

Faculty of Educational Sciences
University of Helsinki

LIFE, DEATH AND LOVE

*Phenomenological Investigations
into the Messy Nature of Authenticity*

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ABSTRACT

Authenticity is a pervasive ideal in western societies. Educators, among others, regard authenticity with increased enthusiasm. Authenticity is certainly appealing. Who would not want to be authentic rather than inauthentic? Who would not want to educate one's children to become authentic? Yet, as attractive as it is, do we truly apprehend the nature of authenticity? How are we to detect an authentic person from an inauthentic one? Who is to decide which instances are authentic and which are not? The literature of authenticity offers us abundance of views and definitions, but no unanimous clarity. The challenges increase when trying to circumscribe educational authenticity. If it is unclear what authenticity is, how are we to understand educational authenticity? What happens if we try to promote authenticity as a curricular subject? Is it possible?

This phenomenological investigation grabs ahold of the nature of authenticity and its possibilities and challenges in education. Key questions include, what is authenticity and what makes it unique, what it is related to, and what makes it possible? In relation to learning, to what extent and with what kind of tools can it be promoted in educational institutions? Finally, what are the most promising pathways to investigate authenticity? How can we better understand the human condition through philosophic and human sciences, with authenticity as a metaphor or as a mantra? Here, various methodologies and schools of thought are explored and utilized, including the sociologically based approaches of qualitative research, including autoethnography and post-qualitative methodologies, and philosophic approaches, especially phenomenology.

In answering these questions this investigation travels through various fields, methodologies and also, planes in the researcher's personal life with an aim to establish a personal connection with themes and questions under investigation. The reader is invited to do the same, to connect and disconnect, and to take a

stance on what authenticity or doing research means at the moment, but also, what could it mean beyond now. Rather than improving the definitions of authenticity this investigation shows that the beauty and appeal of authenticity lies somewhere else than in its potential for clarifying, measuring or categorizing. Hence, the conclusions for educators do not include programs or steps for authentic education but merely an invitation to employ love and imagination in their own lives and with their students.

Keywords: authenticity, education, phenomenology, autoethnography, post-qualitative research

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One day, yes, one day, once upon a time, a terrific time, a time terrifically addressed, with as much violence as tact at its fingertips, a certain question took hold of me - as if it, or "she" [la question], came of me, to me.

To tell the truth, "she" didn't come to me - putting it that way is inaccurate. "She didn't come to pay me a visit. In other words, "she" didn't alight to see me, as if I had invited "her". No, as I said, "she" took hold of me, "she" invaded me before I had seen "her" coming: "she" touched me before letting "herself" be seen. In this sense, yes, although there wasn't any visit paid to me, it really was - before any invitation - a visitation. A genuine test of hospitality: to receive the other's visitation just where there has been no prior invitation, preceding "her", the one arriving.

Jacques Derrida (2005, p. 1)

1. PROLOGUE

Imagine a learner self-directed enough to direct the learning on herself. Or a student so intrinsically motivated that the motif of her work is her own essence. A student so anxious to learn she transcends rules, forms, and conventions because they have become obstacles to learning. A pedagogical dream, or a nightmare?

Based on introspection into this learning process within me as a researcher, it is both. Even the best dreams require counterparts. To have a light we need a darkness to put it in. Perhaps the most engaging learning processes require unconventionality and transcendence. And the most enjoyable learning processes require at least familiarity of the painful ones, the ones that shake taken-for-granted values, sneak in the deepest caverns of our being, mess with our beliefs and values, become the calm after the storm.

This is what happened to me. As my questions evolved, as they became personal, tugged at me and took a hold of me. It happened in my first academic conference. I was the mother of two lovely toddlers, writing up my research during their afternoon naps. But there, in the conference, I was alone, abroad and feeling surprisingly joyful. I met wonderful people, had fun and felt at home. I was perplexed to find myself with that attitude like I was when I was young, joyful and excited, not cranky and tired.

The touch of the question pulled a thread from the depths of my being. How did I become like this, a joyless ghost, not at home in my own life? What happened

and who am I? To get some guidance I started reading around the theme of feeling at home. I ended up with Heidegger's ideas of authenticity and got hooked. I had found my topic. Or perhaps the topic found me. It took a hold of me with a tickling, burning, pressing curiosity and made me work like a dog to find answers.

I found out I'm not alone with my interest in authenticity. Popular culture, self-help publications, art, literature are all pregnant with the theme. In addition, there is a growing enthusiasm around authenticity as an ideal for education. This enthusiasm is grounded in good motives and good will. Indeed, would it not be great if we all could be authentic? Might it be even better if we could educate our children to be authentic? I bet no-one would choose to be inauthentic rather than authentic. But what price are people willing to pay? And how authentic is their concept of authenticity in any case? That is, do visions of self-actualization and flow undergird popular conceptions of authenticity, at the expense of any negative or uncomfortable feelings that might otherwise be included?

A deeper look at what it means to be authentic revealed aspects not so nice and easy. Not many people volunteered to interview. The interviews with few participants gave me an idea of the reasons why people may not rush into interviews about their experiences of authenticity. These experiences are not always easy to talk about. And there is a downside to the rewarding moments of being true to oneself. In the search for authenticity people end up getting expelled from work, break up their relationships and hurt the people they love. They feel ashamed of being weird, disappointed with themselves for not having been something more and unsure if they are doing the right thing. In addition, there was a certain difficulty to put the experiences in words in a way that was not self-contradictory. Soon I understood that in order to understand the deep structures of authenticity I have to delve into my own experiences and look at them with a philosophical eye. Scary moments, to say the least.

How do you find out what is the authentic you? If you had a chance to see all the layers and sides of yourself, would you dare to take a look? How do you know which are the right tools and strategies to find out? What if the object of your study changes with every operation you try out? Finding out what it means to be true to myself unfolded to me as an art of balancing on a thin red line with a risk of falling into immorality, insanity or self-deceit. It was a road full of paradoxes, oxymoronic

enigmas that change, evaporate, reveal themselves in new light every time you reach out for them.

Oxymoronism is not necessarily a problem though. Being a human is paradoxical. Language and also the ideals we have involve paradoxes. For instance, our educational institutions are full of oxymoronic ideals. Structured freedom. Effective creativity. Intrinsic motivation for predetermined topics. Authentic obedience. Decent authenticity. Authenticity. Oxymoronic ideals become a problem only if we fail to see their internal inconsistency and the complexity of human existence or forget to consider the consequences of trying to promote them for whatever lie we wish to believe. This is the problem I observed and worried about when I read psychological and educational literature on authenticity.

Phenomenology as a method enabled me to take a fresh look at the issue of authenticity and served as a tool for thinking about it in a way that does not efface the complexity of human existence. My phenomenological method became a melange of qualitative methods such as interviews, autoethnography, fieldwork and philosophical investigation. In the end, I experienced my researcher identity as a philosopher who tried to do qualitative research but ended up back in philosophy. I enjoyed the journey and I believe it opened interesting questions about boundaries of disciplines, research ethics and the role and place of the researcher. I have attempted to write my journey in a way that these issues travel along and also get their moments in spotlight.

The result of the process, and the main conclusion of this investigation is a description of my personal account of authenticity and the conditions that enabled me to investigate the question and to come to these conclusions. Like a singer who uses her body as an instrument for creating voices, melodies, rhythms, a philosopher thinks through her own being. Hence, this is a story of how authenticity revealed itself to me through my own life, in this world, with this data, with these experiences and beliefs. It is my utmost idea of what authenticity is and means to me here and now, after this process, at this point and place of the world.

The style of writing became another paradox for me. I hate getting personal. I don't like to talk about myself. I loathe the self-centered aspects of the culture in which we live. And here I am, conducting research about myself, revealing not only personal experiences but what I feel, know and do about them. It is not be-

cause I want to. It is because methodologically it is the right thing to do. Before this I was solidly uncomfortable talking about most of the experiences presented here. However, I feel I don't have a choice. How else could I clarify my point that authenticity is a deeply personal issue that cannot be generalized, standardized or measured? How else could I show how the research and conclusions we draw are always situated in a certain time and place and take their form in the interplay between the researcher and the world? How else could I write in a way that touches and relates in the strongest and kindest ways possible?

To balance in between these paradoxes, I ended up combining different styles. Different styles of writing philosophy have often been compared to those of a poet and of a scientist. A poet is engaged in a project of self-creation with vocabulary and language game that lends itself to multiple interpretations, whereas a scientist aims at argumentative style with clear language and precise meanings. *Brother Chronicles* and *Epilogue* are written in a poetic style. They are pieces of autofictional prose that unfold my becoming, mirroring my self-creation with the question of authenticity. Chapter 5, *Authenticity of the fabric-ated self*, which is the main conclusion of the research, is an organic mixture of the language of self-creation and the language of science. Other parts employ the more or less the argumentative style we are used to in empirical research and in philosophy as well.

In addition to describing authenticity and its conditions, I will also draw some methodological conclusions as well as reflections on educational processes with regard authenticity. Accordingly, if authenticity is an ideal for education, particularly curricular challenges, my conclusions remain paradoxical. That is, on one hand, authenticity is a vital goal. On the other, it cannot be treated as a stagnant or an isolated subject in school. In fact, I believe we must withhold enthusiasm to promote authenticity in education. The conclusion is offered for consideration not because authenticity is a wrongheaded ideal – I believe it is idealistic, in a way. However, it is best promoted by focusing on other values and practices other than authenticity itself. To be sure, viewed as an isolated concept, authenticity is easily misshapen. As well, we would be excessively simplistic to view it as a subject outside of its time flow processes.

The methodological approach involves autoethnographic research, post-qualitative research and phenomenology. All of them had an important role in my

research. However, in the end, I am most indebted and affiliated to phenomenology. I have tried to follow the advice of Edmund Husserl, the founding father of phenomenology, that the topic should show the way in phenomenological research. I have tried to let the phenomena themselves spearhead the way. The result of this was that the process of this investigation itself became analogical to the process of authenticity, with an attempt to be philosophically consistent and methodologically congruent. In such an approach, one must wonder what tools are best to unearth problematical phenomena with all their diverse competing meanings. The possibilities for tools of investigation are many. In the end I decided upon more than were necessary, but at least can defend that the investigation is thorough.

The analogical structure becomes most visible comparing the chapters *My phenomenology* and *Authenticity with fabric-ated self*. In addition, several critical questions to resolve regarding authenticity in my own life emerged unsurprisingly in the very writing. For instance, how much conformism is compatible with my authenticity? To what extent should I follow the rules and conventions that guide and mold my life or my writing? What is the best way of being and the most effectual way of writing? Will my most arduous deliberations be of some benefit to scholars of educational sciences, of philosophic inquiry and of scholars who come after me?

This is a journey of how I investigated and made sense of the phenomenon of authenticity and also how methodologists and educators could utilize the conclusions. More precisely, we will inspect what authenticity is and what makes it unique, what is it related to, and what makes it possible. In addition, we will ask what is the meaning of authenticity for learning as well as to what extent and with what kind of tools it can be promoted in educational institutions. Finally, we will interrogate what this sort of investigation informs us of the effectiveness of various methodologies, autoethnography, post-qualitative and phenomenology, of human sciences. If there is something universal in it is not for me to decide. However, I hope my investigation will inform readers about the promises and challenges of authenticity as an educational ideal. Hopefully it will also make one reflect upon the promises and challenges of autoethnography, post-qualitative and especially phenomenology as a method for investigating human experience and conditions. Perhaps it will also invite you to ask your own questions, interrogate your own life and further elaborate your research.

2. PHENOMENOLOGY AS A CHOSEN METHOD

2.1 On becoming a phenomenologist

I began these investigations as a qualitative researcher. As I was interested in authenticity in educational context, I collected data through focus group interviews with high school students. Since the word authenticity does not have an equivalent in Finnish I invented a variety of ways to frame the questions in order to elicit beliefs related to authenticity from the participants. Even though my own point of entry had been Heidegger's homelessness/being at home, I did not use that metaphor directly, owing to the fact that I thought it would easily take the discussion to more mundane ideas of home instead of the existential plane and level of abstraction that was even more important to these investigations. Consequently, my inquiry followed the terms of Charles Taylor (1992) who describes authenticity with the phrase "being true to oneself". This is also a very common way of phrasing authenticity in public discourse. I worked with two groups of students, four and five persons in a group, between 16 and 18 in age. Both groups were interviewed twice. The total time for these interviews was two hours and 21 minutes.

