it may also be felt as alienating the surface activities of education.

As difficult as it may be to admit, a failure of translation is a quality of psychoanalytic work and a condition of its education. The handling of failure is ever present in clinical discussions, although not from a measure of success or best practices. The kind of advice on offer is counter-intuitive to professionalization. Freud (1915) urged modesty in practice while Lacan (2006) suggested the analyst's position as dummy. Winnicott (1996) expected to be mainly wrong in his interpretations to the patient while Bion (1987) warned that whenever two people meet, there would be bad jobs and emotional storms. Kohut (1982) argued that empathy can only occur when analysts accept the relativity of knowledge as also affecting their views of development. McDougall (1992) urged analysts become affected by the limits of their practices with others. Admissions of failures of translation are deepened by the fact that there is no objective reality to reach.

What is left is the charge of psychoanalytic vocabulary, used as both mirror and refractor to unconscious life also made from receptivity, translation, and visitation. The vocabulary is itself an enactment of situations made from those barely remembered features of learning that emanate from susceptibility to unknown life. These psychoanalytic ideas lend a special charge to philosophy's turn to emotional experience since so much of our lifeworld is out of our sight and proceeds without memory, consent, or control. Questions of how the world is registered, felt and perceived as communication open philosophy to consider the suppleness of inner life as issuing from a place it must also comment on.

Responsiveness to the unknown, however, brings with it the weight of reflections on our practices, limits, resistances, repetitions and failures to learn. And transitions in the

psychoanalytic field of thought preoccupy such varied contemporary analysts such as Donna Orange (2020), Togashi Koichi (2020), Julia Kristeva (1991), and Michel Émile de M'Uzan (2019). Each has taken an ethical turn in their consideration of why the power of uncertainty and vulnerability in the lifeworld of the mind is related to an acceptance of otherness and the capacity to stand experience. They draw from philosophical debates, compelling myths and literary fiction, and from analysis of the cost of humanness, political divisions, trauma, and psychosomatic incompatibilities. Their ethics stem from the priority of the other and all propose the desire to think and be receptive to scenes of both suffering and pleasure. They urge us to read and write.

### **If One Only Knew!**

Receptivity to the unknown gives to birth a new sense of temporality, where time is always passing and must also include its retrospective accounts of experience. Scarfone (2015), for example, considers the antinomy between presence, absence, and meaning. He observes that gap made from event, situation, and remembering, where 'a matter of time' becomes a dilemma for knowledge and a problem of belief. Freud (1914) identified disjuncture as a perpetual *umwelt* of mental life when he drew his analysis of infancy, childhood, and family into the conundrums of love and hate in education and when, looking back, had to treat his own education as a disturbance of memory.

Receptivity to the unknown would also turn psychoanalytic practices back on itself and do so with acknowledging the limits and difficulties of learning from the pain of human incompleteness. Here then is the birth of an affected science, touched by the procedures it names. Its knowledge of subjective life would be subject to an opening Certeau (1993) described as "jeopardized and wounded by its otherness (the affect, etc.)" (27). It cannot be otherwise since the object of psychoanalysis is a subject that forces, invents, deceives, loves, worries, interprets, repeats, sleeps, cries, laughs, desires, and retreats. This subject of otherness serves as a specimen of knowledge while becoming the source of its own inquiry. Laplanche (1999) offers psychoanalytic geometric: "a method of free association polarized by the transference. . ." (162). Through this entanglement of speech and desire, psychoanalysis is emotional because its theory is "not only confronted with an object" but also remains a method instructed by its situation (83).

Psychoanalytic methods then are in touch with and touched by obstacles to knowing and may well repeat what memory has fractured and buried. Its methods are particularly dedicated to the work of getting to know those barely perceptible, influential, affected,

ignored, and often unaccounted for qualities of experience that could not have been known at the time of their unfolding. The speculation is that in the midst of learning something resists its own unveiling. For psychoanalytic views, there are unknown qualities of psychical life that drive enactments and exchanges of affect and, while rooted in anxiety and frustration, may also be expressed through displacements and resistance. The trouble begins with not knowing what experience in learning can feel when meeting with needing to know, knowing without having to learn, and learning before one can understand. For this sequence to sustain its own emotional logic and then to break such logic open, there would still have to be feelings of frustration, denial, anxiety, remorse, guilt, and ordinary resistances to the pain of incompleteness. One cannot ever know one's incompleteness. There would then have to emerge from such discord new emotional ties. We would have to accept that creativity, as well, is located in the midst of such incomplete things.

