THINKING, ACTION, AND THE FATE OF THE WORLD

Thought Work

Edited by
ELIZABETH K. MINNICH
and
MICHAEL QUINN PATTON

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THOUGHT WORK

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PREFACE

Beyond Banalities: Thinking at Work in the World

Elizabeth K. Minnich and Michael Quinn Patton

As editors, we want to open with our deepest thanks to the thoughtful colleagues who have contributed to this volume. We also want to introduce the thinkers whose thought work you will experience. We do so in turn, beginning in each case with our opening thoughts about this book.

ELIZABETH

Today, when even small acts can have consequences that spread more widely and much faster than ever before, and public discourse of all kinds produces mind-numbing banalities with at least equal speed and range, it does seem time to stop and think, does it not? More: in the midst of so much thoughtlessness, surely it is time to ask what *thinking* means and does for us; why it matters; and how we might practice this art that is so basic to our humanity both more often and better, individually, alone and together, at work, in public.

Thought Work: Thinking, Action, and the Fate of the World gathers a remarkable group of thought-leaders—practitioners, authors, activists, teachers—from a range of fields rarely if ever in collaborative communication: philosophy, systems thinking, literature, sociology, evaluation, business, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, community organizing, strategic thinking. But here they are, this wonderfully motley

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lot, brought together by their responsiveness to the challenges posed by *The Evil of Banality: On the Life and Death Importance of Thinking* (Minnich, 2017). This, too, should be clear: Independent thinkers each and all (these are people who have in many cases helped create and shape fields), they are in conversation with the book, not writing about it. Insights emerge from their engagement of what they know best—thinking in their fields, their practice, their commitments—with what interested and is useful to them in my work.

In January 2017, my book, *The Evil of Banality: On the Life and Death Importance of Thinking*, was published. Michael Quinn Patton, a longtime colleague and friend, kindly read it, and to my pleasure and continuing benefit, got in touch with me. For some time, he said, he had been reflecting about the thinking in his field—*evaluation*—and was now considering it also in light of what I wrote. We then talked (well, emailed) about the life and death importance of *thinking* and how thought-suffocating *banality* disables conscience and enables the sustained and widespread horrific harmdoing (e.g., genocides, slavery, endemic sexualized violence) that, using a key distinction of the book, I call *extensive evil*.

Our papers in this book—Michael's and mine—emerged from our dialogue across the usual boundaries of our different fields (mine is philosophy), as variously did the papers from an expanding circle of thinking friends we invited to join us. Concerned about our world, we asked ourselves how the characteristic thinking in our own fields works in the world for good but perhaps too often also for ill, whatever the intentions of experts, scholars, professionals.

That is a crucial question that should be here at the beginning, but I have gotten ahead of myself. Not long after Michael opened our conversation, I also heard from Mary Gowan. Mary has worked as a professor and as a dean in business schools at several universities. She told me that as she read my book, she was engaging it with her work on *entrepreneurial thinking*. She also had conversations with a theologian. His own and his students' responses to the book interested us all. The students decided to send me a question. Of course, I welcomed that, and I was rewarded in many ways, perhaps most of all by being entirely startled to discover that what they had decided to ask was whether or not I am a pacifist. I had not thought that through for too many years, so there I was, in one of my favorite situations—thrown back into thinking

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both again and anew. (I hope you will forgive me if I say now that I only aspire to be a pacifist.)

Again, from whatever field or discipline questions and reflections emerged, our differences and sense of concern and urgency about what I will call "the state of the world" proved to be thought-provoking. I have excerpted examples of some thoughts thus provoked for two of our authors below. The excerpts are also a kind of preview, and so they are a bit lengthy: you should have a sense of the minds and differing voices at play in this book.

I was feeling enormously selfish by the time I also received a letter from Gayle Greene, a professor of literature who found herself re-thinking Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as a parable for our current time after she read *The Evil of Banality*. All this thinking afresh about what they cared most about by people who so love the world and their own fields, work, and disciplines that, through long, distinguished careers, have never escaped scholarship into the world, nor the world into scholarship—this should be shared. So, the exploration continued—as our lengthy, highly varied Table of Contents now makes evident. I fervently hope it will go on and spread as an invitation to stop and think what we are doing not only as individuals and activists, but also as we do our work in our fields, disciplines, and professions that do have effects, often far beyond our expectations, hopes, and sometimes rightly, fears.

Speaking for Themselves

This is a project in many voices, from very different angles. I offer, then, two excerpts from differing drafts of papers in the book to exemplify a bit of what I have just tried to describe. The first is from Allen Dunn's "The Limits of Moral Heroism" (pp. 45–49); Allen is a professor of literature. The second is from an email from the sociologist Troy Duster who wrote to me about the challenge and so also invitation of my work (pp. 51–70).

Allen Dunn

"In *The Evil of Banality*, Elizabeth Minnich's bold thesis is that the signature evils of our time, the genocides and holocausts that have become synonymous with our modernity, have their origin in a pervasive thoughtlessness. This thoughtlessness, she insists, is not accidental

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but rather woven into the very fabric of our lives. It is most evident in the various social routines and personal protocols that make thoughtless action possible by disguising from us the very possibility of acting otherwise, by denying the inevitability of human freedom. In her words, 'Thinking, here, refers to what we are doing when we practice our conscious capacity for freedom—our ability to reflect on, about, around something, including ourselves, including our own thinking.' . . . Thinking then 'opens a space, a gap, in consciousness between the thinker and whatever she is reflecting on,' and this gap distances the thinker from herself, the 'I' from the 'me,' as well as from the rest of the world. Most fatefully, it separates the past from the future, what already is from what might be, should we intervene. . . .

Literature, like other art forms, prides itself in its ability to startle us out of the stupor of habit and complacency. It aspires to make the world new so that experiences deadened by years of familiarity can be brought once more to life, and by its own example, it attempts to show us that our thoughtless habits are an affront to our own freedom. The literary imagination offers proof that the world could be otherwise, that we can think beyond the passive acceptance that steers us through the quotidian world."

Troy Duster

"The combination of the goal I see and the barriers to that goal have to do with how to get at the 'epi.'. . . What helps me is to call it 'epi-thoughts' or 'epi-thinking.' Since what Schütz called 'commonsense thinking' is our everyday set of embedded assumptions (that is what we take to be a stand-in for thinking), the task is how to get 'epi' about it. We have all the terms, metaphors, and examples for 'epi,' as in epidermis, epiphenomenal, epigenetics, and on and on. It always means to come outside of 'it' . . . whether skin, the phenomenal world, the gene. . . . So what I see you urging is what I have called (for my own purposes and reference) epi-thinking, a self-conscious deliberate vaulting out of the taken-for-granted thoughts, to consider and reconsider those thoughts. Your book successfully articulates that urging and demonstrates the urgent need—and what we now turn to is the mechanisms, strategies, toolkits, crowbars to pry us away from the commonsense, embedded, taken-for-granted thoughts to get a framework in which the soil is tilled and fertile for epi-thoughts."

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Exploring Responsibility

It matters a great deal that each of these active thinkers has struggled with how to teach people not only to be "a success" as measured by title, office, and pay, but also how and why it is crucial that each and all of us learn to think well about the effects on others, on our world, of what we do in our work, as experts, and personally, politically, morally. They discuss issues such as lying; the ethics of "fixing" genes that will then be passed on to unknown effect; knowing when, even whether, to intervene in genocide; white supremacy; effects of businesses' international economic development efforts; making policy with, as well as for, the public; organizing for social justice. Wide-ranging, yes; how else to exemplify the reality that we are responsible beyond conventional, banal frames, not only to a boss, a contract, a plan, a community but to those who are and will be affected for good or ill? We invite you to join us in thinking in, about, and beyond your own fields, work, communities—and, always, to keep asking questions.

MICHAEL

Elizabeth's book crystallized for me patterns I had been observing in a number of fields over the years, a transition from focusing on tools, techniques, methods, and procedures to an underlying concern about the thinking necessary to appropriately use those tools, techniques, methods, and procedures. Organizational development consultants I knew had begun emphasizing strategic thinking as both more important than and as the foundation for strategic planning. Writings about systems analysis morphed into an emphasis on systems thinking. Guidance about how to succeed as an entrepreneur stressed entrepreneurial thinking rather than a discrete set of skills or steps to follow. Program evaluators began talking about the importance of evaluative thinking as essential to engaging in evaluation; participatory forms of evaluation began emphasizing building the capacity for deeper evaluative thinking among stakeholders involved in evaluation processes.

Critical thinking had always been about thinking, as had creative thinking, but the earlier literature tended to focus on critical and creative thinking as a set of skills to acquire and a sequence of steps to

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follow. But it turns out that engaging in critical and/or creative thinking cannot be reduced to a discrete set of skills or steps. It's something deeper, different, engaging, and mindful.

Statements on professional ethics were transitioning from a set of rules and guidelines to direct attention to ethical thinking and situational ethics, which requires ethical thinking in context. Complexity theory became complexity thinking. Contingency theory became contingency thinking.

These separate patterns converged into an overarching theme—thinking about thinking—the gravitational force pulling them together being Elizabeth's book on the life-and-death importance of thinking.