I also invited students to take part in individual interviews. One student volunteered. In addition, a woman aged 55 years volunteered to be interviewed. The interviews took the form of open-ended interviews with journal entries and

stimulated recall. I wanted to find out what happens in the moments when a person feels being true to oneself or not being true to oneself. The participants wrote journal entries of the moments of being true to oneself or of not being true to oneself. They were instructed to describe what happened in this moment and what kind of thoughts and feelings were involved. In the interviews we probed their written statements. I asked them to retell the cases for me. I was able to glean information through open-ended questions, such as “What did you think about that?” or “How did you feel about that?”

I interviewed the high school student three times during two years, and during that time span she graduated from high school and started her studies at the university. The interviews lasted 162 minutes in total. The other interviewee offered three interviews totaling 88 minutes.

The discussions with some colleagues, friends and relatives can also be called interviews, at least if we follow Ellis, Adams and Bochner’s definition of interactive interviews. As they note, interactive interviews are “collaborative endeavors between researchers and participants, research activities in which researchers and participants—one and the same—probe together about issues that transpire, in conversation, about particular topics” (2011, p. 279). We shared and discussed ideas and experiences of authenticity, and we explored, questioned and probed the boundaries of concepts. These discussions were described and filed in my journals and in email messages.

Fieldnotes were included as well, field meaning my contextual surroundings, whatever they were. I took notes in everyday situations with my friends, relatives and people who I randomly encountered. Sometimes they knew that the topics we discussed were within the scope of my academic interest, sometimes they did not. Either way, their insights ended up in my notebook. In addition, I also took notes of the movies, television series and documents, novels, poems, artworks, commercials, discussions I overheard in cafes, supermarkets, trains, bus stops and other places. I listened to many podcasts: lectures from philosophers, social scientists, psychologists, autoethnographers, self-help gurus, comedians, anyone talking about authenticity or the methodological approaches I was interested in. I also browsed through a load of material suggested for me by search engines (Google, Bing) and social media platforms (e.g., Pinterest, Slideshare, Issuu, Youtube) with

the search word 'authenticity'.

Aside from gathering data and reading scholarly literature on and around authenticity, I journaled my own experiences of moments of 'being true to oneself' and of 'not being true to oneself'. In addition, I wrote letters to my friends, and finally, a story of my life with my brother. Comparing these autobiographical¹ data to the data gathered from elsewhere, I realized that there is something about authenticity I cannot grasp merely by analyzing the data I had gathered. My data collection efforts, and the subsequent data analysis procedures, appeared to be insufficient. Though the participants were well-versed and able to describe their experiences in rich detail, I realized I am not able to get in touch with the deeper levels of the phenomenon through interviews, more of the same type of empirical data, or from the existing literature. There was something that was missing, something that did not fit. In turn, probing deeper at the story of my life with my brother, the *Brother Chronicles*, I understood that the missing pieces were hidden in plain sight, written into the story itself. With this insight that the story could offer the missing pieces for making sense of authenticity I decided to bracket the data I gathered elsewhere and take a fresh look at authenticity as it revealed itself to me through my own life-experience.

Many autoethnographers have been drawn into using autobiographical material owing to similar realizations. For example, Douglas and Carless (2013) observed that academic literature and scholarly practices do not conform to their experiences and therefore courageously decided to make plain their own experiences, one as a mentally challenged person and the other as a gay person. Reading through such reflective accounts of autoethnographers gave me courage to make my investigation personal, to somehow dig deeper, and to let deeper reflections emerge. However, even though the aims of autoethnography, such as "1) purposefully commenting on/critiquing of culture and cultural practices, 2) making contributions to existing research, 3) embracing vulnerability with purpose 4)

1. In this investigation I use three different terms that indicate a relation to my personal history. 'Autobiographical' refers to material that originates in my personal history. 'Autoethnography' refers to a form of ethnographical inquiry where autobiographical material is used as data. 'Autobiofictional' is the term I invented to refer to a style of writing that builds on autobiographical incidents but transforms those incidents and combines them with invented incidents purposefully to reveal the meanings relevant to the topic under investigation.

creating a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response” (Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013, p. 22) are fine and fitting, I wanted to go deeper still. After all, autoethnography did not seem provide a sufficient foundation and methodology for my investigation, the aim of which was to understand the phenomenon of authenticity. My personal experiences gave me tools to comment and critique cultural practices and contributions for existing research. It made me made vulnerable and this vulnerability served a purpose: to think deeper about authenticity. Even with these important tools, I was not convinced I could properly investigate the phenomenon of authenticity and its related concepts. For that I had to find and use additional tools of inquiry.

As a result, I engaged in post-qualitative research. Post-qualitative research, as formulated especially by St. Pierre (2011, 2013, 2014, 2018) and Lather and St. Pierre (2013) is a qualitative approach building strongly on post-structuralist philosophy². Detached from traditional qualitative methodology, especially the forms that have been influenced most by positivistic tendencies, the idea is to re-think anew the phenomena under investigation. That way it comes closer to philosophic inquiry than other, more sociologically based, qualitative approaches. St. Pierre indeed encouraged me to think anew the topic and to use assumptions creatively whatever I encounter as a means to think about it. She also inspired me to think beyond traditional qualitative analyzing, such as finding emerging themes, deducing differences from comparing and contrasting like instances, and finding the pathway to drawing formidable conclusions.

I encourage them [students] to try to forget humanist qualitative methodology and begin with the epistemological and ontological commitments of the analysis—e.g., Derrida’s deconstruction, Foucault’s power-knowledge reading—and use it to think about whatever they’re interested in thinking about—dropouts, the Common Core Curriculum, reading. I assure them that if they’ve studied the theory carefully their

2. St. Pierre (2018, p. 605) writes: “How, then, does one do post qualitative inquiry? My advice (see St. Pierre, 2015) is always to read and reread as many primary and secondary sources about the theory(ies) and/or theorist(s) as possible until one becomes Foucauldian, becomes Deleuzian, becomes Derridean and has those analyses in one’s bones, until one’s life becomes rhizomatic as it has always been, until deconstructing all the structures we create is second nature, until one is always analyzing power relations and investigating the “history of the present” (Foucault, 1975/1979, p. 31).”

“methodology” will follow.

(St. Pierre 2014, 10)

St. Pierre also asserts an important insight about qualitative research. If we look only at the data without reflection as well we are easily drawn into explanations that reveal nothing new about the topic we want to study. According to her, we need to delve deep into theoretical and philosophical literature, because otherwise “we have nothing much to think with during analysis except normalized discourses that seldom explain the way things are.” (St. Pierre 2011, p. 614) This was precisely my experience with my data and the literature on authenticity. Staying with the data I gathered and the existing literature on authenticity would not have opened up many new perspectives about authenticity.

Thinking through the data with different theoretical and philosophical frameworks as St. Pierre suggests, broadens our ways of thinking about the phenomena under investigation and yields different, and possibly new kinds of interpretation and conclusions. Reading different kinds of theoretical and philosophical literature made me think about the phenomenon in different ways. However, it did not resolve my question. It did not make me feel engaged with the phenomenon³ or with the succeeding conclusions. I was not convinced that I had yet found the right methodological approach.

The work of phenomenologists, especially those of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, finally gave me the impetus, the authority, to listen and to think about the phenomenon of authenticity. They encouraged me to bracket my data and the literature, the theories and the existing descriptions, and to develop the capacity to listen to the phenomenon revealing itself to me. Of course, we cannot bracket everything and bracketing is never absolute. Moreover, the data, the literature, my own experiences, in short, everything I encounter provide paths and planes for a phenomenon to reveal itself. Hence, when we listen, we listen always in a certain place, with certain things. With phenomenological seeing, or listening, as I prefer to call it, I finally found a befitting way to make sense of authenticity that

3. Being engaged is not considered as desirable in many methodological approaches. On the contrary, a certain kind of distance is often expected from a researcher. I believe, however, that the reflexive distance that is necessary for a qualitative researcher and a philosopher is attainable only though being engaged with the phenomenon under investigation.

put blocks in their places, that connected with me and enabled me to say something about what authenticity is.

My journeys in the qualitative research were not at all useless. They were merely insufficient. The interviews, the notes, the discussions - academic and non-academic, the books I have read, the pictures, thoughts, emotions and experiences became the fabric of my research, the planes through which I thought about, listened to and scoured my question provided the launch point. The data were part of the threads that pushed and pulled my thinking. They affected me and my research as much as I affected them by choosing, sorting, ignoring, highlighting and elaborating some things instead of others. We shaped each other. The formation of the fabric was at the same time random and systematic. My life-situations and interests took me to certain places, certain books, certain people, and the world was revealed to me in certain ways. Yet the seemingly scattered process was systematic because I was searching for a certain thing, a certain phenomenon, authenticity. No stone was to be left unturned.

2.2 Overview of phenomenology

Phenomenology is, as Taylor Carman (2012) puts it, “an attempt to describe the basic structures of human experience and understanding from a first person point of view, in contrast to the reflective, third person perspective that tends to dominate scientific knowledge and common sense.” (p. viii) Focusing on the first person perspective as a starting point and basis for philosophical reflection was for Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), the founding father of phenomenology, a way to establish a radically new way of doing philosophy, to bring back philosophy to the concrete living experience from abstract metaphysical speculation and provide a basis for all science (Moran 2000, pp. 4–5). Yet, like the quote from Carman indicates, this did not mean merely analyzing certain experiences here and now. The aim was more ambitious: to find the general structures of those experiences. In the following I will present a short overview of the phenomenological movement focusing mainly on the phenomenological method.

Husserl’s thoughts became influential in Germany, giving inspiration to his

students, such as Martin Heidegger, Edith Stein, Eugen Fink, Ludwig Landgrebe, and others, including Karl Jaspers and Max Scheler. Husserl's ideas traveled also to France and were developed further by thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida. Phenomenological thinking inspired not only philosophers, but infiltrated the arts and literature. Phenomenology gave rise to various new philosophical and intellectual movements that started and developed in dialogue with phenomenology, such as hermeneutics, structuralism, post structuralism and Frankfurt School. (Moran 2000, pp. 17–19, Sokolowski 1999, pp. 2–3). In addition, phenomenology has made a significant difference in the fields of psychology and psychiatry by replacing methodologies of narrow positivism and naturalism and making room for new phenomena and interpretations. For instance, the study of phenomena such as perception, emotions, and self has been enriched by phenomenological insight. (Spiegelberg 1972, p. xliii)

None of Husserl's followers fully embraced his approach but rather, developed their own ways of doing phenomenology. Looking at some of the basic tenets formulated by Husserl, and the variations they take in his different works, it is easy to understand why alternate ways of doing phenomenology arose. Taking the first-person perspective as a starting point gives each phenomenologist a unique view from the very beginning. Phenomenology calls for taking a personal stance. In addition, the methodological self-understanding of the phenomenological method contains ambiguities implying that the nature of phenomenological method is always unfinished and subject to constant revisions (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. lxxx, Mertens 2018, p. 470). This starting point is not likely to encourage popularity, or inspire obedience among followers, which of course has never been the aim of philosophy. Neither should it be of any practice that claims to be science.

The ambitious aim of Husserl was to provide a foundation for all sciences. He opens his article "Phenomenology" in Encyclopedia Britannica with the following description:

Phenomenology denotes a new, descriptive philosophical method, which, since the concluding years of the last century, has established (1) an *a priori* psychological discipline, able to provide the only secure basis on which a strong empirical psychology can be built, and (2) a universal philosophy, which can supply an organum for

the methodological revision of all sciences.