Kant's approach to antimony in thinking is often cited by the fields of psychoanalysis and critical theory when commenting on the problem of unreachable reality while being in the midst of it. One of Kant's (1965) many arguments pictured human knowledge from two irreducible sources: objects given to perception and thoughts about them. Kant wrote: "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding, no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty and intuition without concepts are blind" (93). What then can exist between a thought and reality? Freud might reply, anxiety.

This difficulty for existence, that is, accepting the difference between perception and the object and between the source and representation of perception, was a key problem for Freud. Laurence Kahn (2018) traces the aporia to Freud's exasperation, "If one only knew *what* exists" made after Charcot's famous claim, "Theory is good, but it doesn't keep things from existing" (122). It is not only that theory comes too late. It is also that theory cannot stop reality. Freud (1900) acknowledged this otherness in his work on dream interpretation when he admitted that no interpretation can reach the navel of the dream and when he argued for two realities: psychical and material. In Kahn's (2018) wise view, while no one can know reality as such, one can, at least, try to understand its consequences (146). And, trying to understand what has happened is what constitutes our educational situation.

Wilfred Bion (1993) has written extensively on experience with his focus on the consequences of having psychical reality while trying to know this. He can be read as working from the proposition, 'well, if one only knew what exists with a thought!' His answer is surprising. Bion linked the otherness of thoughts and intuition to estranging

situations that he called “thoughts without a thinker” and “empty thoughts” (91). Thoughts are prior to their thinking. He proposed three kinds of experiences tied to thoughts that required the containment of an apparatus in order to think. The first kind of experience is with the mother who provides containment for the infant’s chaotic thoughts, screams, and bodily urges. The second kind of experience is created by the mother’s reverie of returning the chaos back to the infant in a manageable way. It is as if the mother’s reverie said, ‘You can relax for there is meaning.’ The infant can then use that wish to develop an apparatus of thinking, needed to contain the mind in the midst of its own thoughts. A third kind of experience that the apparatus of ‘thinking’ needs to contain thoughts are the relational situations of love, hate, and knowledge. That is, the experience of thoughts and affects must have a thinker to think them. In Bion’s view, a thinker would have to be willing to handle the frustration of experience and tolerate not knowing.

Critical theory would take a different tact by focusing on obstacles to representation as opposed to confusion within perceptions and appearance of objects. Adorno’s (2001) lectures on Kant introduced his students to the challenge of abandoning their idealization of the self-enclosed subject described as the “I think that accompanies all of my representations.” (176). The self is not an isolate of enclosed meaning but is always in the midst of things. Adorno proposed this something as “the Kantian Block” that he eulogized as “a kind of metaphysical mourning, a kind of memory of what is best, of something we must not forget, but that we are nevertheless completed to forget” (178). We know there is something more, but we cannot reach it. Or, if there is something more, it can only be an empty space that will not exist if entered (Britzman 2009).

### **The Lateness of Early Situations**

Melanie Klein’s (1959) theory of the adult world and its roots in infancy provides some clues as to the entangled destiny of subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and history. It is a theory of an adult in the midst of very early things. Her early theories are visceral and the mind as emotional can come as a shock. Perhaps just as shocking is her claim that the contingencies and destiny of early anxiety situations and their phantasies have a second life in the fields of education, law, politics, medicine, and parenting and that major edifices of authority contain infantile reality. What do we really know about the infant’s psychological life and the fate of the ego that emerges from the profundity of helplessness, dependency, care, love, vulnerabilities and the phantasies that follow from these situations with the other? How can one get in touch with that other Kantian Block that

Klein (1930) early on described with *umwelt* of anxiety, namely our attraction to “unreal reality?” (221). Klein placed into the midst of things early anxiety situations over loss of love, then defenses against loss made by retaliatory and paranoid activities, and then reparation and gratitude. It is a sequence that eerily forecasts the difficulties of having to learn before one can know.

Klein considered mental life as an emotional situation, made from crowds of others. It would be a tiny inchoate theatre of otherness staring a series of introjected part objects as figures and their relations. There would be the stranger, the foreigner, the uninvited, the lover, and the disturber. I take these figurations as affects, situations and memories of learning, and the raw material for symbolization, analysis, and creativity. They are also the delegates of anxiety and defense. In Freud’s (1924) terms, such imagos are reflections of identifications in the world of others:

To the imagos they leave behind there are then linked the influences of teachers and authorities, self-chosen models and publicly recognized heroes, whose figures need no long be introjected by an ego which has become more resistant. The last figure in the series that began with the parents is the dark power of Destiny which only the fewest of us are able to look upon as impersonal. (168)

Parents, infants, teachers, heroes, cultural objects, lost objects, and knowledge seem like helpers until there comes disruptions, accidents, starkness, mistakes, coincidences, illness, and disasters. Even then, when all seems lost, we are never finished with elaborating our beginnings with others and do so each time we love, learn, hate, turn away, and reach for more.