Elizabeth, as a philosopher, inquired into the nature of thinking, thoughtfulness, thoughtlessness, and thinking about thinking. The kinds of thinking I described above struck me as instrumental thinking, thinking for a purpose, and thinking aimed at some result: a strategy, a systems map, a business plan, an evaluation design, an ethics framework.

What, I wondered, was the connection between instrumental thinking and philosophical thinking; between thinking for a purpose versus thinking as a way of being; a way of moving through the world, paying attention, making sense of things, deciding what matters, and how to behave in accordance with what matters. I clearly could not inquire into that connection alone, and since Elizabeth ended her book with unanswered questions—not exactly the same as mine, but broad enough to encompass mine—I asked her if we might inquire together and bring some colleagues we respected into the thinking conversation. And so we did.

More Speaking for Themselves

Fred Bird, responding to the invitation to contribute to this volume, wrote the following:

> Interestingly, recently I have been reading or rereading several of Hannah Arendt's books. I am especially focusing on her book entitled in the British publication *The Burden of Our Time* but published in America as *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. I like the British title better. I am looking at this book (as well as several later books)

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> because I want to compare how several well-known authors in the few years right after the end of World War II sought to make sense of the disasters of the previous several decades (two world wars, the Holocaust, the Great Depression, human misery occasioned by the partition India, civil war in China, gulags in Russia, etc.). Arendt's discussion of "Administrative Massacre" with respect to German policies regarding the Jewish Question in Germany (in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*) reminds me of the ways many business practices have occasioned instances of slow violence, not because business people lacked consciences but because they were inattentive, lacked imagination, failed to "think," and failed to consult in depth with people in the areas where they were doing business.

John M. Bryson told me over dinner in Washington, DC, where we were both teaching that the piece he and his wife, Barbara C. Crosby, had written stimulated them to think in new ways about how they approach strategy, the kind of new insight that, once you "get it," you can never again go back to the old way of seeing. John brought his longtime colleague and friend, George P. Richardson, a leader in the systems dynamics field, into the project.

George was intrigued and said he had never taken on an assignment quite like the one we offered. Once finished, the result being in this book, he wrote to us about presentations he would be making at the Systems Dynamics Society and elsewhere, and he reflected: "No one in my field has ever published a qualitative development with structural details like the one in my 'Extensive Evil' chapter, and I want to talk at the Conference about how and why such a development should become one of the most important nonquantitative norms in our field."

Stephen Brookfield, an esteemed educational specialist in and author about critical thinking, pondered the invitation and expanded it, writing back:

> Questions I heard today:
> How do we think wisely?
> What makes thinking critical?
> What does it mean to think morally?
> What is thoughtful action?
> How is thinking inherently political?

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Indeed, that was a common form of engagement among our contributors, taking the initial questions posed at the end of Elizabeth's book and expanding, expounding, and, ultimately, experiencing them, then writing out of that experience.

For my part, I became deeply engrossed in reading about thinking amid extensive exchanges with Elizabeth. My thinking about thinking has been profoundly altered and is not yet closed, nor do I expect it ever to be, and I hope that I do not grow so thoughtless in old age that I think that there can be an end to thinking. That there cannot and should not be is part of the message of "the life-and-death importance of thinking."

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What Is Thinking?

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I

THINKING ABOUT THINKING WITH HANNAH ARENDT IN MIND

Elizabeth K. Minnich

We shall not cease from exploration
and the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time.
T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding* (1952, p. 145)

I. BEGINNINGS IN ENDINGS, LIFE AND DEATH

T. S. Eliot's famous line, often quoted, seems to promise the fulfillment of a homecoming, a realization of knowledge of self and world. But we should perhaps read more carefully before undertaking a journey primarily for the sake of its end. Eliot's line is ambiguous at a crucial point: is "the end of all our exploring" its terminus, where it stops, or is "the end" the purpose of exploration from which "we shall not cease"? If the latter, we are committing to exploration, not solely to its end, setting sail moved by the wind of thought.

Eliot's poem came to mind as I was trying to decide how to begin a paper that might serve as a hinge, or even a keystone, between the published (I cannot say "completed") work of *The Evil of Banality: On the Life and Death Importance of Thinking* and the next book in which, "I will try to think through an education that can free us not only from the weight of ignorance, but from the deadening, deadly hold of banal-

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ity" (2017, p. 217). To prepare a hinge, a keystone, a bridge—such hopeful images—is a tricky thing when one side is for good or ill held firmly there between its covers, while the other is still uncontained, protean, even on days a murky mess. And then I thought of Eliot's line.

Life and Death, Extensive and Intensive Evil

Not ceasing from exploration, I can say that the phrase *the life and death* importance of thinking, backlit by a book on *The Evil of Banality* as well as Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on The Banality of Evil*—I was Arendt's teaching assistant in the late 1960s when she was still defending her controversial "report"—is not an announcement of an end at which I arrived. Life and death were there from the beginning of my quest to comprehend the possibility of what I now call *extensive evils*—horrific harmdoing on a massive, long-term, systemic scale that both affects and requires great numbers of people (e.g., genocide, ecocide, human trafficking, chattel slavery, locked-in inequalities). This kind of historical evil is precisely not *intensive evil,* which is done by one or a few people in a short period of time and is understood immediately to be "abnormal," "mad," "insane"—entirely shocking. This is, perversely, the evil we are, if I may put it this way, comfortable with: moral monsters doing monstrous things are horrifying but familiar. They maintain a kind of ethical equivalency between act and actor.

Extensive evils unbalance that equivalency. In their time and place, they were, and are, normalized, legalized, moralized. They were, and are, done on the ground, daily, by reliable workers and citizens. Indeed, extensive evils are only possible if people are not out of control "monsters" possessed by hatred or fear or demons or psychological "madness." Whole systems are then morally mad; the people who do their work are *adjusted* to them as many were and could again be "well-adjusted" conventional workers and citizens.

If we continue to take the figure of Adolf Eichmann as the potent example he has become, we can say that this "Engineer of the Final Solution" may or may not have been a virulent anti-Semite (that debate continues), but whether or not, what mattered was that he did his job for a significant period of time, reliably, and, concerning the monstrous system that required that job, he did it well. This—the doing of what

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people in different times and places (also always a few clear-eyed people even in perverted times) want to call *monstrous things* and doing them over time as part of a conventional "ordinary life" is what I needed to comprehend. *What were they thinking?* I kept asking. *How are they, and so many others, making sense of what they are doing, day after day, as their ordinary life?*

The red thread that runs through the book I wrote but cannot consider finished is: *People who are not thinking are capable of anything.* And banalities, including conventionality, clichés, jargon, group-think, and technical and other in-group language and logics—*enclosures of thought* as I now call them, in which we function well on autopilot—emerged as I did my research on how we can fail to think.

But life and death were also already there from the beginning of my first book. In *Transforming Knowledge,* I tried to think through how the evident conceptual errors caused by prejudicial categorizations of humans into radically divided, hierarchically ranked 'kinds' were still skewing knowledge passed on by well-meaning professors and scholars, as indeed they demonstrably were (and some still are). There is nothing, it then seemed to me, merely academic, divorced from "real life," about variously institutionalized knowledge: it reflects and creates meanings as well as truths that shape our world, for both good and ill. This, I believe, is also why Hannah Arendt, asked by the founder of a new philanthropy what to support that might help people become better citizens of a democratic republic, responded, "[S]timulate individual scholarship and thought which will counter the trend toward the institutionalization of thought" (Arendt 2018, p. 102).

We come back, time and again, to the importance of thinking. How and whether we are attentive and reflective as we move through our days alone and among others matter a great deal. We are conscious creatures and creators of meaning. When we go through some parts of our life (at work? in school? partying? as experts?) on autopilot, following the rules, running only on the tracks made by others, a sense that life has no meaning can spread. Infecting, attenuating our own relation to life, it can deaden also how we experience others whose moral claims on us we may then no longer recognize as meaningful.

Banality, substituting for thinking as it can in any arena of life, suffocates minds until they lose their vitality, their originality. In its many

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forms in enclosures of thought, more and less institutionalized, it can deaden. It can also become deadly.

Michael Quinn Patton, with whom I share a life-altering effort to comprehend genocide (in his case, originally in Rwanda), has written passionately, rightly, and, as always, well about the sense of urgency with which he understands the life-and-death importance of teaching thinking. My urgency, as I have said, has as its wellspring an idea that both presses and draws me: that thinking, the activity itself—rather than code, dogma, creed, principles, or faith—is intrinsically of moral and so also of political significance (and vice versa). As with all activities, the mind's thinking, like the body's moving, requires practice not only as those who would be scholars or athletes practice to become better but simply to keep becoming who we are.

Intimate as thinking is with our moral being, it can be denied us, become distorted in us, and we can refuse and fail it. We can become human, humane; we can become inhumane, inhuman. The line between can be very thin indeed.

Learning to Be Thoughtful, Enlivening Thinking

The road to extensive evil is paved with thoughtlessness, whatever intentions were occupying our minds. How then could anything be of much greater importance than teaching thinking, not only as one more specialty (logic, critical thinking, creative thinking, ethical reasoning; thinking like a lawyer, a designer, a psychologist . . .) but as a practice of thoughtfulness? There is a great deal more to be said, evidently. Nonetheless, it is significant to consider that prime among our purposes as educators (in and out of schools) are practicing thinking and becoming thoughtful.