(Husserl 1929, p. 118)

In his view, phenomenology takes place beyond empirical sciences. However, in recent decades, different kinds of qualitative phenomenological research methods building on the basis of the philosophical approaches of Husserl or Heidegger have been developed and utilized for instance in psychology, education and also in nursing and health studies (for an overview of phenomenology in psychology see Morley 2011, in education Brinkmann & Friesen 2018, and in nursing and medicine Carel 2012). I do not believe there is a clear cut distinction between qualitative research and philosophy and I balance myself in between them in this investigation. However, I visit only briefly some of the qualitative phenomenological methods here, because most of them contain some of the following three departures from the philosophical base of phenomenology⁴ that I find problematic for my investigation: the 'dative' of the experience, the reluctance to consider the ontological and epistemological foundations of knowledge and the pre-determination of the methodological steps.

The focus on the first-person perspective requires us to consider both the subject and the object of the experience as the 'dative' element in the experience. An experience is always intentional, it is 'about something' and 'for someone.' (e.g., Moran 2000, p. 16) For Husserl, it is naturally the philosopher doing the phenomenological investigation for whom and by whom an experience is made. Qualitative phenomenological methods from for instance Giorgi (e.g., 2009, 2012, 2014), Smith, Lowers and Larkin (2009) and Moustakas (1994), however, focus on analyzing the experiences of research participants⁵. Even though I use empirical data in my investigation, I believe taking seriously the first-person perspective means that it is always the researcher for whom the experience is and whom we also need to investigate as someone who enables the phenomenon. As Merleau-Ponty informs us:

4. For a critique regarding these departures in the Interpretive Phenomenological approach and the phenomenological approach of van Manen see Zahavi (2019).

5. For a deeper discussion on the differences between phenomenological psychology and philosophy see Spiegelberg 1972 and Morley 2012.

The thing can never be separated from someone who perceives it; nor can it ever actually be in itself, because its articulations are the very ones of our existence, and because it is posited at the end of a gaze or at the conclusions of a sensory exploration that invests it with humanity.

(Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 334)

There is also a certain reluctance to address the ontological and epistemological foundations of the method or the phenomena under investigation among some qualitative phenomenological approaches. For instance Max van Manen, in introducing the European tradition of phenomenological pedagogy is sympathetic to approaches such as Langeveld's, who wish "to use the term [phenomenology] exclusively to refer to the method and remain completely impartial to Husserl's development of a phenomenological philosophy." (cited in Manen 1996, p. 44) In addition, van Manen holds that "The lesson to be learned from the above is that phenomenological inquiry does not yield indubitable knowledge" and "every phenomenological text is only one interpretation of a possible experience." (1996, p. 44)

Van Manen (2014) explores features of phenomenological method with which I fully agree and which are present in my investigation as well, such as a moment of wonder as a starting point of a phenomenological investigation, the reciprocal influence between the researcher and her topic, the importance of being attentive to how different kinds of texts mediate meaning in different ways and the unfinished nature of phenomenological method. However, I fail to believe that a method can be detached from its philosophical basis and I find his approach insufficient to address fundamental philosophical questions regarding how knowledge is constituted through research. Even though it is useful to remain cautious of truth claims and irrefutable knowledge and remain open toward the range of possible interpretations of experience, I believe *research must offer something deeper* than mere understanding, especially the rich complexities of the here and now of a certain phenomenon, in situ, and in process. Viewed this way, in addition to interrogating the meaning of our experiences, it is crucial to interrogate the question of evidence. The question of how we know and what does it mean that we know

cannot be bypassed by claiming that there is no indisputable knowledge. ⁶

Contrary to Giorgi and Smith, who eagerly provide ready-made steps for conducting phenomenological research⁷, I believe we must not determine our methodological tools before delving into an investigation. The ambiguities present in Husserlian phenomenology are of crucial importance to consider for anyone wishing to study human phenomena, because they comprise the fundamental ontological and existential questions each researcher should personally ascertain. In this way, the research method, particularly analytical methodology in the inductive sciences, including the phenomenological method, will take a unique form in each investigation. Merleau-Ponty⁸, sums up the ambiguities of the phenomenological method, which are present already in Husserl's own work and are handled in different ways by later phenomenologists:

Phenomenology is the study of essences, and it holds that all problems amount to defining essences, such as the essence of perception or the essence of consciousness. And yet phenomenology is also a philosophy that places essences back within existence and thinks that the only way to understand man [sic] and the world is by beginning from their "facticity." Although it is a transcendental philosophy that suspends the affirmations of the natural attitude in order to understand them, it is also a philosophy for which the world is always "already there" prior to reflection – like an inalienable presence – and whose entire effort is to rediscover this naïve contact with the world in order to finally raise it to a philosophical status. It is the goal of a philosophy that aspires to be an "exact science," but it is also an account of "lived" space, "lived" time, and the "lived" world. It is the attempt to provide a direct description of our experience such as it is, and without any consideration of its psychological genesis or of the causal explanations that the scientist, historian, or sociologist might offer of that experience; and yet in his final works Husserl mentions a "genetic phenomenology," and even a "constructive phenomenology."

(Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxx)

These points come back to questions crucial to all attempts of establishing

6. Same kind of critique is given by Zahavi (2019) and also by Kakkori (2009).

7. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p. 5) acknowledge, however, the dangers of methodolatry and maintain that the steps they provide are recommendations for novices rather than prescriptions.

8. For a deeper analysis of these ambiguities see Mertens (2018).

knowledge: how do we know that what we believe to know is not just a contingent belief? How do we proceed from our own experience to something general? And how should we think about the role of the evolving human understanding in the process of producing knowledge? In Western thought there has been a persistent attempt to separate the knower from what is known, the subject from the object, and an effort to detach the objective knowledge from the subjective experience. Phenomenology questions this setting. Rather than assuming that subjective experience is something we need to get rid of in order to obtain objective knowledge, phenomenology places subjective experience as the starting point and the basis for clarifying the essences, that is, the objective structures of phenomena.

How do we then proceed from a first-person experience to the essence of a phenomenon? Husserl calls the process of arriving at essences ‘eidetic reduction’. Eidetic reduction is arrived at through *epoché* and imaginative free variation. By *epoché* Husserl means suspending or bracketing any presuppositions we might have about the phenomena experienced (Husserl 2014, pp. 55–56). He describes *epoché* in various ways, but the essential pointer for doing phenomenology is to gain an effective ‘alteration of attitude’ [*Einstellungänderung*]. Specifically this means identifying and understanding taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in our everyday behavior regarding particular objects or phenomena, and also from those offered to us by natural science and philosophy. We need to go ‘to the things themselves,’ that is, to the *originary* experience as we witnessed it, as Husserl famously urged. (Cohen & Moran 2012, p. 110)

Apprehending an experience with *epoché* is not yet enough for apprehending its essence. For that we need, according to Husserl, imaginative free variation. Imaginative free variation, or eidetic variation as Husserl also calls it, takes place in phantasy. The starting point can be an experiential intuition, like perception (for instance, a horse as seen from the window) or memory (bringing back to mind the ‘horse seen from the window’) but also a mere imaginary intuition (image of ‘a horse seen from the window’ yet never perceived) as well. Hence, no existence of perceptual object or matters of fact is required for the starting point of imaginative free phantasy. (Husserl 2014, p. 14–15) Being aware of the risks of misinterpretation⁹,

9. To wit, Husserl refers to the point in a footnote: “A sentence that would be particularly well-suited as a quotation to ridicule, from naturalistic point of view, the eidetic manner of knowing.” (2014, p. 127)

Husserl even wants to salute imagination with the following provocative remark: “Fiction makes up the vital element of phenomenology...fiction is the source from which knowledge of the “eternal truths” draws its nourishment” (2014, p. 127).

Imaginative free variation permits us to explore and even pinpoint aspects of what is given in the originary experience by modifying it until the merely contingent parts drop away and what is essential is revealed. Whereas empirical universals are, according to Husserl, arrived at by inductive generalization, essences are arrived at by free variation. (Cohen & Moran 2012, p. 161) In a way the process of a qualitative researcher and that of a phenomenologist are aligned: a qualitative researcher gathers empirical data and tries to cull out recurring themes in her data with analytic induction, especially the epiphanies, which can be seen as a form of imaginative free variation, or at least part of it. A phenomenologist modifies the aspects of what is given to the experience and thus considers different possible instances of a phenomenon in order to cull the essence of that phenomenon in order to reveal the essences. However, in eidetic variation the factually given is merely assumed as an exemplification of the essence: Essences are determined by the scope of possible modifications of an exemplarily given (Mertens 2012, p. 473).

The process of eidetic variation is in principle endless: The insights into essential structures can be modified and revised in future variations (Mertens 2012, p. 473). That way, a certain paradox pervades Husserlian essences: they are claimed to be general and invariant, but this seems to hold only until they change in future variations. As Merleau-Ponty notes in the extract above, Husserl, in his later writings, moves away from an idea of static understanding of phenomena and recognizes their evolving and contextual nature. The idea of immutable essences is discarded also by most phenomenologists after Husserl, including Heidegger, Derrida and Merleau-Ponty himself.

Not only the possible future variations, but also our deep entanglement in the quest for certainty, that is, facticity, make it impossible to reach essences in their fulfilment. Even though Husserl claims that imaginative free variation takes place in phantasy, the investigator cannot escape her facticity, the fact that it is her life-world and her natural attitude in and through which she is having originary experiences and which thus interfere with the imaginary free variation. Husserl acknowledges the importance of different sources of originary intuitions,

for example, the ability of art to elevate the appearances of new configurations of phenomena:

Extraordinary profit is to be drawn from the offerings of history and, in even richer measure, from what art and, in particular, literature, have to offer. Although these are products of imaginings [*Einbildungen*], they tower high over our own phantasy's accomplishments in regard to the originality of the new configurations, the fullness of individual features, and the continuity of motivation.

(Husserl 2014, p. 127)

As many phenomenologists posit, I wonder if we are able to escape the facticity and historicity of the human condition and enter into the realm of pure essences as Husserl suggests. I believe it is paramount to consider the probabilities along both lines in order to understand the nature of essences because otherwise we are condemned to remain at the level of mere impressions which cannot give us much security that we *know* anything. We at least must try to trace the origins of evidence of our experiences and beliefs. If a phenomenological investigation would be just about describing an experience, it would indeed be nothing more than what Van Manen (1996, p. 44) claims it to be: only one interpretation of a possible experience. There is nothing wrong in describing experiences. Writing and reading them can be interesting, funny, eyes-opening, evocative even transforming. However, in order to make research different from journalism, I believe we need to ask what is it that makes us convinced of what we believe of the experience we want to communicate to others through our research. Knowledge requires evidence-based descriptions.

Evidence of a phenomenon is not the starting point for a phenomenological description but rather, its task (Mertens 2012, p. 474). In his later works Husserl admits that evidence cannot be accomplished, but it requires the continuation of phenomenological investigation. "I must at all times reflect on the pertinent evidence; I must examine its 'range' and make evident to myself *how far* that evidence, how far its 'perfection', *the actual giving of the affairs themselves*, extends. Where this is still wanting, I must not claim any final validity, but must account my judgment as, at best, a possible intermediate stage on the way to final validity" (Husserl 1960, p. 13). Hence, our phenomenological descriptions are still frames of a process, but

the kind of still frames that include the evidence gained so far. The still frame cannot be taken at any moment though. I believe it has to be taken in a moment where we have reached a personal certainty. If that certainty is universal depends on how we have managed to communicate it, how it touches others and if it makes them convinced.

Finally, the last point mentioned by Merleau-Ponty questions our ability to describe phenomena without interfering into its becoming. Despite the references to constructive phenomenology in his later works, Husserl remains committed to fundamental relevance of description as the decisive method of phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty, on the contrary, emphasizes rather the productive and constructive character of phenomenological reflection. (Mertens 2012, 484) For Merleau-Ponty, there are no ready and static essences waiting for us to find them with a fitting description because they become in the very act of our investigation. That way, also “phenomenology allows itself to be practiced and recognized as a manner or as a style, or that it exists as a movement, prior to having reached a full philosophical consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, xxi). In the following section I will explain what is my style of doing phenomenology.

2.3 My phenomenology

Being touched by a phenomenon

Once upon a time, ... a certain question took hold of me ... with as much violence as tact at its fingertips, ... “she” invaded me before I had seen “her” coming: “she” touched me before letting “herself” be seen.