## **The Emotional Situation**

There are plenty of variabilities within emotional situations, although the dominant tendency involves anxiety over loss. Bion’s (1994) insight was to join knowledge with the problem of trying to know and the pain of evasion. He argued that difficulties in learning are intimately tied to one’s theory of knowledge and preconceptions that seem to dictate how knowledge should be acquired, transmitted, felt, received, recognized, and transferred. Imagine a teacher who can do without these preconceptions and implicit *how-to* instructions. Being instructed and having to instruct have a long history: they are ready-at-hand in the child’s game of ‘let’s play school’ where the omnipotent child

teacher dominates those other bad children due to a theory of knowledge as possession and a will to punish. The ‘child teacher’ is a dictator who yells and hits misbehaving others. The phantasy is that only one person can be in charge and others must obey. The child who plays teacher may not have been humiliated but was once a witness to the humiliations of others.

A situation, then, is emotional when it is felt as if it can forecast destruction. Bion (1993) argued that every encounter with unknown ideas or what one has not expected carries threats of catastrophic change because new knowledge may destroy the valence of deeply held beliefs and shake one’s foundational myths to the core. His conception of knowledge, or what he termed as “K,” simply means getting to know the emotional experience of frustration. The constellation of “K” contains elements of Freud’s (1905) confrontation with the figure of the child as sexual researcher who links phantasy with theory. “K” also leans on Klein’s (1928) notion of states of being as our most radical relationality constituted through phantasies and the early sadistic epistemic instinct for curiosity. When Antonio Ferro (2017) surveyed the psychoanalytic field with Bion in mind, he pointed out that the emotional situations of trying to know constituted “the development of psychoanalysis, where every change could be experienced as turbulence to be avoided, even though we cannot evolve without disturbing what we know” (177). To be subject to the tenders of its own theoretical disturbances is, perhaps, the only means by which receptivity to unknown life can even be considered. And this admission preoccupied Freud.

Freud’s (1937) most difficult claim for psychoanalysis appeared near the end of his life. With some irony the problem he presented may also be a mirror to the anxieties of education as they involve the length of treatment and running out of time. Freud had to acknowledge, almost forty years into his psychoanalytic theory, that more was unknown than known and that even the work of trying to know—thought of as interpretations and transferences—were subject to intersubjective failings and the defense of ideality. A matrix of miscommunication is also a part of the analytic relationship since communication is disrupted by desire. But there is another problem that Freud’s (1937) late essay, “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” had to admit. A gain in knowledge does not necessarily translate into affective change. One can hold a great deal of knowledge in store and still not know what has happened to the self. One can hold a great deal of knowledge and still be playing the child’s game ‘Let’s play teacher.’

Twenty years earlier, Freud wrote (1917) “A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis” and emphasized the defense of resistance that he understood as an emotional situation rather than as lack of knowledge:

I will say at once that it is not an intellectual difficulty I am thinking of, not anything that makes psychoanalysis hard for the hearer or reader to understand, but an affective one—something that alienates the feelings of those who come into contact with it, so that they become less inclined to believe in it or take an interest in it ... the two kinds of difficulties amount to the same thing in the end. Where sympathy is lacking, understanding will not come very easily. (137)

It is a grand paradox that interest in emotional life is still viewed as a suspicious activity. Freud understood that psychoanalytic views hurt people's feelings but that did not stop him from an emotional truth when he described our nervous conditions as in the midst of things, and so as beholden to upbringing, unconscious attitudes toward libidinal life, and egotistic fear of loss of love. Freud's (1917) discussion is memorable for its unrelenting description of a universal psychological blow to the illusion that consciousness is the sum of mentality and that sexual drives are unimportant: "...the life of our sexual instincts cannot be wholly tamed, and the that mental processes are in themselves unconscious and only reach the ego and come under its control through incomplete and untrustworthy perceptions—these two discoveries amount to a statement that *the ego is not master in its own house*" (143).

### **The Anthropological Situation**

The ego is not master of its own house because others are already living there. Laplanche (2017) presented the problematics of the experience of life "as fundamental anthropological situation" of every human (20). It begins at birth when the infant is confronted with the world of adult desire it knows nothing of. What is unconsciously conveyed between the infant and adult is a radical gap in communication, ability, and intent. It is our original asymmetry and our situation as care and the primacy of the other opens onto sexuality, curiosity, and the life of the mind. For both infant and mother, the meaning and destiny of acts of care and love are enigmatic and in the midst of things. Laplanche considered relations of dependency and love and the mother's desire as transmitted to the infant in the form of an enigmatic message that neither party can fully translate.