I now realize that John Dewey was also there at my starting place and continues to cast light. The first line of his *Democracy and Education* reads, "The most notable distinction between the living and the inanimate is that the former maintain themselves by renewal" (1944, p. 1). Drawing out, summing up the moral, political meanings in that starting place, the final line of the book is, "Interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest" (1944, p. 360).

The life of the mind, having taken up the question of moral responsibility, does not in this view have to end its inquiry with a stand-alone

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ethics to which we can refer, by which we can, using deduction, judge. Renewing itself in being *interested*—opening to, respectful of, actively engaged with experience—enlivening thinking is already relating morally. Such relating is evidently not sufficient for individual conscience or democratic justice, but it may indeed be necessary. How can we be morally responsible if we are not responsive? I at least would suggest that, lacking openness, respectful and curious attentiveness to anyone, anything about which we will make a moral judgment, choose, and act leaves us vulnerable to doing great harm, even if we intend to do good, even if we are faithfully applying tenets of a code we have learned.

That last line in *Democracy and Education* is congruent with positive moral meaning of the red thread in *The Evil of Banality: On the Life and Death Importance of Thinking*, which is, "People who are not thinking are capable of anything." As an antidote, I wrote there about the necessity of being "attentive" and being ready "to be startled back into thinking." Dewey's use of "interested" suggests a motivation for and an informing attitude of such attentiveness.

It is urgent that we keep thinking alive, not only for the sake of some end, some final answer, some knowledge or creed in which it may end, but so that we can in many ways sustain life. In her Nobel Prize acceptance speech, the Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska, familiar with dictatorships, told us: "[A]ny knowledge that doesn't lead to new questions quickly dies out: It fails to maintain the temperature required for sustaining life. In the most extreme cases, cases well known from ancient and modern history, it even poses a lethal threat to society" (1998, p. xvi).

Fieldwork

From the beginning of this book project, there have been pressing, often urgent, questions concerning the relation of knowledge, disciplines and fields, thinking, and acting for the good in this, our life and times. Specifically, we have considered how the relationship between *banality* and *extensive evils* explored in my book does and does not or might better illuminate modes and ways of thought that characterize and so are taught in established fields, disciplines, professions, projects: *What do any or all of these ways of thinking have to do with countering actual and potential extensive evils through the educating, working, and*

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acting they inform? There are many and differing responses among our authors, of course: a fine thing. They offer examples of thinking, working, and acting within their fields, and they question whether and how they counter extensive evils, serve instead extensive good—or might fail to do so. For example, Fred Bird explores how it is that experts in companies with "benign" as well as "malign intentions" can do harm working in economic development. Sociologist Troy Duster, who chaired the national Commission on Ethical, Social, and Legal Implications (ELSI) that was convened as research on the human genome was taking off, reflects on difficulties many fields now have taking on such big and consequential issues. Among other things, Duster observes that there has been increasing pressure on scholars to publish many short papers rather than books capacious enough for the author to have thought through genuinely complex questions. Wryly noting that researchers and educators bemused by numbers developed an intelligence quotient (IQ) test to measure capacities of intellect, Duster observes that we have no moral quotient (MQ) test to measure capacities of conscience.

Throughout all this interesting, richly informed reflecting out and about in fields and professions by some of those who know them best, I have continued to be moved by a few basic questions:

- *How does the mode of thinking characteristic of a field practice people in making good choices and judgments, where "good" means both sound by relevant standards of the field and moral political good?*
- *Does the field require <u>external</u> ethical standards and after-the-fact judgments because it takes its characteristic ways of thinking, hence acting, to be entirely neutral morally?*
- *Is it held that concern for real effects is appropriate primarily when, and because, knowledge is "applied" (and perhaps even then only for some kinds of applications)?*

Basically, then, I am asking: *Is there anything we need to learn from or worry about thinking, say, "like an engineer"? Or an English professor, philosopher, or business person?* Then there are the next pressing questions: *Are there ways engineering—or any field (I chose engineering because that was Eichmann's field, of course)—is and/or could be*

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taught that might make it more difficult for graduates to do "good" engineering by all stated professional standards but to horrific effect? Can adding on a unit, a course, a commission to raise ethical, legal, and social considerations do work we need as long as they remain separate, after the fact, external?

Are there some fields that offer ways of thinking that are, shall we say, antidotes to the evils enabled by banalities, and/or that notably strengthen our ways of working for extensive good before or even during times in which significant harmdoing is normalized?

II. WHAT IS THINKING?

What is thinking? is kind of a trick question: Being about itself, it escapes, reforms, beginning ever again just when you thought you foresaw an end. Nonetheless, with Arendt as my exemplar, with other thinking friends such as Dewey in mind, and on my own, as they would insist, I have recurrently asked myself what I am coming to mean by *thinking*. I am asking now as I continue to prepare to write about why and how to teach it: It has for so long seemed to me to be of life-and-death importance, how can I not? I have therefore to take up this tricky question particularly as it concerns the most basic and also moral political dimensions of what it means to be human. Field-defined, formalized thinking ought not enclose itself too rigidly against other modes and ways, or so I keep thinking.

Teaching thinking: You can certainly teach something you are still thinking about; I hope that is what most of us do. It does mean, though, that our well-worn banners bear the sign of a question mark.

On a Quest

I opened *The Evil of Banality* with a question I had long had in mind from Arendt. She asked it of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: "Do the inability to think and a disastrous failure of what we commonly call conscience coincide?" (1971b, p. 418).

It is a haunting, agitating question. How to hear it? If it becomes (or, for me, remains) our own question, what to do with it? What does it ask of us when we consider how we should learn and teach newcomers of

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all ages? As important as it is, it was not sent to us wearing the clothes or speaking the language of religion, tradition, myth, emotion, or psyche that would signal where and to whom we might turn for responses that suit it, that are appropriate: who are the experts? Are there any? Might we consult science, perhaps studies of the brain and evolution to which today even moral philosophers can be found turning? But that, too, would mean translating, re-clothing it. It would take a lot of work before Arendt's became a "good research question" that could put us on track to "sound" answers, don't you think? We might have to start as if we already knew what "an inability to think" refers to, or assume that some institutionalized definition of thinking, some diagnosis of its disabilities, would suffice as beginning places. There is not much in Arendt's work that would help us understand what *she* was asking, though.

Is the question, as posed, even a question that can be answered—perhaps a lousy, sloppy question? A merely rhetorical one? Or, perhaps, a different kind of question?

Arendt also asked, "Is our ability to judge, to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, dependent upon our faculty of thought?" (1971b, p. 418). Not easy to say that helps. *Our faculty of thought, thinking, conscience, judgment*: The 'coincidences' and dependences are getting more, not less, complex here. And why pair "right from wrong" with "beautiful from ugly"? What does moral judgment have to do with aesthetic?

It is worth noting here another question that could slip by us: So, we are looking for a grounding of conscience and of judgment in an experience, thinking, of which we are all capable, and not only or especially people Arendt (citing Kant) called "professional thinkers"? (1971a, p. 3). For Arendt, who considered such equality requisite for any—if I may—moral morality, this question did not need to be posed, but for many reasons, including the common association of ability to think with intelligence, and of both with knowledge and formal education that is delivered to us in disciplinary form, I have found it important to highlight it. For now, I will simply assert, with Arendt (and Socrates, Dewey, Whitehead, Weil, to name but a few; there are also folk sayings to this effect) that there are highly educated people who do not think much or well and undereducated people who do. When we ask what difference thinking makes and how to teach it, I believe we need to be

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attentive to ways that we have limited what we take to be *thinking*, and/or here encounter persistent but erroneous old, hierarchical rankings of humans by kind (2005, *Transforming Knowledge*, 2nd Edition). I should also say that, observing that thinking is something we can all do, I do not turn to the descriptive literature on kinds of thinking (more or less correlated with kinds of intelligence) that is quite popular. What is interesting to me in such listings is that the freedom inherent in thinking is so evident. It surpasses itself endlessly, given a chance: The lists can always be added to, differently ordered, and new ones emerge regularly.

Even about itself, thinking can always be otherwise. But that does not mean we can say nothing. It is hardly "nothing" to observe the reflexivity and freedom of our active minds.

Thinking/thinking

There is a gimmick I did not use in my book but turn to here as a way of making elusive meanings of *thinking* easier to hold on to: there is Thinking, with a capital "T," and there is thinking, with a lowercase "t." You may be familiar with this device. In some schools of thought, we can find the Self and the self; Being and being; God and gods. That is useful, but I do not want Thinking/thinking to suggest that Thinking is metaphysical, mystical, or existentially higher than thinking. What I am about to discuss as "basic modes" of thinking—of and with it, not different or merely additive—is the thinking we do as conscious creatures. That is, it is an activity that is the *life* of the mind, always available to each and to all, as well as the reflexive Thinking that our consciousness makes possible so we can do that remarkable thing, Thinking about our own thinking. These basic modes are not mystical or Other: They really are basic and also, I believe, can and ought to be enlivened, practiced, enjoyed throughout education, work, and our lives—with and for everyone. I will capitalize when I speak of reflexive Thinking, and use lowercase for all the other ways our minds move, including what I am for now calling "middle world" thinking (i.e., developed, legitimated, field-related modes). I call them "middle world" because Thinking in a sense surrounds all other modes, enabling from 'below' and reflecting from 'above,' outside. I hope that does not seem to slide toward the arcane. Indeed, I hope that it will come to seem simply obvious.