Jacques Derrida (2005, p. 1)

In the beginning there is a touch. By touch I do not mean a physical touch alone, but rather, the kind of touch we mean when we say that something is touching. I mean a touch that moves and transforms. Pathos, as Wandenfels calls the “something by which we are touched, affected, stimulated, surprised and to some extent violated” (2004, p. 238), takes place. A touch that hits me and takes a hold of me. It

can also be a physical act, like someone holding me, but even then, if it is the kind of touch I mean, it is never just physical. Likewise, when it is not a physical touch, it still touches my physical constitution, my body, and creates embodied responses. Hence, there is no clear boundary between physical, mental, spiritual, or whatever you wish to call them.

When a question touches and takes a hold, at first there is a pre-sense of it. An embodied sense of something becoming. A tickling, pressing, burning curiosity for something yet impossible to name. One becomes aware of one's ignorance, and this awareness results in the desire to know.

Naming a phenomenon

To be specific, the awareness of one's ignorance of something with no name is difficult to bear. Hence, at some point, we give the question a name. Finding a name for the question steers the labeling and the becoming of the phenomenon.

After I was touched by the question, it took a while to find a name for it. How could I conceptualize the joyful emancipatory experience, free in a foreign country with strangers-becoming-friends as opposed to being a cranky stay-at-home mother? Reading Heidegger made me interested in the feeling of being at home, but being at home in all places under varied circumstances. Heidegger (1962) discusses 'being at home' as related to authenticity, which is the mode of Dasein's ownmost being. I named my question 'authenticity' and started an academic journey into the literature on authenticity.

No question is fully obedient to the name we give to it. And no name is fully obedient to any question. They spill over each other's edges. Moreover, the question comes to us in multiple ways. While I was investigating authenticity with my academic tools, the question was looking for other ways of revealing itself. It made me think about my life, the past and the present. How did I become like this? I wrote notes of the issues coming up. I wrote letters to the people in my life, I met old friends. Finally, I ended up writing a story of my life with my brother, my dead brother, my brother the angel.

Intuiting the essence: the first grasp

The first grasp of authenticity that I was able to describe was the idea that authenticity is about choosing to broaden one's options of becoming. I had a strong intuition that authenticity is not a static state, not about living according to one's values or about standing out from others with virtues aplenty, nor self-reflexive moments of owning one's choices. Rather, I intuited about constantly becoming, constant interrogation of who am I, what is this 'I' that seems to escape my approaches, where do I come from and where do I want to go. I felt a need to go beyond the immediate options available for me. I write in my journal (29.10.2017):

Authenticity is about exploring one's beliefs and values, exploring the sources of one's self and alternative ways of being and becoming. Authenticity involves confusion, tension and anxiety. It requires courage to face different aspects of life and safe and significant others with whom to explore.

This initial intuition persisted throughout the investigation. It could have also proved wrong through reflection. In this case, it persisted. At some point it faded, diluted by other considerations. Sometimes I was inclined to discard it, but then, eventually I noticed that I have, after all, returned to it.

Calculating and contemplating the phenomenon

After having been touched by the question, finding a name for it and grasping an intuitive essence of it, started an intentional reflection of this essence. From here on the processes did not follow any order but rather, took place in cheerful chaos, as is so often true in inductive sciences. Using Husserl's terms, I could say I oscillated between bracketing and imaginative free variation. However, I will describe the types of reflection I did using Heidegger's (1966) terms calculative thinking and releasement [*Gelassenheit*] because they offer interesting insights about the nature of the reflection. Calculative thinking included various techniques I used in order to get new insights. Moments of releasement were instances of listening, moments of waiting for the world to disclose something.

These forms of thinking cannot be entirely separated from each other, and

usually they follow each other organically, mingling with each other. Sometimes I started with calculative thinking and ended up in releasement, sometimes it happened vice versa. For instance, the art exhibition from teamLab in the art museum Amos Rex and its immersive digital artworks helped me to listen to my question. My patronage on that day was not intentionally connected to my ongoing data collection, but just for visiting the exhibition. However, as I immersed myself in their work, I felt it touched upon and resonated with my question and gave me an idea of how my subjectivity is constituted. I felt that their work visualized my thoughts about subjectivity, which then helped me to think further and verbalize my ideas. I went to the exhibition again, many times, to strengthen those impulses and to help the ideas emerge. Another space that I used intentionally for thinking in both forms was the forest. When I needed inspiration or another point of view, I often had a walk in the forest and my thoughts were taken to new tracks by the shades of light, the sounds and scents, the animals and the plants, the beauty and the mystery of nature.

Included within calculative thinking can be the traditional academic activities, such as the ones I chose, but also the act of imaginative free variation. I thought about my topic with the data I had gathered and with the literature I read. I compared and contrasted my ideas to those of others and to other phenomena. I operated especially with two kind of descriptions: my own, with authenticity as exploration of one's own becoming, and with a description common in existing research and everyday conceptions of authenticity, that is, authenticity as being true to one's beliefs and values. I searched for inconsistencies in these descriptions and explored their origins. I also thought about different questions through these different descriptions¹⁰, and compared and contrasted my grasp of authenticity to other phenomena, such as autonomy, honesty and role taking. Authenticity, after all, does not exist in a vacuum.

I developed my own techniques. I wrote my ideas in different forms in order to shed light on their different aspects. I wrote lists, arguments, poems, essays. I recorded my ideas in English and Finnish, then listened through the recordings

10. For instance, in my audio log I try to think what is the relation of 'loneliness' and authenticity if authenticity is understood as 'being true to one's beliefs and values' in contrast to as 'choosing to explore and expand one's ways of being and becoming'.

and observed how the re-expressing and the change in the language affected them. I also went to different places and thought about the same idea again and again, observing how it developed. I drew depictions of authentic situations, conceptual maps of related concepts and symbolic moments. Sometimes just changing the view, looking in a different direction and letting the thought reform itself with a different background and its different shapes helped me find new structures and connections.

Releasement was more easily materialized through artistic activities. Yet, 'materializing' is perhaps not a good metaphor, since releasement is more about listening and letting emerge than about capturing. Releasement is listening to what is revealing itself, being attentive to what is coming, giving space for what is coming. When listening, one needs to be quiet but not passive. Listening is active participation. It can be "straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible" (Nancy 2007, p. 6). It can also be being attentive to how sounds and meanings are making their way through our being and sensing the work they do in us. In French, *entendre* means to listen, to understand and to agree. In Finnish, German and Swedish, listening is connected to belonging¹¹. Through listening we become connected to what we are listening, we entwine, become together, belong together. Through this process, we come to understand.

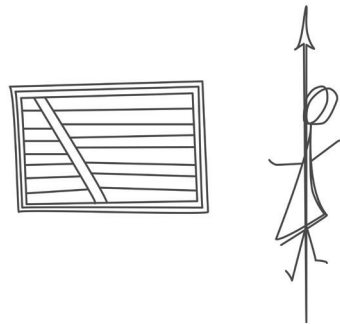
Artistic expression like drawing pictures and writing poems were more appropriate for trying to give form to the insights from releasing moments than argumentative writing. Drawing pictures, writing poems and writing the Brother Chronicles enabled the activation of unconscious contents and enriched the ways of becoming of the phenomenon at least in four ways: they opened up perspectives that were not present in my consciousness before drawing or writing; they compressed the meanings of certain things or experiences; helped me to verbalize embodied experience; and to remember and keep in mind the non-verbalizable aspect of my experience.

Phenomenologists have disagreed about the possibility of engaging unconscious levels of experience in the phenomenological analysis (Smith 2010). My investigation made me convinced that we not only *can* engage unconscious experi-

11. Finnish: *kuulua* = be heard, be audible, to belong; German: *hören* = listen to, hear, *gehören* = belong; Swedish: *höra* = listen to, *höra till* = belong.

ence in the phenomenological investigation, but we *have to* do it, because it affects our investigation anyway. The more aware we become of it, the more convinced we can be of our conclusions.

Creative imagination takes place, at least partly, beyond the cognitive and linguistic levels. For instance, when I tried to think about the role of Eros in my investigation and in authenticity, an image I had seen a long ago kept on recurring to my mind. It was a nun being pierced by a spear straight through to her neck. I remembered it was a depiction of a religious experience of a certain nun whose name I had forgotten. Many times I tried to find the picture but with no success. Then one day, when I was sitting on the couch thinking about Eros and authenticity, my eye was caught by the fence outside the window and the structure the boards created. Suddenly I realized this is how Eros works, and a name Theresa de Avila came to my mind. I did not find the original picture, but I found her autobiography and there a rather erotic description about her experience of being pierced by the love of God.



Picture 1. The fence and Theresa de Avila. A drawing from my notebook.

Releasement was also immensely important for the development of my ontological insights. Often times, being halted by an emerging thought and dwelling in the pre-cognitive and pre-verbal plane of being revealed an ontology where I felt alive and at home¹². In other words, my view of how *my* self exists, how

12. For instance, one such moment took place in the marketplace where I was having coffee reading Juho Hotanen (2008) on Merleau-Ponty. I wrote the following poem right after that moment.

and suddenly their words take me
to a different plane
like being in a movie
people coming and going
birds singing
A couple of old drunks swaying nearby
sun shining
I'm halted, waiting
I feel my self extending, flowing over
dispersing and folding
my flesh – where?

phenomena exist and reveal themselves to me, and what it means to be true to oneself unfolded especially through these contemplative moments. The movement between releasement and the calculative thinking imprinted this ontology in the threads of my being. Reading philosophy gave me tools to express this ontology with words. My thinking, calculative or releasing, is not something that resides solely in my head nor even in my body. It is an embodied process that flows over and through my being. It is an osmosis, a filtration of thought through my body, my life. The planes of filters are inductive and endless. Different filters open up different views and different conclusions. Perhaps that is the essence of all inductive sciences, the discovery of emergent patterns and themes.

Becoming convinced

But how does someone know something with certitude? How do I know what is authenticity? What is it that I really know when I believe that I know what authenticity is? And how do I become convinced of what I believe to know? I have done a lot of things in order to find out, I have thought fiercely, parlously comparing and contrasting ideas, with consideration of proper concepts and descriptions of experiences, and tried to make sense of bodily sensations, emotions and thoughts of my own and those of other people. On the main such steps lie beyond a more minimalistic approach to qualitative research. But how do I know my deliberations are centered on authenticity? Derrida is skeptical about our ability to get a grip of a phenomenon: “Contrary to what phenomenology—which is always phenomenology of perception—has tried to make us believe, contrary to what our desire cannot fail to be tempted into believing, the thing itself always escapes.” (Derrida 1973, p. 4)

Indeed, the thing itself always escapes, that has become clear to me in my attempts to catch authenticity. However, I am as reasonably certain as I can be that the still frame presented in the following chapters is the structure of authenticity and its conditions. The structures revealed in this phenomenological analysis are not empirical generalizations, but neither are they rational speculations. They are ontological structures, but not stable and immutable. As outlined in chapter 3.1.

(Overview), they are constructed in the process in which the phenomenon reveals itself *for the investigator*. What kind of essences I surmise depends on so many factors that accurate, detailed, non-changing description would be improbable. The essences I grasp in my investigation are the essences here and now. Answers to the question of what authenticity is and how it reveals itself to me is a still frame. It is a still frame taken at a certain moment in time, from a certain perspective, with certain tools. It is private, momentary apodicticity, yet sharable and possibly universal.

Truth, even though perhaps a term outmoded in some circles of empirical research, is necessary for becoming convinced of anything. Without an assumption of truth we would fail to believe or think about anything. Derrida reminds us of this by saying that

To have the possibility of the authentic, sincere and full meaning of what one says, the possibility of the failure, or the lie, or of something else, must remain open. That's the structure of language. There would be no truth otherwise. I insist on this because if I didn't say this I would be considered someone who is opposed to truth or simply doesn't believe in truth. No, I am attached to truth.

(Derrida 2003, p. 44)

Truth becomes an issue only when there is a disruption, when things don't work. I walk on the street and it is true to me that there is the street and it carries my weight when I step on it. On ice the truth is different, especially in the early winter and spring: I am cautious and I walk carefully, one foot ahead, then two, then jump a bit as a test. The truth is in the different place then, but still, it is there. It is not anymore providing a basis for my embodied unconscious security for acting, but is cracked, giving space for insecurity. Truth being cracked makes it possible for me to doubt the strength of ice. I may disagree about whether the ice is strong enough with a friend going with me, but we understand each other because we believe there is a truth about it, either the ice will support us or not. Even though we did not discuss the strength of the ice we would know that it is strong enough, until it is not. We walk on the ice and believe it is strong or doubt if it is strong or learn that it was not strong just because we are—or were—walking there.