Domonique Scarfone (2018) painted the anthropological situation with the outlines of broad brush-strokes. The situation is one of "compromised messages to which each of

us is exposed, from birth by way of the infant's unpreparedness with regard to the sexually saturated adult universe" (89). And yet, everyone is ill-prepared for the human condition and no one can predicate what becomes of the fate of the anthropological situation. There cannot be a complete translation of desire because no completeness can be made. Instead, our earliest relationships leave erotic traces, impressions, and yearning. Communication carries this affective disturbance or excitement and a failure of translation. The anthropological situation is one of ill-preparedness for culture, birth, sexuality, and education, and a sense of otherness.

### **The Transference Situation**

Transference, always in the midst of things, is another term for the enigmas of communication carried by feelings of having to translate relationality. Klein (1952) coined the term "transference situation" to point out that even the most banal utterance of her patients and even when they complained they have nothing to say, even then, these seemingly empty utterances carried on persuasive forces of love, hate, and ambivalence into phantasies of reception. Through her focus on anxiety and defense in mental life Klein listened to what could not be said but could be acted out between her and the patient as conflict, demand, compliance, hatred, and wish. She thought the self's paranoid perception of the other and the depressive worry over destroying the other characterized the make-up of the mind's oscillations and affected the ways the self could deny or get to know the pain of incompleteness. And interpreting transference gave her this clue. She found that the patient transferred to the analyst an imagined and real history of learning in the form of object relating that blurs the line between inside and outside, between perception and object, and between current and past experiences.

Betty Joseph (1996) described transference as both a means to understand and a quest for and disrupter of relationality. Her focus was with the contrary transmissions of unconscious attempts at influence:

Much of our understanding of the transference comes through our understanding of how our patients act on us to feel things for many varied reasons; how they try to draw us into their defensive systems; how they unconsciously act out with us in the transference, trying to get us to act out with them, how they convey aspects of their inner world built up from infancy—elaborated in childhood and adulthood, experiences often beyond the use of words, which we can only capture through

the feelings aroused in us. (62)

Transference situations signify not so much why we feel anything at all. Rather, as situation, transference carries the additional element of acting as attractors to the feelings of the other. The teacher's affects are a complex of matters, beholden to frustration, competing investments, and projections of the introjected accumulation of the teacher's educational biography and imagos. All of this is conveyed each time a teacher acts, each time a teacher worries over the loss of knowledge, and each time the teacher listens before they can understand. The transference situation then may contain the *umwelt* of education and so, for example, the teacher's sinking feeling of something not right may well be in contact with the silent student who feels wronged. Transference situations are our means of relationality but also of resistance to that connection.

### **The Ethical Situation**

Koichi Togashi (2020) has made the claim that psychoanalysis consists of a number of turns: structural, linguistic, subjective, intersubjective, relational and, the ethical turn that he attributes to the late work of Hans Kohut (1982) who came to the understanding that there is no objective reality to perceive, but only "the unknowability, in principle, of reality" (400). And this incapacity to dominate reality and even the ways one can insist on how reality should then be perceived, Kohut argued, is a challenge to static knowledge. Unknowability has, as its principle, a psychological subject that is also in the midst of its own development and growth. The ethical turn, as Togashi understands, is an empathic one that has more to do with accepting the relativity of knowing and the relativity of perception than it does with any intuitive understanding of the other.

Togashi adds to the ethical turn the movement toward decolonizing psychoanalysis. He describes Eastern values as a way to open, render as variable, and even overcome the dominance of Western views of the individual subject. For Togashi, "there are many patients we cannot describe" and he goes on to ask, "How shall we understand our work and our patient's sufferings?" (109). From Togashi's perspective, how our work is understood is the area to analyze.

Decolonizing psychoanalysis is also discussed in Sally Swartz's (2019) Winnicottian analysis of political protest movements in South Africa and in Orange's (2020) discussion on the radical ethics of listening. They both seek the means to challenge psychoanalytic orthodoxies, cultural overreach, and entrenched intolerance. Their interest

is with the priority of the other as a means to affect change within psychoanalytic practice and the wider world. A clue that both lean on resides in the psychoanalytic taboo against suggestion in clinical practice where its main ethic is the autonomy of the patient and the analyst's willingness to reflect on her own affectations through an interest in countertransference.