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"No Doctrine": Thinking for Ourselves

If we are to turn to *experience* looking for the thinking (which may be, or include, Thinking) that could be most important to teach and practice, the context of the questions themselves, rather than any discipline or institutionalized thought, would seem a place from which to begin. We met those questions in the context of Arendt's reflections on what she experienced in a courtroom in Jerusalem where Eichmann, "the Engineer of the Final Solution," was being tried for crimes against humanity. At some point, she found herself "in possession of a concept" (1971a, p. 5), as she put it—*the banality of evil.* It made sense of—shone some light on—although it certainly did not explain (she was quick to tell us that she meant by it "neither an explanation . . . nor a theory about it"; 1994, p. 288) what had struck her as Eichmann's sole extraordinary characteristic, a curious, quite authentic "inability to *think*" (1994, p. 49).

This was what she 'saw': what to do with it? Imagine how many questions could come to mind. But, as you know, what Arendt asked is, "Do the inability to think and a disastrous failure of what we commonly call conscience coincide?" I want to say that she stayed right there, with what had come to mind during a very complex experience, to question it with little mediation by or translation into available concepts or methods honed by fields of knowledge. She called what came to mind "simply factual" (1994, p. 287). We should note, though, that we deal here with meaning, which does not contravene factual truth but ought not be conflated with it: there are facts, and there is the question of what they *mean*.

It is also the case that in later years Arendt took her questions about "the experience of thinking" to the works of "great philosophers"—to virtuosic thinkers. But still she was not looking for any "thesis or doctrine" (1971a, p. 3). As, I am told, Pluto (planet or not) was discovered by scientists observing the effects of gravitational pull despite there being no then-known body to cause it, Arendt 'discovered' some things about thinking by seeing it as "invisibly" causing what she called "metaphysical fallacies" (1971a, p. 12) in great philosophical works. In particular, she observed that philosophers seeking *truth* tended to conflate it with *meaning*, missing what Arendt took to be a crucial distinction between Thinking's free play of mind by which we explore *meanings*

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that cannot be proved but do need to be sustained by others (on one crucial level, as "commonsense") and rule-directed "cognition" that ends in knowledge or conclusions that can and must be proved. Evidently and significantly, for Arendt as for Szymborska, it is not knowledge *per se* that "will make us free"; it is thinking. More on that later: *thinking* may be more or less "free," but *free* with *Thinking* is redundant.

I took my own questions to those who in this light appear as virtuosos of *not*-thinking—perpetrators; enablers; regular, reliable people who did the daily work of the Nazi genocide. I then kept going, seeking also those who did and are now enabling or doing the work of other genocides, other extensive evils. I was asking, *What kind of thinking did Eichmann and the many reliable workers of extensive evils lack to such an extreme degree?* And, of course, *Is that a fruitful question? What does it bring to light?* Often enough, what came to light made me stop and think yet again.

"Thoughtless"?

An observation that diverted my attention from the experience that Arendt asked us to stay with—Eichmann's "thoughtlessness"—as well as what I observed in others who had "a disastrous failure of conscience" was that they were evidently capable of and did do what we often call "using their minds." Certainly, neither Eichmann nor, for another prominent example from the many I found, Eugene de Kock, the man called "Prime Evil" during South Africa's Apartheid regime, has been called "stupid" or "inept." Eichmann was a capable engineer and a good problem-solver, working through the daunting logistical problems of extensive evils. It is not a mindless task, the rounding-up, transport, and murder of millions of individuals. Eichmann did his job nonetheless, as did "Prime Evil" for Apartheid.

We can also note that Eichmann had what is often taken to indicate, or even pass for, a "moral compass" or "ethics." He was loyal to his government; he worked hard; he had a social life, was married, and was apparently a good father; and, Arendt observed, he was quite emotional about issues that brought to his mind "edifying phrases," of which he had quite a stock. Or, on the contrary, as other scholars have said, he was a virulent, arrogant, power-craving anti-Semite, and that helped,

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instead of hindering, him in using his mind to do his horrendous work well.

Apparently his mind worked well enough in what appear usual and unusual ways: *What, then, can Arendt have meant by* thinking *that allowed her to say that Eichmann had an "inability" to engage in it?* Here is my question again, with a crucial new clause: *Which activities of mind do those who make extensive evils possible lack or, more likely, since few are as extreme as Eichmann, fail to use? How and why are those activities so basic and so significant that, failing them, for Arendt at least, all other mental activities lose their standing as "thinking"?*

Locating such thinking (which I mark now with that capital "T"), we may be able to see how we might do better at teaching it as intrinsic—indeed, basic and significant—to the thinking of all fields and to all those activities of mind that allow us to do our work and get through our days.

Disclosing T/*thinking*

We turn now to meanings that have been flickering around us without quite coming into view. If we seek illumination rather than conclusion, revitalization of thinking rather than its end in answers, it is a fine thing to consider how words can not only *communicate* meanings but, as Arendt put it, *disclose* them.

Here, then, is a sampler of meanings Arendt introduced in various contexts. I gather these now rather as I might introduce the characters in a play with a brief phrase or two, knowing that only as they appear and reappear interacting with others will we come to have some sense of them, a sense about which we will probably argue with others who saw the same play.

For Arendt, as for Dewey, discussion of meanings, of *thinking* as of *freedom*, *democracy*, *equality*, does us good even if—because?—we do not pin down a meaning. We also do not "pin down" a meaning of *beauty* or *ugliness* but may nonetheless be changed by them. It is not so mysterious that Arendt would have paired right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, as we saw her doing when she was questioning thinking that perhaps keeps us from having "disastrous failures" of "what we commonly call conscience." Interestingly, Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1980)

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is arguably as illuminating of what he meant by democracy, by *democratic morals*, as *Democracy and Education*.

Arendt says at various times that what she means by "thinking" is "Socratic thinking" (the conversations I have with myself, the "two-in-one" of thinking); "speculative thinking" (a free play of mind that is not seeking answers); and the thinking of "spectators" or "umpires" (reflecting impartially from 'above,' perhaps to judge). She also says that thinking is what "reason" as distinct from "cognition" does: Unlike cognition, which gives us science, reason in this sense not only does not end when it comes upon answers, it has (she says, citing Kant) "a positive aversion to its own results." This is of course similar to the Socratic *aporetic* conversation in which the 'end' of a dialogue is just a pause to acknowledge that, having cleared the ground, we may be ready to begin again.

Glimpsing a Morality Play

"Before my teacher came to me, I did not know that I am. I lived in a world that was a no-world. I cannot hope to describe adequately that unconscious, yet conscious time of nothingness. . . . Since I had no power of thought, I did not compare one mental state with another" (Dennett, 1991, p. 227).

Consciousness, comparison, contradiction—conscience? Contradiction is a quality we can only experience if we can *compare*. The Rwandan *genocidaire* I quote in the opening of *The Evil of Banality* did not compare what he knew of an old man he killed one day with the reality of having killed him. The discrepancy seems to have come to mind, as it did for his wife when, in the evening, they discussed it but neither then went on to compare. They had dinner, he tells us, did not talk about it, and went to sleep. By contrast, an ISIS enforcer recently interviewed says that after he killed for the second time he was torn by contradictions, most profoundly of his sense of himself with what he actually did. So now, he thought, "I'm a psycho killer" (Callimachi, 2018, p. 3). He remembered; he could not stop thinking about it. The Rwandan continued "doing his job." The ISIS officer quit and left the country.

Becoming conscious of what we are doing is a prerequisite for thinking about it. Thinking about it can—although it may not—enable conscience. Thinking does not make us moral, but we cannot be moral if we are not thinking.

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Capital T/hinking—Above and Below

I asked earlier, *Which activities of mind do those who make extensive evils possible lack or, more likely, fail to use? How and why are those activities so basic and so significant that, failing them, for Arendt at least, all other mental activities lose their standing as "thinking"?*

The three most basic of the many meanings of *thinking*, including the one I am capitalizing for now, concern activities of mind through which we can become both what and who we are. They realize human life; allow us to be not only human, but humane; and together actualize the blessing and curse of individual human freedom and so also of responsibility.

Beginning to unfold that: Thinking is (1) the *life* of the mind, the activity of human consciousness. Citing Aristotle, Arendt says that thinking is an experience of *Energeia*, our life energy, an expression of our potential. We are more likely to refer to *consciousness*, which is also evocative, and similarly eludes settled definition. Thinking is also (2) the realization of our mind's ability to be with itself; to recognize itself; to be "two-in-one" (Socrates); to "recoil" (Augustine) on itself, to "self-stimulate" and to "double back recursively" (Dennett, 1991, p. 256)—to be reflexive and open a space for us to be reflective. This ability to be "in-and-for-ourselves" (Jean-Paul Sartre), and so to "compare" (Helen Keller), enables conscience. Con/sciousness, con/science: The words themselves disclose that we *know with* and can *think about* ourselves and so, as Sartre put it, we can be in-ourselves (subjects/subjective), for-ourselves (objects/objective), or we can choose to be in-and-for-ourselves, realizing the curious and definitional ability of humans to cross without closing the gap, the openness, at our existential and also epistemological core. And, (3) Thinking actualizes the blessing and curse of specifically human freedom without which there can be no moral responsibility—i.e., a freedom that is the opposite of necessity, although often submitted to dogma and/or ideology that *claims* necessity. This specific human freedom is ours due to that gap between I and me that we can experience as a need to "find myself," to "make peace with myself," to "be true to myself." We are not simply there as doubled but the same. We have to ask, *Who am I? What is true*—even, *What is real?*

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For creatures of the gap—of con/sciousness and possibly of con/science—identity, morality, and truth are achievements, not givens, and never secure. Insofar as that is the case, we are also then creatures who must learn to choose. Responsibility is already ours, recognize and take it on or not.