Does truth mean something different in different times and places? Of

course, as all words do. As children or mice or moose the truth of the strength of the ice would be different for us. After having crossed the lake or having dropped through the ice, we and even the possible spectators would agree if the ice was strong enough or not. There is a truth about the strength of the ice but this truth is always situational.

Truth about phenomena regarding human existence is not, however, something we measure or come to agree about in the same way as we can measure whether ice is or is not strong enough to carry an average size person. Neither can it be established by big data or saturation of data. Truth about the questions of the being of persons cannot be proved by empirical generalizations or by rational analysis, but it can be traced back to its evidence, expressed in poems, argued in literal sentences and finally, it must be felt. Truth bursts out in works of art and even in academic works, but there is no time or place where it would reveal itself the same way to everyone.

Truth about my being, and the unfolding of this being, is a background assumption as it is for us all. It is also the origin of intelligibility and the promise of universalizability. It provides a foundation, a platform for sharing, and thus opens up the possibility for participation. My description participates in truth and this participation makes it possible for others to be in my description. However, this does not mean there is one universal foundation on which all truths are based, or universal truths that are the same for everyone and upon which everyone would agree. My claim is more modest. There is something about the truths about our being we must believe and which other people can grasp and either agree with or disagree. As Derrida suggests, without belief in truth all conversation becomes meaningless.

Richard Rorty maintains that truth is a property of linguistic entities. There is no truth “out there”, outside our linguistic utterances. (Rorty 1989, p. 7) Different language conventions and games enable different kind of truths. After Nietzsche there has been a tension between two different kinds of philosophical styles, or ways of presenting ideas. Rorty describes these styles as those of poets and scientists and names authors such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Heidegger and Nabokov as examples of poets dedicated to self-creation and private perfection and Marx, Mill, Dewey, Habermas and Rawls as authors engaged in shared efforts for

social justice through literal expression. For Rorty, the poetic and the literal styles are incommensurable: “There is no way to bring self-creation together with justice at the level of the theory. The vocabulary of self-creation is necessarily private, unshared, unsuited to argument. The vocabulary of justice is necessarily public and shared, a medium for argumentative exchange.” (Rorty 1989, p. xiv)

Samuel Fleischacker also relies upon the metaphors of the poet and the scientist when discussing truth-conditions of poetic and literal utterances. He points out that for poetic utterances there are no specified set of truth conditions we could apply to determine truth. Rather, “Poetic utterance, when successful, allows us to give a sentence a definite meaning, but also to replace that meaning with a new one as often as we like.” (Fleischacker 1996, p. 125). Scientific, literal language differs from the poetic: In science we need to restrict the truth-conditions and interpretations. Yet, there is also a need for a flexibility of interpretation. We have to allow theories a possibility to be re-interpreted based on alternative truth-conditions. Fleischacker concludes that “Scientific theories cannot survive without the possibilities of reinterpretation that poetry keeps open for them, while poetry thrives precisely by contrast with the apparent determinacy of scientific language.” (1996, p. 124) Hence, instead of being separate or contradictory practices, poetry and science make each other possible.

Authenticity in modern context is about self-creation. However, it is also becoming a matter of increasing institutional educational interest, and as Somogy Varga (2011, 2012) argues, a moral demand of the capitalist forces, and thus, it also belongs to the sphere of social justice. In addition, authenticity is investigated in a wide range of different kind of language games by philosophers, ranging from the poetics of such writers as Sartre (1992) and Heidegger (1962) to analytical style of Charles Taylor (1992), Charles Guignon (2008) and Somogy Varga (2011, 2012). The empirical studies, especially the quantitative measures of authenticity, bring in yet another language game with the truth-conditions of their own many of which are agreeable to the players.

I agree, for example, with Rorty in that the vocabulary of self-creation is unsuited for argument¹³, and that in public sphere we need argumentative lan-

13. I do not believe, however, that the vocabulary for self-creation would be private or unshared. Is a private language even possible, as Rorty implies? For a deeper discussion on the issue of private

guage. However, contrary to Rorty and in line with Fleischacker, I believe that these two ways of expression are not incommensurable. In order to understand our own self-creation, we can use argumentative and literal language as well as poetic expressions. Likewise, poetic language can increase understanding of the issues we need to negotiate in public sphere. In addition, there is no clear line that demarcates these two styles from one another. Investigating phenomena with different kinds of tools, different language games, gives us a broader sense of what a given phenomenon is about and what it could be about. Consequently I have made use of both kinds of language in this investigation. By using different styles of writing I want to illuminate the different ways in which the phenomenon has revealed itself for me in different language games.

The Brother Chronicles is an attempt to instigate a process of self-creation, to exhibit how the question of authenticity revealed itself during these years of investigation. The style of persuasion is not argumentative but rather appeals to the personal and human, as tragedies do. It aims at touching¹⁴. The text is not fully documentary. That is, I have fabricated incidents and dialogues in order to metaphorically highlight what has been essential for me. However, like a friend of mine said: “Your text felt honest and truthful, even though I don’t assume it be the truth. Therefore it was touching. Because, even if not all of it was true, neither was it a lie and therefore it is easy to feel the seam of truth there.”

The truth of the story is what Heidegger calls *aletheia*, unconcealment, rather than correspondence to matters of fact¹⁵. Alethic truth unfolds, discloses being,

language see e.g., Wittgenstein (2001) and Derrida (1973). The view taken here questions whether it is appropriate to think of poetic truth merely as a property of linguistic entities. Rather, the truth about self-creation is not reducible to linguistic and cognitive level but it must include other planes of persuasion. Unfortunately, the scope of this investigation does not allow me to chase this idea further.

14. Flynn (2013) calls the prose from Kierkegaard and Sartre “indirect communication”. The point of their literary work is to communicate a feeling and an attitude that a reader/spectator adopts in which certain existentialist themes such as anguish, responsibility or bad faith are suggested but not dictated, as if delivered in a lecture.

Also Husserl notes the power of artistic expression: “Through the suggestive power of artistic means of exhibition, they [works of art] convert themselves with particular ease into perfectly clear phantasies, when we attempt to construe things in an intelligible way.” (2014, 127)

15. Heidegger draws on early Greek thinkers’ understanding truth as *alétheia*, unconcealment. In every unconcealment something remains concealed, however, and in every truth, something

and lets beings be. It is the most fundamental truth, the truth that is presupposed by propositional truths. (e.g. Heidegger 2011, pp. 72, 113; 1962, pp. 261–263) My story not only unfolds my being, but by doing so it also fabricates my being. When writing my story, my being and my authenticity unfolded in the very process of writing. This truth slowly divulged itself through my present situation and therefore it is also fabricated in a certain way. It also fabricates me, we are in touch, living together in movement with each other. Later, having become aware of what was essential for authenticity, I re-fabricated (some of) the incidents in order to highlight the meaning of listening, love, Eros and imagination in my process of interrogating authenticity. For the reader the truth unfolds in a different way, because the story touches us in different places and thus, fabricates and becomes fabricated with different threads of being.

In making sense of poetic utterances it is primarily the readers life-experience that provides the appropriate truth conditions. Hence, my idea of authenticity as universal is not up to me alone to decide. If there is one person who finds my description resonating and illuminating his or her life-experience, then I have succeeded in saying something that makes my description more than subjective. In research where the aim is to think otherwise generalizability comes after, not before drawing conclusions. With questions like authenticity no one can generalize beyond her own life. We can only give others suggestions of something being true for them hoping that there is something that touches, hoping that “in the end, here and now, your own gaze touches the same traces of characters as mine, and you read me, and I write you” (Nancy 2008, p. 51). I am in no position to say that this is true for you, but you can say it if you think so, if you can take something from my text and make sense of it with your own truth-conditions. And perhaps then you will be able to say that “another private world shows through, through the fabric of my own, and for a moment I live in it” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, pp. 10–11).

In addition to taking the poets job of trying to describe the truth of becoming to conclusions about authenticity with *Brother Chronicles* and encounters with literature, I am making use of literal, argumentative language to make sense of this becoming and to participate in the discussion of authenticity in different fields.

remains hidden. Plato transformed *alétheia* into correctness of the correspondence between idea and entity. (Heidegger 1998, pp. 176–177)

I especially want to take part in the discussion of the place of authenticity in our educational institutions as well as of the methodological approaches I have utilized. The aims of my arguments targeted at these social practices are modest. Instead of trying to establish truths, the goal is to pinpoint somewhat controversial aspects of what we might call idealistic curriculum building, or what it might mean to run amok with an idealistic concept such as authenticity. When it comes to education and authenticity, what is it we can hope for? Do we believe we can educate individuals to be authentic? Are we delimited to merely provide examples of instances of it? Or is authenticity in the context of education something else? Before we create either fads or foibles, we could more deliberately re-think the purposes of including authenticity in schools in the first place. Chapter 5 provides the main conclusions, a full-fledged account of authenticity. The multi-style approach to it permits what I hope are organic, that is person-oriented, truths to emerge.

Having now explained how I understand truth in my investigation, I still have yet to touch upon the question of how one becomes convinced. How do I make conclusions? What does it mean when I am certain of a conclusion? Borrowing again from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty¹⁶, at first glance, one is inclined to say that becoming convinced is an experience of truth, the revelation of which one is able to follow and capture. Yet, this experience cannot be fully explained or communicated. No matter how much I explain, there remains always something impossible to prove, show or explain, because becoming convinced of ontological questions, such as what is authenticity and who am I, does not happen (merely) at the cognitive and linguistic level and is in constant flux. After all, one can also become unconvinced. In addition, that which convinces one person may not convince another. Answers to the questions of being must be factored in first. Becoming convinced is not a static state of affairs nearly as much as it is a process, the whirl of the unfolding of one's own life, the oscillating between one's experience and reflections, the use of whatever tools one wishes to employ.

16. Merleau-Ponty (2012), relying on Husserl, discusses truth and evidence: “evidentness is the experience of truth.” To seek the essence of perception is not to declare that perception is presumed to be true, but rather that perception is defined as our access to the truth.” (p.lxxx) See also translator's footnote on page 495.

2.4. Ethical considerations and quality of qualitative research

Being ethical in research means being mindful of the process and of its consequences. Being mindful of the people, animals and the world involved in the process and being mindful with the future world one is building with the research. Hence, when considering the ethics of the investigation, we need to ask two questions: first, was the procedure ethical, and second, is the outcome ethically sustainable? The first question involves considerations of the treatment of the participants or other people, animals or environment involved, as well as considerations about the plausibility of the methods and the conclusions. In other words, have the parties involved been treated well and are the procedure and the conclusions convincing? Various ethical guidelines have been created to deal with these issues.

The second issue of ethics in research is less discussed. This issue becomes especially evident in cases such as research in quantum mechanics with the aim of building an atom bomb. Is it right to research phenomena the application of which may lead to massively destructive outcomes? In humanistic research this question may not seem pressing in the same way. We are merely dealing with ideas. Some researchers adopt a stance that they are just finding out how things are with regard their research questions and it is enough if the procedures meet the requirements of ethical committees who deal with human subject issues, such as confidentiality, voluntary participation and fairness. For others (e.g., most post researchers and autoethnographers), social responsibility is an important motivation behind the research and the aim is to change the world for the better.

I believe that research, like any human activity, has an ethical aspect that should be taken seriously and that this responsibility goes beyond guidelines given by ethical committees. Our responsibility extends not only to the research process but into the indefinite future. However, I also believe that in order to think and rethink, to search and research, we must bracket our moral convictions as well, at least to some extent. In addition, since ethical questions are always situational, we need to consider the ethical questions in the context of the particular investigation at hand.