Togashi's question, however, exceeds technical orientations when he asks, "Can we be open to our patient's accounts without formulating stories about it?" (8). His question is a stunning alteration and challenge to the history of psychoanalysis and its transference desire for speaking subjects who narrate their stories. Of course, we wish for expression and of course we wish for the analysand's desire to speak. And yet many experiences born of unspeakable pain and horror, specifically those of social violence, natural catastrophes, accidents, war, and profound loss of life—many humanly induced catastrophes and untold loss cannot become a story. From this awareness and respect for suffering, Togashi formulates "the psychoanalytic zero," as emptiness that expresses a fundamental void without consent or will: "The psychoanalytic zero requires us to be in this vulnerable position when we see our patients who are themselves afraid to be vulnerable" (110). All this is prior to assuming the roles of patient and analyst. He described the ethical situation as beginning in the midst of things, in the meeting of two humans that occur before the frame is explained, before the presenting problem is placed between the analyst and analysand, and before there is any knowledge of either party. The psychoanalytic zero is in the midst of things, belonging to no one, and there without consent.

Togashi asks analysts to attend to the ways patients are encountered. It is advice well suited for educators since, after all, encountering and receiving groups of students they do not really know is what they do. And typically, educators do not begin their greetings by presenting themselves as vulnerable people meeting their students who are afraid to be vulnerable in their presence. This approach of privileging fallibility, vulnerability, and unknowability is quite other to Western discussions that urge both the analyst to focus on the patient's presentations and the teacher to focus on what they think students need before the student speaks.

What is striking for me is Togashi's emphasis on human beings, "prior to analyst's and a patient's awareness of their identities, their sense of self, and their professional, therapeutic, social and cultural roles" (17). It is almost as if we can be returned to a community of infants and to our anthropological situation. Whereas Freud suggested complete honesty with his method of free association, Togashi imagines an ethic of sincerity and not knowing in order to consider what cannot be chosen or given consent:

“The randomness of the world creates human vulnerability and loneliness” (37). He is moving close to an empty void, an unspeakable situation of otherness without a situation. For Togashi, the ethical turn depends upon acceptance of the analyst’s vulnerability and uncertainty and so, “to surrender herself to the moment without any distinctions including right and wrong” (116). The analyst’s ethical turn belongs to the work of facing her or his vulnerability, forgetting preoccupations, and accepting the limits of understanding as the ground for listening to otherness. It also depends on decolonizing the ways we study and having the faith to be influenced by what we do not know and by what is unknowable.

### *In Medias Res*

Jacques André (2013) suggested why early contact with the other matters: “There is no such thing as human nature from a psychoanalytic point of view. Not that nothing is innate, but there is nothing human that is not subjected to the vicissitudes of early intersubjective relationships” (190). Even if our birth is inescapable and largely forgotten, it matters that we are born into a world of others. André provides a rough sketch of infancy as destiny rather than as nature. Nothing belongs to the subject yet there are no blank slates. The intersubjective fact begins with birth, a situation the neonate cannot give consent and of which we are ill prepared. Laplanche (2017) named this homemade cultural investment as the fundamental anthropological situation, where otherness and reception are nearly inseparable.

So it is that the field of education inherits and is itself an inheritance of unconscious experience that orients emotional expressions, wishes, anxieties, and attitudes toward the mental lives of self and other. These are our educational situations that broadcast human incompleteness, dependency, and unknowable life. But because we are also affected by randomness, the ethical situation calls on our vulnerability in the recognition of the other’s vulnerability (Togashi 2020). Ethics on loan gives the self the fragile means to tolerate the frustrations of emotional experience that are readily expelled through preconceptions, rigid knowledge, and exhaustion. Lack of toleration can only lead to breakdowns and harsh defenses. These situations—emotion, transference, anthropological, and ethical—already an aspect of our daily lives, are a challenge for education to stop treating itself as if curriculum, modes of authority, theories of knowledge, and social arrangements took instruction from reality, as if reality was knowable, and as if there was no value to the situation of not knowing. What would it be like to take instruction from our vulnerability? And yet, what stands before education and the reason education seems to defend against

otherness is that its institutions are always beholden to life's uncertainties, to the randomness of life and death, to the histories inherited and denied, and our anthropological situation of ill preparedness. The dilemma for trying to represent all this anxiety and all this care is that words in the midst of otherness may feel as if they are delegates of abstract expressionism. There are so many brush strokes, erasures, over painting, textures, splashes, and so many layers that no center can be discerned.

So, what else can the field of learning become if we are in the midst of otherness and fragile life and, if our emotional situation is enlivened by vulnerability, dependency, care, ethics, the passing of time, and fallibility?

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