Exploring Still in the Same Place

Realizing human life: "Thinking" is what we call the activity of our minds. We are conscious creatures; when we realize and actualize that defining potential (which is very likely intimately related to our need to communicate), we are thinking. This is not a startling thing to say. For example, we are familiar with the idea—one with great significance—that to be in a persistent *vegetative* state (i.e., not capable of a *human* life) is to display chronic wakefulness without awareness. These are difficult definitions and subject to change. What interests me now is the distinction, wakefulness without awareness. There may then be responsiveness, but no indication of "awareness," or no indication of reflexivity, the recoil of consciousness on itself that allows us to communicate if only by some interpreted-as-*purposeful* indication to someone else even something as simple as "I am hungry."

But is this a reductive or lowest-common-denominator meaning? Thinking as an activity of life seems to me rich in implication: consider only the complexity and intensity of a change from wakefulness to awareness. The novelist Marge Piercy, imagining it, writes in *He, She and It* (1991) of the great systemic shock of a cyborg crossing over a final barrier into human consciousness. Most, in her story, do not make it. Imagine Helen Keller, deaf and blind from birth and therefore mute, in the moment of crossing over from an undifferentiated state of being to a differentiated consciousness that gave her an "I" along with others and a world.

The awareness that arises with an ability to "compare mental states" is with us through life, as is the language Keller was then able to learn. Like all potential, however, that for reflective awareness as for language can be more or less realized; it can even be refused. Consider drug use, which with other ways of suppressing thinking has certainly been offered to those who are doing great harm. We are not the only ones who realize that people who are not thinking are, even if not capable of

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anything, at least a lot more capable of doing things incompatible with their sense of themselves as a decent human being if kept from remembering and so being able to reflect on it (or kept from reflecting, and so not remembering) (Ohler, 2017).

Keller became the moral exemplar she remains for us because she showed us a mind not only choosing and struggling for but reveling in an "I" that, emerging from experience of non-I, understood that relation precedes self. And Arendt, who so stressed the interiority of thinking, our inward gaze when engaged with things as images or thought-things rather than as they are in the physical world, nonetheless quoted one saying of a great Roman, Cato, practically every time she considered the experience of thinking: "Never is he more active than when he does nothing. Never is he less alone than when he is by himself" (1958, p. 325).

Not Only Human, but Humane

Reflexive, reflective thinking is the activity of our mind that realizes our moral being, allowing us to become humane, as the sheer activity of thinking—emerging with awareness of difference and also relation—realizes our human being. In this more specific but no more narrow sense, *Thinking reflexively* is also evidently of life-and-death importance.

Reflexivity is not the same as but always potentially accompanies and can interrupt—*What am I doing?!! What does that mean? What an odd use of language. I think I just told a lie*—our many other mind activities, the daily thinking of which there is a vast play of ways, including the very important commonsense, scientific reasoning, any kind of expertise from physics to housecleaning. Crucially, reflexivity also potentially accompanies and so can interrupt the substitution for thinking of autopilot mental activities such as banalities, conventions, clichés, ideologies, faiths. Simply, we can if we will think *about* anything, from a sensation—*Ah: an unripe apple*; to a subject—*plumbing, music theory, the ball game*; to our own thinking—*Not sure of that; Mom won't agree; Oops, lost my thread of thought*.

Another way to observe our reflexivity is to notice that thinking generalizes and is engaged with generalizations, beginning with an ability to use words. Nouns are not names, for example, and there is resis-

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tance among scientists (*cf*. those who study animal intelligence) to conferring the title of "thinking" on the ability to connect a word to an object or symbol or act (i.e., to learn it as a name rather than a general term, a noun, applicable even to instances of, say, "table" that one has not encountered before). Even in making sense of sensory stimulation we are generalizing: An infant just cries, while an adult feels *pain*, usually some *kind* and *degree* of pain, even when it is a new one. We are then using categories (generalizations) and, as Helen Keller told us, we are able to *compare*, think *about*, and not only undergo states, conditions, and/or sensations.

Moving into language, we are moving into communication that preexisted and surpasses us. We are all to some extent thus "socialized," and when we subsequently learn sub-languages—technical, professional, conventional, religious, social group—our thinking can become, as Arendt put it, "institutionalized." Nonetheless, we are still capable of Thinking about what we are doing, and thus we are in position to choose to submit to or work with, vary, or question—in a sense, already to resist—enclosures of thought and of meaning. Consider "code switching," a term for the evident ability of people to shift from and back into, say, the "language of the street," or "the locker room," or the language of their ethnic community where they hang out with peers, to the language of "professionals," or "mainstream America."

Such virtuosity can be strikingly evident in humor, which at what I, anyway, consider its best, approaches being a model of Thinking about thinking. It is one of our daily ways of de-institutionalizing ourselves and others, of resisting enclosures—or it can be. Good comedians *break the rules* so that we have to see them, can laugh in relief, anxiety, startled surprise, rebellion. (It might seem that humor can also be used to reinforce the rules, as in mockery; I am inclined to deny that the honorific of *humor*, though.)

The reflexivity that arises as a possibility when we become not only awake but aware and able to reflect on, to resist simply taking in, undergoing—thence perhaps to evaluate, to judge—is the specific meaning of Thinking that I now take to be crucial to ongoing efforts to be morally responsible. It makes it possible to think about what we are doing in particular ways that can develop into, say, business ethics, legal ethics, Baptist ethics, ethics as a field in philosophy. Reflexivity cannot do the work such fields do; it opens space in which we can create such fine

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edifices of mind. They are invaluable; to have a common world and live well in it, we need knowledge as well as "the wind," the "stinging fly" (as Plato's Socrates put it) of Thought. But if or when fields become overly institutionalized as kinds of expert thinking that can be applied without the disruption of unruly thinking, they, along with all enclosures of thought—from clichés to technical language, even unto formal logic or, say, Medical Ethics as taught, learned, and applied—can also become not only boring, rudely exclusive, and unnecessarily elaborate but also dangerously inattentive. Thus, all of the authors in this book believe in the good to be done with their field's ways of thinking and then find ways to think *about* it (not only as "meta-cognition" does: It is a step beyond characterizing a field's "cognition" to Think about it, by comparing, using historical contexts, checking out motivations, engaging "outsiders," considering consequences—opening space to walk around, to be startled into thinking/Thinking yet again).

Freedom, Resistance, Responsibility

Arendt tells us that Thinking (I am using my distinction of Thinking/thinking here: She says "thinking" but evidently does not mean "cognition" or any other rule-bound use of mind) is "always out of order," "unruly," that it "lays paths" (Heidegger, 1968) but does not arrive anywhere. She also held that we in our time should "think without a bannister" (Arendt, 2018) because the complete collapse of traditions wrought by the calamities of the twentieth century means we can no longer take them for granted as common ground even if to rebel against them. What is needed in our own times is, as Arendt used to say, wandering among the ruins, which can indeed be very beautiful, while thinking for ourselves as we explore, pick and choose, reinvent, reject.

Thinking and Resistance

Morally, politically, we should be ready to think off and around as well as on pre-set tracks because otherwise we could find ourselves helpless in the face of ideologies wielded by dictators or a totalitarian order that rewards those who switch tracks without Thinking—without "thinking what they are doing." Those who have not *practiced* thinking for themselves, thinking without a bannister, can find it easier to adopt beliefs

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that contradict their old values than suddenly to think as and for themselves. Fortunately, in a sense we are already resisting reality when we generalize, as we said earlier: not refusing or repelling it but no longer undergoing it in an unmediated way as a child does who suffers and, not yet able to understand, say, "appendicitis," has less perspective, less agency, than one who can with a generalization delimit it, think about what to do, who can help, how long it might last. Once started, we can practice resisting, Thinking rather than simply "taking in," becoming subject(ed) to experience.

All thinking opens space that frees us potentially, and with Thinking that enlivens us and allows us to question and reflect on anything, it is the act of resistance that enables all others. We should know that: Would-be dictators do. The first groups they turn against are those that make us T/think: poets, journalists, intellectuals, artists, scholars, students.

Thinking also frees by dissolving concepts, categories, dogmas—anything it takes up, turns around, sees in new light. The exemplar of this thinking/Thinking is, of course, Socrates, who liberated those he questioned and, he said, himself from unexamined certainties. We could say that it re-opens minds that have become "single-minded," a telling term we could apply to any closing of the gap, the "two-in-one" that allows for self-awareness, for conscience, for the freedom that allows us to think as well as know, to act as well as to behave, to choose as well as to go alone, undergo.