I am not alone with my belief that research ethics should be rigorous, per-

sonal, and situational. In a special issue of *Qualitative Inquiry*, dedicated to research ethics and regulation, various authors (Boser 2007, Cheek 2007, Koro-Ljungberg et al. 2007, Kakali 2007) raised concerns that research is legitimated through market philosophies and that regulation in its multiple forms results in an illusion of ethical practice. After absorbing the instructions of Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity I began to think about the ethics of my research. Something important occurred to me that I believe is often overlooked. I realized that the instructions were written from an ontological and epistemological stance that did not fit my research methodology. Of course I believe in the intent of maintaining a strong ethical stance, especially when human subjects are involved. But I pondered on what it means to base ethics on criteria that may or may not be universal. Specifically, the challenges I pose relate to instructions on the nature of data and the relation between the researcher and data.

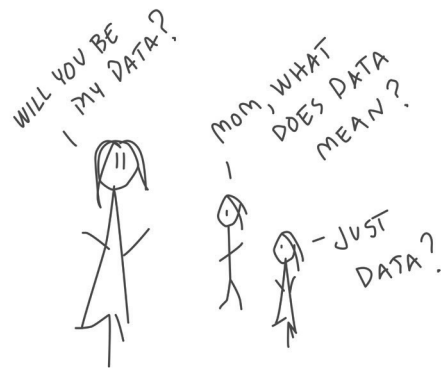
According to the Advisory Board, "In order for research to be ethically acceptable and reliable and for its results to be credible, the research must be conducted according to the responsible conduct of research." This includes the proviso that "The methods applied for data acquisition as well as for research and evaluation, conform to scientific criteria." (2012, p. 30). Scientific criteria are different in different fields and methods. In addition, they vary considerably by historical and cultural contexts, allow different practices and yield different outcomes. All criteria can be questioned and should be questioned. Therefore, it is never enough to leave ethical considerations for ethical committees. Neither is it enough to leave the consideration of the boundaries of science to philosophers of science. Every single research takes a stance to these questions and can have a say by obeying or by pushing and stretching the boundaries. I believe there is a place for both conforming and questioning, but either way, in order to be ethical, it must be a personally and situationally reflected choice. Conforming to criteria without first confirming one's own ethical stance in knowledge production does not necessarily lead to a more consistent or a more clarified personal research philosophy, nor would that action always be ethical.

My investigation became a place for questioning. It interrogates both the borderlines between different fields and methods, as well as the borderline between art and research for instance by utilizing literary techniques as methodolog-

ical tools. This is an approach the instructions do not address directly, even if one may deduce likely connections. By definition, a list of criteria for ethical practice is limited. In my case, I must ask whether the criteria provided by the Board on Research Integrity are relevant to my cause. My cause centers on good philosophical thinking, that is, an aim to think about my topic with rigor and depth, irrespective of authorities, minding good arguments, finding consistency and truth (which take different forms in different language games) and trying to reveal different aspects of the phenomenon. I believe any thoughtful reader will acknowledge that my research takes research ethics very seriously, especially when it concerns the comfort and anonymity of all subjects, including myself, and is deeply ethical even though it does challenge some instructions and definitions provided by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity.

The instructions demand that “The necessary research permits have been acquired ...”. (2012, p.30) In the beginning, when doing individual and focus group interviews I did take care of the research permits, explained the nature of the research for the participants and made sure they understand what we are doing and what I am going to with the data, and that they have a right to withdraw whenever they wish.

However, after having turned to autoethnographical and post-qualitative research the acquisition of permits became impossible. When sharing ideas about life with close others or other people I encounter, I do not wish them to fill forms of consent to use their thoughts as data for my research¹⁷. However, it is something that affects my thinking, gives me insights and draws my attention to some things instead of others. In many cases, I did not realize that a certain discussion will be relevant for my research before it was over and after



Picture 2. Acquiring research permits. A drawing from my notebook.

17. For instance, Tony E. Adams (in Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis 2014, p. 107) ends up in a same kind of ethical decision when doing autoethnography of the experience of coming out of the closet”. Also Holman Jones and Ellis discuss similar challenges (pp. 111–112).

I had the opportunity to properly reflect upon it. I cannot separate other people and the world from my research. All encounters and moments affect my life and research in ways I cannot foresee.

The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity also reminds us about honesty and truthfulness and excludes fabrication and modifying observations from ethical conduct:

Fabrication refers to reporting invented observations to the research community. In other words, the fabricated observations have not been made by using the methods as claimed in the research report. ... Falsification (misrepresentation) refers to modifying and presenting original observations deliberately so that the results based on those observations are distorted. (2012, pp. 32–33)

Both of these points assume epistemological and ontological considerations that are more consistent with logical positivist thinking, typically done in deductive fashion, than with inductive or, in my case, abductive thinking. The formulations make sense if we think of data as something outside the researcher, something she gathers through observing the world, and not as something she gains through imaginative variation or creative writing, as it happened in my case. Hence, fabricated observations are equated with dishonest reporting with regard the methods used. In my research fabrication has a different, positive meaning. For me fabricating and modifying original observations of my own experiences were methodological and ethical tools that enabled unfolding of the meaning structures of authenticity while protecting the participants, including myself, from unnecessary revelations. Hence, fabrication helped me to be truthful and treat my participants in an ethical manner.

I did fabricate, but I do not mislead the reader. Rather, in the previous chapter I have carefully explained why these fabrications were necessary. Likewise, the modification of original observations did not distort the results of my investigation. On the contrary, together with fabrication it enabled the results. Being truthful for what really happened at the level of incidents would not have enabled the unfolding of a truth that was more fundamental: the *alethetic* truth of my becoming, my authenticity. In other words, fabricating certain threads in the *Brother Chronicles* transformed it from autobiography to autobiofiction and the auto-

ethnographical data from being mere 'data' into a combination of data and analysis. In addition, fabrication became an important metaphor for thinking about self and authenticity.

Had I been doing a traditional philosophical inquiry, or any deductive style research, the question of fabrication would not have arisen. Philosophers often use 'imagine-a-case-like-this' -examples, ideal-type examples, and hence, no real person is in danger of harmful exposure and no-one would complain about fabrication. The plausibility of the argument and of the example is what counts. I hesitated many times if I should fade away from the autobiographical data and transform it into imaginal cases that nevertheless illuminate the arguments. I did not use that literary convention because I wanted to explore and probe the methodological boundaries between disciplines and the ethics involved. In addition, leaving the autobiographical level visible I am able to argue one of my methodological points better: *all thinking happens through the researcher's own being and experience. This affects the results. The best we can do is to make the influences as transparent as possible.*

Revealing my personal history this way certainly affects my own life as well as the lives of others close to me. Talking about sensitive and private issues has consequences I cannot control. However, my responsibility for the people affecting me and my research is the same responsibility I have for them as persons, outside any research context. I embrace them as associates, friends and family members toward whom I am responsible. I am bound to them and they to me, not as research participants determined by pre-set instructions. With some of the people involved in *Brother Chronicles* I discussed the ethical issues. With others I did not. However, I will continue to feel personally responsible and respond to them in appropriate manner, as I would do anyway.

3. LINGUISTIC REMARKS

3.1. Shifting meanings

Authenticity is a slippery concept, with varying meanings in different contexts. For instance, the ways in which we use the word when we talk about physical objects is different than when we attach it to human beings or human existence. Sometimes authenticity is easy to define and detect. An authentic diamond possesses a certain constitution with pre-defined characteristics and qualities, an authentic Gucci dress is designed and produced by the Gucci company and grandma's authentic meatballs are made according to grandma's recipe with that special taste. When applied to humans, authenticity becomes less clear. What is an authentic human being? None of the above criteria seem fitting. Could a list of qualities of an authentic person ever be agreed upon? Who would construct such a list? Indeed, the purposes of creating such a list in the first place appears to be dubious at best. Perhaps there are signposts, processes, or meta issues that could signal movement toward authenticity.

In addition to the meanings of being genuine or being traditionally produced or presented, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines authenticity with various meanings, some of which may be more easily applied to persons: 1. The quality of truthful correspondence between inner feelings and their outward expression; unaffectedness, sincerity. 2. A mode of existence arising from

self-awareness, critical reflection on one's goals and values, and responsibility for one's own actions; the condition of being true to oneself. The etymology of the term is also instructive and accompanies the definitions of authenticity in the OED.

Accordingly, authenticity as a sense of self-awareness was first discussed by Martin Heidegger in his 1927 work *Sein und Zeit*, and was later treated by Jean-Paul Sartre and other existentialists. However, for both philosophers, authenticity is part of a larger concept of human condition and cannot be properly understood if detached from the context of their thinking. I will get back to their understanding of human condition, especially to that of Heidegger, later in this chapter. For now, I will focus on the shifting meanings of authenticity on a more everyday level, related to the questions I am bound to resolve when gathering qualitative data regarding how people experience, know, and understand authenticity.

As the OED illustrates, everyday English contains a multitude of meanings for authenticity. As we expand the examination of authenticity into other languages, the meanings become even more complex. The differences I encountered in the ways of talking about authenticity between English and Finnish speaking people made me think about how language shapes our understanding of self. I became aware of the interplay between ontology and language; the ways in which we talk about ourselves and of being authentic frame the options we have for thinking about these issues, and our underlying beliefs shape the way we use the language. In the following I will open up some challenges in translating the concept into Finnish and examine how my interviews with Finnish speaking participants illuminated aspects that were not as visible in Anglophone literature.

In many European languages, the word authenticity appears almost in the same form. German 'authentizität', French 'authenticité', Spanish 'autenticidad' and Italian 'autenticità' have roughly the same meanings as the English word authenticity. In Scandinavian languages, (except for Icelandic) authenticity is translated as 'äkthet' (Swedish), 'ekthet' (Norwegian), 'ægtthed' (Danish). All these words have a meaning of 'genuineness'. In Finnish the dictionary meanings given for authenticity are 'aitous' (genuineness), 'oikeellisuus' (correctness), 'luotettavuus' (trustworthiness), 'tarkkuus' (meticulousness), and 'todenperäisyys' (truth). Also a direct translation 'autenttisuus' is offered. (sanakirja.org)

The word 'autenttisuus', however, is a borrowed word, not originally Finnish,

and also not commonly used. The reaction I usually have when I tell a Finnish person that I am investigating authenticity is “What is that? What does it mean?” When I try to explain, they often start guessing what it could mean and quite often end up joking about authentic selves and authentic action. “Am I now authentic peeling these carrots, I feel more authentic sitting on the terrace drinking beer.” “Do I look very authentic with this hair?” or “Let’s take an authentic walk.” For Finnish speakers, there is often something funny about authenticity. And when something is funny, there is something controversial in it. A funny thing lends itself for various interpretations, that is what makes it funny.

In the interviews and when talking to people about my research I usually used the following description of authenticity: “Authenticity has been understood in diverse ways, but one of the most common ways is to describe it as ‘being true to oneself.’” However, translating this seemingly simple sentence to Finnish was not so simple. A literal translation of being true to oneself would be ‘olla tosi/ todellinen itselleen’. This does not, however, make sense. A reference to truth does not make sense in Finnish, because it would refer to the realness of my existence. The opposite of ‘olla tosi/ todellinen itselleen’ would mean being in a state where one doubts or has delusions of one’s own physical or mental existence. This is not usually the case when one talks about being true to oneself in English. Thus, I ended up translating ‘being true to oneself’ as ‘olla uskollinen itselleen’, which in English would translate as ‘being loyal to oneself’. That makes sense in Finnish and captures some core meanings of the English phrase ‘being true to oneself’.

The Finnish way of using the language when talking about self or about being true to oneself does not readily bring forth the question of true versus false. In English the talk about ‘being true to oneself’ easily turns into a talk about ‘being one’s true self’ (for instance, in Franzese’s data 2009, p. 99). In Finnish we don’t use the phrase ‘be one’s true self’ [olla todellinen itsensä]. Rather, we speak about ‘being oneself’ [olla oma itsensä]. Hence, instead of talking about true selves, my Finnish participants often turned the original question [olla uskollinen itselleen] into the talk about ‘being oneself’.

In addition, in the focus group interviews with Finnish participants, the positive value of authenticity was not as evident as it was in the qualitative studies with English speaking participants. Whereas for instance Franzese (2009, p. 99)

tells that during the interviews it often seemed that her participants wanted to be perceived as highly authentic individuals, my Finnish participants did not seem to exhibit this kind of desire¹⁸. The participants used an assortment of phrases like “on the one hand, on the other hand” with which they brought up the complexity of being true to oneself. They discussed how different roles and different social contexts, conflicting ethical and practical demands contribute to the way how they are and behave, but in general, did not make hasty conclusions of what it means to be true to oneself. They seemed to agree that ‘being true to oneself’ is a good thing in general, but that often ‘being true to oneself’ yields conflicting demands, such as whether to say what one thinks or be nice to others, both of which are valuable choices. In addition, they seemed to value also ‘not being true to oneself’ as a part of role playing that is important for growth, and for finding one’s own way of being. Even though they recognized that some things were more ‘them’ than others, they did not refer to an idea of core self or true self, but rather, seemed to view self as evolving in different contexts and with different experiences.¹⁹

As I will show in the following chapter, much of the empirical research on authenticity made me feel uncomfortable. The linguistic observations mentioned above made me wonder if this discomfort could be explained by different cultural backgrounds. The empirical literature I studied was in English. If the Finnish language and the ways of talking about self does not posit questions of truth in the same way than the English way, could it be just that the uneasiness with the literature comes from the fact that I am not used to thinking about myself that way? This kind of conclusion garners support from Richard Rorty (1989), who maintains that our sense of self is a contingent product of historical events and is shaped by contingent and arbitrary descriptions and uses of words.

However, despite the differences in ways of talking about self and authenticity, there are a lot of themes in common. Even though languages and ways of

18. In one focus group students made jokes about that. After the interviews I asked them to rate how true to themselves they think they were during the interviews. Most of them chose 4 in the scale from 1 (I was not at true to myself) to 5 (I was all the time true to myself).

19. These findings could be analyzed further. For instance, one could discuss the possibility of false dilemmas or different normative domains. However, my purpose here is to merely offer some differences between English and Finnish-based use of language when talking about authenticity. Accordingly I will not delve into analyzing these examples further.

thinking are culturally bound, they are not incommensurable. We do understand each other, we can share ideas and our deep beliefs of human condition with people from different backgrounds and speaking different languages. This sharing and working on the borderlines between different languages opened up new perspectives, invited me to go deeper into the ontological questions related to my investigation and enabled me to fabricate my own stand with authenticity.

3.2. Layers of the discourse

In every culture there are conventions about how and what to talk about oneself in public or in private contexts. In the midst of doing fieldwork in social media and in my surroundings, I write in my notebook:

I have started to think of the phenomenon of authenticity as a spiral topic with different layers. At the uppermost level there are things that we talk about quite comfortably in public. There is the public jargon of authenticity, in which authenticity is something that is virtuous, possible for everyone and at the same time promoting the individual good and the good of the society. There is no suspicion, nothing to be worried about, no reason to expect that it wouldn't be good to be authentic. Beneath this public level the question of authenticity gets more complicated.

(13.1.2018)

The public stories of authenticity are easy. They are stories that make people say “Wow, she is brave, I wish I could do the same.” In these stories authenticity is unproblematically good. For instance, a woman in a high position is leaving her job because she feels she has to uphold her values. In her last speech to her former colleagues she says: “I came to the conclusion that I cannot continue working here, because I would have to act against my core beliefs. Sometimes you just have to be true to yourself and make difficult decisions. So now it's time for me to look at what life brings elsewhere.” The audience listening to her speech is nodding approvingly, some of them hoping they could do the same.²⁰

Or a man becomes enraged at his superior who is treating a colleague of

20. This story I witnessed myself in a public place.

color disgracefully and yells at him: “if you ever publicly humiliate him again, or anyone else, just to satisfy your big fat ego, I’m going to cut your balls off, you racist pig.” Again, we approve. He was brave. He stood up for the things he believed in, justice, equality and decency. And he took a risk in confronting his superior who was much more influential than him. We are happy that it ended well and that the superior quit bullying his team members.²¹

Public stories of authenticity are heroic. The hero has struggled his way to authenticity and overcome the risks involved. The values of the hero are good, aligned with what people usually value, something that is easy to agree with. The hero, the authentic person, or the person acting in an authentic way is doing the right thing. S/he is acting according to her own values and these values are good also in public opinion. She lives up to the values we all would like to. The protagonist of these stories is a hero because s/he is strong enough to do what many of us cannot. The story ends well.²²

Beneath the public stories of authenticity are the stories that make the narrator more vulnerable. These are the stories many of us tell only to their close others²³. They involve and reveal inner conflicts and hesitation about what is good as well as questioning one’s behavior and reasons for it. For instance, a woman is struggling in her relationship, hesitating between whether to break up or stay with the boyfriend. She feels that in order to be true to herself she needs to leave the boyfriend, because her visions for her own life have changed from the ones that attached her to the relationship in the first place. After having made the decision she feels she was true herself, yet feels guilty and sorry for how things went.²⁴

At the very bottom there are the stories of authenticity that reveal tensions and conflicts triggered by the things we are not even conscious of. We may have an

21. This is one of the stories of authenticity told to me in interactive interviews.

22. As in the previous chapter, all the extracts from interviews could be analyzed further. Here the intention is, however, merely to illuminate the layers of the discourse.

23. In the research literature for instance Burks, D. J., & Robbins, R. (2011) note in their qualitative study on authenticity with 17 psychologists the participants indicated feeling the most authentic with close friendships, significant others, and family members, and less authentic in casual and/or collegial-professional roles.

24. This story is from my interview data. Even though I was not ‘a close other’, I believe this is a story one would not tell in a public speech. Same kind of stories or pondering about comparable situations I have also from my close others.

uncanny feeling that things are not right, but we do not know why. These are the stories of authenticity we are afraid to tell even to ourselves. Stories that make us face the paradoxical nature of our being and becoming to the highest degree. They are not the kind of stories you would tell a researcher, not only because they are stories that make us vulnerable, afraid of ourselves, stories that make us balance between insanity and immorality, but also because they involve intruders we become aware of only by telling the story.

Yet, these are the stories that want to be told. How do I know? I know because I have my own stories. They emerged in my journals when I tried to make sense of authenticity. They emerged in my thoughts, speech and writing when I thought, talked and wrote about authenticity. And they were compelling me to act on them. "Do not leave us out." It is this deepest level of authenticity that I want to open up in this investigation. I believe enough has been said about authenticity in the public levels and also in the private levels, but the investigation of the very roots of the phenomenon has largely been ignored.

Before going into that I will give a short review of authenticity as an ideal for humanity and question how authenticity has been approached within different fields. Emblematic of educational literature on authenticity is how the background is drawn from various sources, amoeba-like, with pseudo-pods pouring more than a sharp edged signpost guiding. After all, authenticity has various roots and branches. Educational researchers tend to use literature from fields such as psychology, sociology and philosophy as a background for their studies. Instead of going through all the possible literature on authenticity available for educational applications, I will take an example from each field mentioned and evaluate it in the light of my own emerging investigations. The examples do not exhaust the research of authenticity in those fields, but rather, the choices have been motivated by providing different kind of examples to scrutinize.

4. ENCOUNTERS WITH PREVIOUS RESEARCH

4.1. Authenticity as an ideal for humanity and education

In his small but influential book “The Ethics of Authenticity” (1992) Charles Taylor claims that authenticity is an unrepudiated, yet degraded ideal of modernity. Taylor places the birth of authenticity in the end of eighteenth century, when the ideals of being in touch with one’s inner voice and the ideal of the self-determining reason start to gain independent moral significance. Whereas earlier on the ideal of being in touch with one’s inner self was important because it told us what is the right thing to do, in the eighteenth century it gained moral significance of its own, as something we have to attain in order to be full-fledged human beings. Self-determining freedom is an idea that I am free when I decide for myself what concerns me instead of simply reacting to external forces.

For Taylor, authenticity can be articulated as a valid ideal, if we just recognize its dependence on the social bonds and the shared horizons of communities instead of interpreting it in a self-centered form focusing on the self-fulfillment of atomistic individuals. Authenticity, in its proper form, according to Taylor, includes two strains which are in tension with each other. The first is the individualistic strain involving creation and construction as well as the discovery of self and opposition

to the rules of society, even to morality. The other strain is the communal strain of authenticity and it involves recognition of horizons of significance and self-definition in a dialogue with others. (1992, p. 66)

Not all scholars, however, view authenticity as an ideal for being a human. For instance, Heidegger, one of the most cited philosopher on authenticity, maintains that authenticity and inauthenticity are both inescapable modes of being and as such are not value laden (Heidegger 1962). Also Golomb claims that “there is no reason to suppose that it is any better or any more valuable to be authentic than to act inauthentically.” (1995, p. 202) It is, however, difficult to escape the positive aura of authenticity and hence, the desire to be authentic rather than inauthentic. Even in Heidegger’s text can be found another normative account of authenticity and inauthenticity (Carman 2003, p. 2007).

There has also been fierce criticism against authenticity as an ideal for humanity. For instance, Theodor Adorno criticizes the ‘cult of authenticity’, which he traces back beyond Heidegger. Heidegger, however, according to Adorno, gave the cult a language which since then has become a jargon of authenticity that dresses ordinary words with sacred meanings detaching them from their historical context and instead of its promise to free from alienation, rather alienates than empowers (Adorno 1973, pp. 4–5, 9). In addition, especially since Freud’s acknowledgement of drives, it has become questionable that everything “deep within us” would be good and desirable and thus authenticity as being true to own innermost self and living according to it would be desirable (Guignon 2004, pp. 97–106).

Also Taylor (1992) claims that not all forms of authenticity serve well as ideals. Accordingly, self-centered notions of authenticity inflicted by self-determining freedom, which demands that one break free of all external impositions and decide for oneself alone, fail to acknowledge the importance of shared horizons in the formation of self, and thus when taken as ideals, flatten and narrow human existence. Also Somogy Varga (2011, 2012), even though striving to harness aspects of authenticity as an appealing and sustainably ethical ideal, recognizes the challenging nature of authenticity and claims that especially in the contemporary performative form authenticity has assumed, “the very attempt to realize (performative) authenticity creates conditions under which the probability of its realization is reduced.” (2012, p. 157)

Despite the pitfalls, authenticity persists as an ideal. For decades there has been increasing enthusiasm for authenticity in many aspects of education. In a review article of authenticity in education Lauren Bialystok (2017) identifies three main areas in educational literature on authenticity: authentic learning and assessment, teacher authenticity, and student authenticity as an educational aim. I will not address the questions related to non-human features of the first category such as authentic learning environments, authentic curriculum or authentic tasks but instead, focus on authenticity as an ideal for human beings and an ideal for education.

Teacher authenticity has been of much greater interest to researchers than student authenticity in educational literature. Yet, as Bialystok (2007, p. 19) points out, the motivation behind that is the idea that it brings good implications for learners and ultimately also increases student authenticity. Empirical educational studies on authenticity often start with the acknowledgement that authenticity is a fuzzy concept, then introduce some notions from the existing literature, proceeding to either clarify the notion with the help of empirical data, or define authenticity in some way and then investigate its relation to some other constructs.

Even though the various roots of authenticity are often acknowledged in educational literature, the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of different kinds of notions of authenticity tend to remain unclarified. Rather, the possible ontological contradictions are bypassed by maintaining that authenticity is a multifaceted concept and thus for instance aspects relying on the essentialist notion of true self can be subsumed in the same “multifaceted concept” with notions relying on Heidegger, to whose thinking such ideas fit poorly. (For a similar critique see also Bialystok, 2015 and 2017) To introduce some trends and challenges in educational studies on authenticity relevant for my investigation I will take a look at two widely cited studies on authenticity in education.

Kreber and al. (2007, 2010, 2013) aim to achieve conceptual clarity of authenticity with qualitative and mixed methods studies comparing different notions of authenticity found in the philosophical literature to those of teachers and students. What is interesting to me in their studies is that when asked about authenticity in learning and teaching, their participants seem to fill the concept of authenticity with all kinds of desirable features of good teaching or good learning, such

as being sincere, demonstrating consistency between values and action, pursuing moral questions, having a sense of care for the subject and students and engaging students with the subject. I share Kreber and Klampfleitner's (2007, 2013) worry that among the aspects they found as relating to authenticity in teacher's thinking, the critical reflection on core beliefs and values seemed to play a lesser role than other dimensions.