This, I think we might consider, is why Thinkers, like activists, so often get in trouble, on the one hand, and, on the other, are not infrequently honored after the fact—when new bannisters, new tracks, have been established in light of their disclosures. There is much more to say here, but for now, perhaps just this observation: People of conscience, conscientious objectors, those who practice civil disobedience non-violently startle people back into thinking. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. put it, they "heighten the tension" (King, 2012). Significantly, Mahatma Gandhi considered himself an educator trying not to force but to move people to think differently. He called off hunger strikes and other actions if he thought their targets might yield without the change that comes with learning. These thinking teachers acted for freedom, not the substitution of one with another form of "single-minded" dominance. Not surprisingly, Arendt observed that "freethinking" is redun-

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dant: *thinking* is freeing. Again, it is not sufficient, but it is necessary—and not only before but during and assuredly after struggles to realize freedom.

. . . And Moral Responsibility

If Thinking in its life-activity and its reflexive, reflective meanings is, as I hold, the ability we have that realizes the human freedom enabled by the gap we recognize with the term "con/sciousness," it is also why we are but must also become moral beings. Whatever moral guidelines we may refer to, we could and would not have to do so at all if we were not able to choose. We do not hold people or other beings responsible morally, thence also legally, for their acts if they cannot think—are "cognitively impaired," "unable to tell right from wrong." We do not hold a stone that falls on our foot morally responsible (even if we do swear at it). "Gravity made me do it," it could say in the kind of unarguable self-defense for which desperate defendants' lawyers yearn (hence the market for "expert witnesses," although unfortunately there are always equally credentialed experts who disagree—thinking does that).

This is the problem with freedom, of mind as of governance: It escapes whatever we do to try to institutionalize, to contain, even to define it. How then to practice and teach *Thinking* concerning formalized thinking in fields, knowledge, arts, methods? There is evidently no one way, nor is there any essential subject matter. What then? At the end of this book, we will glean ideas from these thoughtful authors, not because there are "Lessons to Be Learned" once and for all, but so that we may all think further in their light.

For myself, I think I have to say that my question is about asking questions. How do we do that in ways that startle people, and ourselves, back into thought? How do we keep the questioning always in play, rather than using it to pry out answers, to test, to expose, to correct? How do we question to draw out meanings and to explore them?

How do we question so that everything becomes more interesting and we, more thoughtful?

P.S. A few of my favorite questions: *You asked me to help you solve this problem that your organization has had for twenty-five years. I can do that. First, though, can you tell me what it is about this problem that*

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you love so much you have kept it around for so long? More: *Here you are, in a class called "Contemporary Moral Issues." What does "moral" mean? Bad question, I know. What do you mean when you say to a friend, "I have to tell you that I think what you are doing is immoral"? Is it possible to be too moral? Is it immoral to mow your lawn at 6:00 a.m. on Sunday?*

I'm trying to understand: Will you tell me more about what that means?

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BEYOND BANALITY IN THINKING ABOUT THINKING

Michael Quinn Patton

Twenty years ago, following my keynote address at an international evaluation conference, I was approached by a man who said he had something for me. He handed me a five-volume report entitled *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience.* The man, Niels Dabelstein, had chaired the Steering Committee for the evaluation on behalf of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the development cooperation division of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The evaluation report presented a comprehensive, independent review of the events leading up to the genocide that occurred in Rwanda between April and December 1994, during which some 800,000 people were killed.

The report also included an evaluation of the subsequent international humanitarian response. The international assistance for emergency relief to Rwandan refugees and displaced persons cost $2.3 billion US dollars (inflation adjusted). The United Nations Peacekeeping effort and related activities cost more than that over several years leading up to the genocide. The peacekeeping mandate was aimed at keeping the antagonistic groups apart in an attempt to prevent violence while efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict were underway. However, no effort was made to bring ordinary people from the opposing groups together for dialogue, mutual understanding, and higher education—where higher actually means *higher*, deeper, broader, more meaningful, and higher impact, and such might actually undercut the escalating momen-

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> Operationalization as a value has been criticized because it reduces the concept to the operations used to measure it, what is sometimes called "raw empiricism." As a consequence, few researchers define their concepts by how they are operationalized. Instead, nominal definitions are used…and measurement of the concepts is viewed as a distinct and different activity. Researchers realized that measures do not perfectly capture concepts, although . . . the goal is to obtain measures that validly and reliably capture the concepts. (p. 162)

It appears that there is something of a conundrum here, some tension between social science theorizing and empirical research. Yet a second entry in the *Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods* sheds more light on this issue.

> Operationalism began life in the natural sciences . . . and is a variant of positivism. It specifies that scientific concepts must be linked to instrumental procedures in order to determine their values. . . . In the social sciences, operationalism enjoyed a brief spell of acclaim. . . . Operationalism remained fairly uncontroversial while the natural and social sciences were dominated by POSITIVISM but was an apparent casualty of the latter's fall from grace [emphasis in the original]. (Williams, 2004, pp. 768–69)

The entry elaborates three problems with operationalization, each of which applies to the challenge of defining thinking. First, "underdetermination" is the problem of determining "if testable propositions fully operationalize a theory" (p. 769). Examples include concepts such as homelessness, poverty, and alienation that have variable meanings in different social contexts. What "homeless" means varies historically and sociologically.

The second problem is that objective scholarly definitions may not capture the subjective definition of those who experience something. *Poverty* offers an example: What one person considers poverty another may view as a pretty decent life. The Northwest Area Foundation, which has as its mission *poverty alleviation*, has struggled to try to operationalize poverty for outcomes evaluation; they found that many quite poor people in states like Iowa and Montana, who fit every official definition of being in poverty, did not even see themselves as poor much less "in poverty." The third is the problem of disagreements among social scientists about how to define and operationalize key con-

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cepts. The second and third problems are related in that one researcher may use a local and context-specific definition to solve the second problem but that context-specific definition is likely to be different from and conflict with the definition used by other researchers inquiring in other contexts.

One way to solve the problem of definition is to abandon the search for a standardized and universal operational definition and treat thinking as a "sensitizing concept."

THINKING AS A SENSITIZING CONCEPT

Qualitative sociologist Herbert Blumer (1954) is credited with originating the idea of the "sensitizing concept" to orient fieldwork. Sensitizing concepts in the social sciences include loosely operationalized notions such as victim, stress, stigma, and learning organization that can provide some initial direction to a study as one inquires into how the concept is given meaning in a particular place or set of circumstances (Schwandt, 2001). The observer moves between the sensitizing concept and the real world of social experience giving shape and substance to the concept and elaborating the conceptual framework with varied manifestations of the concept. Such an approach recognizes that while the specific manifestations of social phenomena vary by time, space, and circumstance, the sensitizing concept is a container for capturing, holding, and examining these manifestations to better understand patterns and implications.

Minnich tells me that Hannah Arendt wrote of "*illuminating* insights," ideas that ask to be brought into conversation. Sensitizing concepts constitute illuminating insights about something that deserves attention and, to be sure, conversation.

Consider the notion of *context*. Any particular research, evaluation, program, or event is designed within some *context,* and we are admonished to take *context* into account, be sensitive to *context*, and watch out for changes in *context.* But what is *context*? In 2009, the theme of the annual conference of the American Evaluation Association was "Context and Evaluation." Animated discussions ensued among those attempting to operationally define context and those comfortable with contextual variations in meaning. Those seeking an operational defini-

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tion of context ranted in some frustration about the ambiguity, vagueness, and diverse meanings of what they, ultimately, decided was a useless and vacuous concept. Why? Because it had not been (and could not be) operationally defined—and they displayed a low tolerance for the ambiguity that is inherent in such sensitizing concepts.

TYPES OF THINKING

One way we deal with the ambiguity of general concepts is to attach an adjective to specify a type. If we're dealing with context, we might begin by distinguishing types of contexts: cultural, political, economic, or societal. We might distinguish urban, rural, or suburban contexts.

Minnich, in the opening chapter of this book, usefully distinguishes "Thinking, with a capital 'T,'" and "thinking, with a lowercase 't.'" Thinking, capital T, includes our capacity to think about thinking. She explained that she would capitalize Thinking about thinking and "use lowercase for all the other ways our minds move," including what she calls "'middle world' thinking (i.e., developed, legitimated, field-related modes) . . . because Thinking in a sense surrounds all other modes, enabling from 'below' and reflecting from 'above,' outside."

That got me thinking about types of thinking. Table 2.1 offers a "Thinking Typology" to display the great variety of ways thinking is delineated. I've limited the inventory to ten in each category. The typology is nonhierarchical and nonsequential. No sequence or hierarchy is intended across the categories either horizontally (across the rows) or vertically (within the columns). Nor is the typology alleged to be either comprehensive or exhaustive. The purpose of the typology is simply to suggest the many ways we differentiate thinking (lowercase "t"), all of which, I want to suggest, *are ways of directing us away from Thinking, capital "T."*

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Table 2.1. A Select Inventory of Thinking Types

Thinking processes	Thinking purposes and applications	Thinking in disciplinary specializations	Instrumental thinking for action	Thinking predilections	Thinking situations
deductive	strategic thinking	sociological	engineering thinking	zero-sum	individual reflection
inductive	design thinking	political	legal thinking	bottom-line	group reflective practice
abductive	systems change thinking	economic	therapeutic thinking	argumentative	facilitated thinking
counterfactual	evaluative thinking	anthropological/cultural	medical thinking	skeptical	teaching thinking
comparative	entrepreneurial thinking	ecological	managerial thinking	cynical	coaching how to think
dialectical	development thinking	psychological	leadership thinking	hopeful	invited feedback
hypothetical	policy analysis	philosophical	sports thinking	selective perception	uninvited feedback
critical	planning	cross-disciplinary/ interdisciplinary	culinary thinking	evidence-based	debates
creative	implementation	transdisciplinary	community organizing thinking	contextual	dialogues

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Minnich's overarching premise is that capital T/hinking can be an antidote to extensive evil and its manifestations in such atrocities as genocide and slavery. "T/hinking can also be an antidote to the doing of violative harm to many over time, as when a great wrong is normalized, e.g., child labor and human trafficking" (personal communication, 2019).

The capital T/hinking versus lower t/hinking was new to me, and as I have worked with it in the course of co-editing this volume, I have come to appreciate its profound importance. I have spent a lifetime doing lower t/hinking and very little time doing capital T/hinking. Nor is capital T/hinking just for philosophical inquiry; it is for human inquiry. It is for realizing our human potential for T/houghtfulness, mindfulness, and consciousness.

Adjectival t/hinking

In this age of specialization, highly specialized forms and types of thinking are proliferating. I daresay you can take any adjective or noun—any of thousands in the linguistic ocean—and proclaim a new approach to thinking. Try it for yourself, as I will hereby demonstrate. I opened my 1,664-page, hardbound, unabridged *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (1966) to a random page using a random number generator: page 683 covers "hookworm" to "hor."—abbreviation for horizon.

The page includes "hopeful" and "hopeless," already well-established types of thinking. Applying hopeful thinking, we can conjure some new types of thinking, each worthy of widespread attention. Let the social media universe contemplate these additions to the thinking arsenal derived from just the first of three columns on the page (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2.

Adjective or noun	Type of thinking
Hookwormy—blood sucking nematode worms that cause severe anemia	*Hookwormy thinking*—insidious, draining argumentation that sucks the life out of deliberation
Hooky—full of hooks	*Hooky thinking*—fishing for weaknesses in another's perspective, catching that weakness and dragging it to the surface for exposure and digestion

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Statistical Analysis as Rigorous Thinking

An affirmation of rigor residing in thinking has come from the *American Statistician*, which, in a special issue of the journal, proclaimed that statistics should move from being a rule-bound enterprise to a principles-focused way of making sense of numbers. The four principles promulgated are:

- Accept uncertainty.
- Be thoughtful.
- Be open.
- Be modest (Wasserstein, Schirm, and Lazar, 2019).

This shift from rules to principles, from a focus on procedures to a focus on thinking, constitutes a significant paradigm shift. In concluding this section on rigorous thinking, I offer a reflection from Nobel Prize–winning physicist Percy Bridgman:

> There is no scientific method as such, but the vital feature of a scientist's procedure has been merely to do his utmost with his mind, *no holds barred*. (Quoted in Waller, 2004, p. 106)

CRITICAL REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FOR RESEARCHERS AND EVALUATORS

Research thinking is ever at risk of succumbing to banality through obsessive focus on operationalization and standardization as sources of credibility when, in fact, the focus on replicable procedures increases compliance with recipe following, makes research methods banal, and reduces thoughtfulness. In discussing this with Minnich as we worked on this book, I asked for her thoughts on methodology.

> "Methodology" is a nice, fancy word, but "method" is usually what people are actually talking about when they say methodology. So the meaning of methodology can be lost, and if we lose "methodology" in its own right, we lose "the study of the logics of method," the reflective dimension we need to justify a choice of method. Methodology is thinking about choice of methods that will then shape disciplined reasoning and can then help us think about those choices without

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> continuing to be constrained by them. And thinking itself can reflect on limits of methodology. (Minnich, personal communication)

This reminds us to think about our thinking and how our thinking is embedded in all we do, especially methodological choices and how we think about what rigor means, "demonstrating rigor" being a core aspiration of researchers. She continued:

> Technical languages can become the kind of banal that allows people to do thoughtless on up to evil things. There is a constant risk in doing one of the most basic and important things of which our minds are capable—making categories.
>
> Thinking and language interacting creatively are how we comprehend without reduction, how we retain our own and others' freedom of mind. Limit thinking to knowledge, opinion, belief, and these lock in and become dogmatic—perhaps deadly, certainly deadening, boring. Limit language to the worn coins of cliché, convention, jargon, insider professional language and the same thing happens. The past, the retrospective, smothers the present, the prospective future—and then there are ever more insider/outsider divisions for obvious reasons. Only the already initiated can speak to each other with comprehension. Awful thought . . . and not unfamiliar to any of us.
>
> We can *think about language* even as we use and are used by it, and that allows us, as Toni Morrison put it, to become aware of "the otherwise invisible bowl within which we swim."
>
> In some ways, I want nothing more than to help awaken, nourish, and make utterly contagious a fine and insatiable love of thinking and its complement, language, among other things, but basically to keep our mind's products from being prisons rather than homes, works of art, tool shops, keys. (Minnich, personal communication)

This kind of increased awareness comes from T/hinking.

WHAT THINKING IS NOT

Sometimes we can more definitively specify what something is *not* than what it *is*. Let me expand the landscape of inquiry by including attention to what IT (thinking) is *not*. The 2016 American presidential election was characterized by fabrications, lies, misrepresentations, illogic,

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character attacks, and a general disregard for facts, data, science, and evidence—patterns carried over into and permeating the Trump presidency. Politics inevitably involves different opinions. However, as distinguished social scientist, policy researcher, and US Senator from New York Patrick Daniel Moynihan stated: "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts." Would that it were so! Instead, we have seen the politics of the big lie resurrected at an unprecedented level:

> If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State. (Author unknown, often attributed to Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, Nazi Germany)

Here's the updated, research-based version from Nobel Prize–winning decision scientist Daniel Kahneman in his best-selling book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*:

> A reliable way to make people believe in falsehoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth. Authoritarian institutions and marketers have always known this fact. (Kahneman, 2011)

The rise of social media makes disseminating big lies easier than ever. One consequence highlighted by the *New York Times* editorial board is that "when everyone can customize his or her own information bubble, it's easier for demagogues to deploy made-up facts to suit the story they want to tell.

"That's what Mr. Trump has done. For him, facts aren't the point; trust is. Like any autocrat, he wins his followers' trust—let's call it a blind trust—by lying so often and so brazenly that millions of people give up on trying to distinguish truth from falsehood. Whether the lie is about millions of noncitizens voting illegally, or the crime rate, or President Obama's citizenship, it doesn't matter: In a confusing world of competing, shouted 'truths,' the simplest solution is to trust in your leader. As Mr. Trump is fond of saying, 'I alone can fix it.'

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He is not just indifferent to facts; he can be hostile to any effort to assert them. . . . Mr. Trump has changed this game. He has exploited, perhaps better than any presidential candidate before him, the human impulse to be swayed more by story than by fact. As one of his surrogates said recently, 'There's no such thing, anymore, as facts' (*New York Times*, 2012, p. SR10).

We now know from research on how our brains process information that we are vulnerable to *confirmation bias:* the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms our preexisting beliefs and prejudices, while giving little consideration to contrary evidence (Kahneman, 2011). In so doing, we mistake the repetition of the same thing over and over as confirmation of its truth. Repetition of the big lie becomes verification of its truth. As if the challenge of thinking clearly and rigorously was not already daunting, *truthiness* has ascended to overshadow truth. *Truthiness*, a term introduced sarcastically by comedian Stephen Colbert (2005), refers to the quality of preferring facts that *feel right* and that *one wants to believe* to be TRUE. No need to worry about actual facts and empirical evidence.

As we inquire into the definition, parameters, nature, applications, implications, and consequences of T/hinking and t/hinking, let's bear in mind what it is not: lying, big or little; manipulation of data to support perceived positions; cherry-picking evidence to distort the full truth; illogical and unwarranted conclusions; intentionally creating and disseminating false "news"; treating opinions as facts; *truthiness*; and fabricating evidence to support ideological and political positions. And that's just the short list. We may not agree on a precise definition of thinking, but perhaps we can agree on what it is not.

NEVER AGAIN

The promise *Never Again!*, central to the message and mission of the Holocaust Museum, was the title of Meir Kahane's 1972 best-selling book about the Holocaust. It is an aspiration the world has failed to realize. Rwanda. Darfur. Congo. Central African Republic. Syria. Rohingya in Myanmar. And the future?

While working on this book, I participated in three major conferences on various aspects of and likely consequences of climate change.

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Serious, knowledgeable, empirically oriented, and sober-minded experts from around the world, working in a variety of sectors and engaged in diverse arenas of environmental, economic, and development research, conclude that by the middle of the twenty-first century as many as twenty countries could be gone, sixty major cities could be underwater or under threat, and 1.5 billion people will likely be displaced. They believe that not only is humankind in danger from climate change but that climate change will lead to massive violence on a scale never before seen. Unless things change, the vision of *Never Again!* must yield to the reality of *Again and Again and Again*. . . .

I close this reflection with a heightened sense of *urgency*. The latest projections and scenarios about the effects of climate change on humanity globally, and the likelihood of extensive violence stemming from massive displacement of people, affirm and magnify the life-and-death importance—*and urgency*—of thinking and acting.

BASELINE THINKING

Minnich opened her chapter on "Thinking about Thinking" with a T. S. Eliot poem:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> and the end of all our exploring
> will be to arrive where we started
> and know the place for the first time.

My journey through the lowercase t/hinking landscape began with T/hinking about T/hinking. After extensive time in the t/hinking world, I find myself pulled back to T/hinking, and though having started there, I know that place for the first time and in a new way.

In the course of working on this book, I've reviewed a great deal of the thought that has been and is being given to thinking, everything from conceptual work to empirical research to personal guidance to tools for teaching. What I have found absent from that vast landscape is attention to the life-and-death importance of thinking in preventing extensive violence. That niche—the niche of this book and the cumulative work of Hannah Arendt, Elizabeth K. Minnich, and those with whom they have engaged—is the territory you now enter for a deeper

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II

Teaching Thinking

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3

THE LIMITS OF MORAL HEROISM

Allen Dunn

In *The Evil of Banality*, Elizabeth K. Minnich's bold thesis is that the signature evils of our time, the genocides and holocausts that have become synonymous with our modernity, have their origin in a pervasive thoughtlessness. This thoughtlessness, she insists, is not accidental but rather woven into the very fabric of our lives. It is most evident in the various social routines and personal protocols that make thoughtless action possible by disguising from us the very possibility of acting otherwise, by denying the inevitability of human freedom. In her words, "Thinking, here, refers to what we are doing when we practice our conscious capacity for freedom—our ability to reflect on, about, around something, including ourselves, including our own thinking" (Minnich, 2017, p. 65). Thinking, then, "opens a space, a gap, in consciousness between the thinker and whatever she is reflecting on," and this gap distances the thinker from herself, the "I" from the "me," as well as from the rest of the world. Most fatefully, it separates the past from the future, what already is from what might be should we intervene. To assume that the future will replicate the past is the beginning of thoughtlessness and the abdication of our responsibility.

As academics, we might be assumed to have a corner on this market. Thinking, after all, is what we are paid to do, but as Minnich discusses at some length, academic work seems as vulnerable to thoughtlessness as any other occupation. Certainly, the university generates numerous thoughtless technologies that inhibit rather than enhance thought by closing the gap between the thinking subject and the world on which

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THE EVOLUTION AND ASCENDANCY OF INDIVIDUAL CHOICE

In a treatise on reproductive choice titled *Children of Choice*, John A. Robertson acknowledges that social and economic constraints such as access to employment, housing, and child care can often play a significant role in the decision to have a child. However, the overarching theme to which Robertson returns again and again is that reproduction "is first and foremost an individual interest" (Robertson, 1994, p. 22). Framed as individual choice, debate about reproductive decisions takes place in the decontextualized vacuum of individual rights: to have a child or not; to have a male or a female child; to have a child with Down syndrome or a cleft palate; to produce a clone. However, rather than deploying an either-or formulation, a continuum is a better analytic device for arraying an understanding of strategies and options—from individual choice through embedded but powerful social pressures (e.g., stigma and ridicule), economic pressures, and even the coercive power of the state to penalize, as in China's former one-child policy and state-sponsored sterilization programs in the West. However, discussions of individual rights are routinely lifted from such contexts.

However, there are many circumstances in which latent and responsive state-level interventions reveal that the individual is not the appropriate unit of analysis. Amniocentesis is a relatively expensive procedure for the poor, and some states provide assistance to women seeking amniocentesis. In the 1980s, however, the California Department of Maternal and Child Health noted that the state was providing financial support for amniocentesis primarily to wealthier women past their mid-thirties. Mindful of the eugenic history in the state, officials initiated a program to persuade poorer women to accept the service. Yet, because the poor tend to have their children at an early age, this policy was not consequential.

LOCATING THE APPROPRIATE UNIT OF ANALYSIS: INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIAL

Refusal to address the matter of informed consent at any other level than that of the autonomous individual can twist and distort the deter-

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mined focus on the individual into unlikely contortions when dealing with non-Western cultures. But there are also subtle and unexamined ethical issues inside Western societies when we insist on ignoring the social reality of group interests and possibly the need for some element of group "consent." Here is a case in point.

Huntington's disease is a late-onset neurological disorder that strikes usually after the ages of thirty-five to forty. The race to locate the Huntington's gene(s) resulted in a triumphant discovery in the early 1990s. There is now a genetic test that can be performed to determine whether the person at risk for the disease actually carries the gene. Within a few short years of the discovery, neuroscientists in Denmark published a study in which they concluded that males with Huntington's are twice as likely to commit crimes as those who do not have the disease. The authors report that when they applied for permission to pursue this research, they made it clear to the human subjects' review panel that no individuals would be harmed by participating in the study. They noted that when analyzing the data, only serial numbers were used, and all personal identifiable information was removed.

However, this research report can implicate all those males in a group category (i.e., all those diagnosed as having Huntington's). This number would include far more people than those individuals who "participated" in the statistical manipulations that were the fundamental methodological techniques used in the study. The deeply embedded assumption of the ethics committee was that if no harm is done to the individuals participating in the study, then there are no other ethical questions that deserve scrutiny or consideration. Nevertheless, the results of the study implicate and potentially stigmatize all those with Huntington's. To the extent that the researchers find evidence that there is a general association between crime and Huntington's, then all those persons "in that group" (having Huntington's disease) are vulnerable to being stigmatized by this association. I am not suggesting that this study actually established a strong link between criminal activity and Huntington's disease. That is a topic for a different analysis. Rather, what is most important for this line of thinking is that the human subjects protection committee did not even have on its agenda the need for a radar screen to pick up the matter of "group interests" (all those males with Huntington's) in its review of the research protocol. Understandably, the Institutional Review Board would have a difficult time deter-

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mining and establishing "who speaks for the group" (all males with Huntington's) in such a situation (Jensen et al., 1998).

This example highlights one of the central reasons why there is a need to expand our notion of bioethics to biopolitics: namely, to address the effects of policies (and patterned practices) that have varying impacts upon groups and communities, upon classes and cohorts and aggregates, not just upon individuals. On the surface, direct-to-consumer genetic testing seems only about the individual and the assessment of health risk generated by test results. Indeed, the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues published a report at the end of 2013 in which all seventeen recommendations address individual level rights and privileges and the corresponding responsibilities of genetic testing companies, clinicians, and researchers to individual consumers (Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues, 2013).

PERSONALIZED MEDICINE VS. GROUP-BASED THERAPEUTIC TREATMENT REGIMENS

The development of genetic tests has ushered in the promise of "personalized medicine." The idea is simple enough—once a clinician has access to an individual's genetic makeup, it will be possible to fine-tune medications to that specific individual. One of the most popular candidates for this kind of attempt to fit the drug to the patient is warfarin, commonly used as a blood thinner for heart patients. Indeed, in the United States alone, approximately two million people take warfarin to prevent excessive clotting or coagulation. Calibrating the correct amount of warfarin to prescribe is difficult because taking too much of the drug will produce bleeding problems while too little will not stop serious health risks of clots forming. In addition, there is high variability among different patients.

To address this matter, researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania assessed a gene-based method for selecting a patient's dosage levels. They published their results in late 2013 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and here is how the lead author characterized the significance of the study:

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> At the individual level, the results of the four-year study (at eighteen clinical sites involving more than a thousand patients) were disappointing. Patients were divided into two groups—the first prescribed based only upon traditional clinical information, the second with genetic information added. The disappointment comes from the fact that there was no difference among the two groups in the key measure for efficacy. (Kimmel et al., 2013)

That might have been the take-away message, but the reason why this study is of particular relevance to a discussion of bioethics versus biopolitics lies in the following finding:

> There was, however, a statistically significant difference by race. Among African Americans, the same PTTR (percentage of time in therapeutic range) for the pharmacogenetic-guided dosing group was less than that for the clinical-guided dosing group—35.2 versus 43.5 percent, respectively. Pharmacogenetic-based dosing also led to more over-coagulation and a longer time to first therapeutic levels of the warfarin among African Americans. (*Science Daily*, 2013)

Here we see the potential inversion of personalized medicine to racialized medicine. That is, while an individual's genetic profile does not provide evidence for calibrating warfarin dosage, the designated race of the individual could well influence a clinician's decision to adjust dosage levels. If this sounds hyperbolic, here is a quote from the *Annual Review of Pharmacology and Toxicology* (2001):

> Ethnicity affects the average warfarin dose required to maintain therapeutic anticoagulation. . . . [W]hite patients require higher warfarin doses than Asians to attain a comparable anticoagulant effect. Chinese patients required a ~50 percent lower average maintenance dose of warfarin than White patients to obtain comparable anticoagulation. (p. 818)

In sum, physicians are prescribing warfarin doses based upon the race and ethnicity of the patient, not upon the patient's individual genome. Here is where a biopolitical analysis of group issues can and should trump a riveting focus on the bioethics of individual interests—because it is the group-designated individual who is at greater risk for misdiagnosis.

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