By contrast, critical self-knowledge or self-awareness plays an important role in the conception of authenticity arrived at in the grounded theory approach by Cranton and Carusetta (2004). They interviewed and observed 22 university teachers during a three year period in order to understand how faculty members understand authenticity in teaching and how they see it manifested in their practice. Participants were selected primarily from nomination of colleagues and administrators, based on whom they consider authentic teachers. As a result of their study Cranton and Carusetta generated five categories related to authenticity: self, other, relationship, context and critical reflection.

Awareness is a crucial term in all these categories and critical reflection is a category that pervades the other four categories. Authenticity in teaching is then seen as critical awareness of self, others, relationships and the context of teaching and it results in action such as being genuine and open and demonstrating congruence between values and action (self), being interested in student's learning (other), caring for students and dialogue (relationship), knowledge of discipline and awareness of classroom context (context) and taking a critical and reflexive stance to each of the above-mentioned categories. The tentative hypothesis here is that as awareness in these categories develops, so does authenticity in teaching.

Cranton and Carusetta were drawn to studying authenticity by their interest in transformative learning and their conviction that teachers should be permitted to find their own unique styles for teaching in the midst of institutional demands. I agree with them in that authenticity is indeed a transformative process and has implications both on learning and teaching. I also agree that awareness and critical reflection in the categories they present are good traits for a teacher and will probably enhance both the quality of teaching and promote an atmosphere conducive to learning in the classroom. Yet I wonder what is the added value of naming the combination of these categories authenticity. Does it help us better understand the

features listed under the five categories, or does it clarify authenticity as a precise and discernible concept? I am not convinced of either option. In addition, contrary to what Kreber and Klampfleitner (2013) argue, a critical reader simply cannot believe that combining the different, mutually contradictory notions of authenticity together and claiming that authenticity is a multifaceted concept, brings much conceptual clarity to the conceptual definitions.

Kreber & al. (2007, 2012, 2013) suggest for future research more extensive quantitative studies, but also, and with a stronger recommendation, qualitative studies that would investigate not only teachers' conceptions of authenticity but also their experiences of striving for authenticity in teaching. For the reasons explained in the forthcoming chapter, I believe the former suggestion with a quantitative study would not help us much in clarifying authenticity. The latter has more potential. However, there are at least three challenges to overcome.

The first is that relying on generalization from lay conceptions in trying to achieve clarity for a concept without delving into a philosophical conceptual analysis (summarizing notions from philosophical literature is not yet conceptual analysis) probably leads more to circular reasoning and conceptual confusion than to clarity (for a more detailed critique, see Bialystok 2015). The second challenge is a practical one explained in the previous chapter. As my investigation hopefully shows, authenticity involves layers of our being that are both difficult and dangerous to face and therefore, the probability to gain descriptions of the deep level experiences of authenticity is not very high. The third challenge concerns the marriage of the concepts, authenticity and teacher. If the concept of authenticity is fuzzy in itself, I doubt that we can jump into clarifying an authentic teacher or authenticity in teaching without first having made sense of authenticity *per se*²⁵ and

25. Kreber & al. talk about authenticity in teaching and authenticity in learning as well as about authentic teachers. The philosophical literature they use discusses authenticity as a mode of being a human (e.g. Heidegger) or as a moral ideal (e.g. Taylor, Varga). It is not at all clear the leap from authenticity *per se* to authenticity in teaching or to an authentic teacher can be done. It seems to me (see also Bialystok 2017) that not only in the work of Kreber and al. but also more widely in educational literature on authenticity, authenticity contains both the idea of being true to oneself when doing the work of the teacher, but also being true to certain virtues related to being a teacher, and an attempt to find some kind of general description of what an authentic teacher would be like. For the discussion of the challenges to combine the terms 'authenticity' and 'teacher' see e.g. Bialystok (2015).

eliminating the fuzziness.

Despite the disagreement about the best ways to clarify the concept of authenticity, what I have to offer in this investigation is a partial answer for Kreber's et al. wishes. I offer a description of my experience of authenticity expressed through an autobiofictional text and a phenomenological study of authenticity encompassing also traditional qualitative elements. These descriptions are of course available for anyone to analyze further. However, since my interest is on the deep structures of the phenomenon of authenticity, I am more interested in what a careful phenomenological study of authenticity conducted by someone else would look like.

Based on a philosophical analysis on the concept and a critical analysis of empirical studies on authenticity in teaching, Bialystok (2015) concludes that contrary to what the existing empirical studies on authenticity in education suggest, there is no necessary relation between authentic teacher and good teaching. An inauthentic teacher may be an excellent teacher and an authentic teacher may be a bad teacher. In addition, comparing authenticity to autonomy Bialystok (2017) notes that authenticity has a paradoxical nature as an ideal for education. She does not, however, develop the idea further but only notes that the topic is ripe for research.

The paradoxical nature of authenticity was revealed to me on many levels throughout this investigation. With Varga's insights about the counterfeiting effect of authenticity when implemented with an institutional demand in mind, such as a Ministry of Education mandating authenticity in the core curriculum, one is rightfully worried that authenticity will not land well when implemented as an ideal, or even as a curricular suggestion, in education institutions. I will get back to it in more detail in Chapter 7 when considering the implications of my investigation to education. In the following, I will go deeper into ontological aspects of authenticity by taking a look at three different examples from literature, each of them with a different kind of approach and notion of authenticity.

4.2. Authenticity with true self

A majority of the empirical research on authenticity builds on some kind of

idea of true self or core self. Many authors writing on teacher authenticity rely on an assumption of authenticity as being in touch with one's true self and echo, a wish that teachers be in touch with their true self (e.g., Palmer 1998, Cranton 2001). In the following I will take a look at a quantitative measure from psychology relying on an assumption of true self in operationalizing and conceptualizing authenticity. I will scrutinize these cases in the light of my personal experiences and highlight some difficulties when authenticity is conceptualized as a correlation to true self.

Quantitative studies with regard authenticity have not been very popular in education so far, but there are emerging studies using some kind of authenticity scale in order to measure student authenticity and say something about the relation between measured authenticity and some other desired features such as hope (Akin and Akin 2014), metacognition (Chiaburu, Cho and Gardner 2015), organizational health, organizational climate, and leader effectiveness (Henderson and Brookhart, 1996) or successful spiritual education (Ubani, 2018). Even though different scales developed for measuring authenticity measure different features, and not all of them necessarily rely on a strong assumption of true self, all of them naturally assume that authenticity is something that can be operationalized and measured. I am strongly suspicious of such an assumption and argue that all attempts to measure authenticity with a framework that is not 'my own' are doomed to fail. The problem lies in the assumption about operationalization. Exactly what depth of authenticity is to be operationalized? The deeper one goes, the more difficult the operationalization.

In the following I will parlously examine an Authenticity Scale developed by Wood & Al. (2008). When I tried to assess my authenticity with this scale, I found I am not a very authentic person. As I advanced through the protocol, faithfully answering the questions, I noticed that I failed in many aspects of authenticity. I answered 'agree' to questions like "I don't know how I really feel inside," "I feel alienated from myself" and "Other people influence me greatly" and disagreed with questions like "I am true to myself in most situations," and "I live in accordance with my values and beliefs." Failing to be authentic was not the only highly disappointing matter for me with these measures. According to Wood, et al., authenticity correlates for instance to well-being and self-esteem. Despite the sudden downturn in my profile, I believe it is possible to critique the Authenticity Scale thoroughly

and well.

Wood et al. refer widely to literature of authenticity in psychology, but do not investigate the philosophical roots of the notions they rely on, such as the influence of existential philosophy to existential psychology. Thus, different notions are summed up into a scale relying on an ontological assumption of true self. For existentialists, such as Heidegger and Sartre, feelings of uncanniness and freedom to ask questions about one's own existence are a starting point for authenticity. I felt this was exactly what I was going through in my life. I was anxious to make sense of my own life, my past and the present, to understand who I am and what the feelings of 'being at home' and 'uncanny' are trying to tell me. I thought I was doing fine, that I was on the wave of/for authenticity, but now this measure seemed to undermine my struggles. Instead of recognizing the ongoing process of trying to understand who I am as an indication of authenticity, the scale seemed to reward denial of inner conflict as well as refusal to examine one's values and beliefs. A person sticking rigidly to certain values and beliefs would score pretty high in authenticity measured by this scale, whereas my results, grown out of interrogating my being, indicated inauthenticity. Is that fair? It is not.

Why did I result in this disappointing outcome? One explanation could be that I was in crisis which made me question, reconsider and re-evaluate my values and fundamental beliefs and therefore I was lost with them and in that way, also inauthentic. Could it be that after having settled down with the crisis, my answers would shift more to the direction of authenticity?²⁶ Perhaps it did happen a little with some questions, such as "I don't know how I really feel inside." But still, even now, having put the crisis behind me, my answer is at best: sometimes I do and sometimes I do not. In addition, I would say that the more I explore myself, the more I become aware that the deepest of my feelings cannot be known in a way that I could offer a literal, cognitive account of them. One explanation for the discrepancy between my low results and my belief that I am not inauthentic could of course be that I am just living in self-denial and refuse to admit that I am inauthentic even though the scale clearly indicates I am. However, I believe a better

26. Wood, et al point out that literature suggests that after trauma people often feel more authentic and suggest that the Authenticity Scale could be used to test whether this was the case (2008, p. 397).

explanation would be that we have a different idea of what authenticity is.

Not only do we disagree on the overall account of what authenticity is, but also my ontological beliefs seemed to conflict with those of the Authenticity Scale. For instance, my strong affirmation for the question “Other people influence me greatly” is considered as a sign of inauthenticity in the Authenticity Scale. For me the sentence is a truism, an inescapable fact about the human condition. I believe we are all, from the very beginning and throughout our lives, entwined with other people (and also with other things around us) and bound by them. Authenticity does not happen by breaking away from others. Wood, et al., however, seem to view influence from other people as something contingent and not consistent with authenticity. This kind of individualistic-atomistic underpinnings of the Scale made me feel alienated. I understand the point, join the union, but refrain from being a unionist. Still, in order to be viewed authentic, I would have to interpret the question in a framework that is not my own. A person with a belief that we are independent individuals who can resist external influences and that this resistance is good and a sign of authenticity, would very probably be assigned the label of ‘authentic person’. I, with my beliefs of human condition as entangled with others and of life as a continuous process of growth, with its ebbs and flows, raveling and unraveling, am considered as not authentic, or maybe even inauthentic. Hence, with the tendency to efface the binds to others, the Authenticity Scale can be seen as an example of self-centered forms of authenticity that Charles Taylor, and many others, criticizes.

Another difference in ontological beliefs between me and the Authenticity Scale is an assumption of true self. I found it very difficult to answer the question “I feel in accordance with my true self”. How could I feel in accordance with my true self, if I do not believe that I have one? The only suitable answer would be thus to disagree. However, I would have to disagree not because I feel out of touch with my true self but because there is no true self to be found, at least in my case. As I simply do not share this assumption, it feels very unfair to be assessed with this criterion. By analogy, one could assume that authenticity is about a person’s relation to God and a negative answer to the question “I often feel connected with God” would be an indication of inauthenticity. Measuring authenticity with that kind of measure would make sense only among the population that believes in God’s existence and

that authenticity is about being in touch with God. For others, it would mean demeaning their core beliefs. Such a staggering bias cannot be explained away by cultural differences, either. The inherent conception of authenticity in the Authenticity Scale is simply indefensibly narrow.

Consequently, the feeling of being misunderstood and diminished was my experience with the Authenticity Scale. I felt it gave a demeaning picture of me by assessing me within a framework I would not share. The ontological, epistemological and ethical assumptions of what it means to be a person (or me) were too different for the scale to provide me support in my process of thinking about my own authenticity. Was it then counterproductive to my process? I cannot say so. It made me angry and pushed me to take a closer look at why I am getting so frustrated with it. Making sense of this frustration made me more aware of my own stance.

4.3. Authenticity as being true to one's values and beliefs

Another feature which appears in some form in most academic discussions I have encountered including educational is authenticity as congruence between one's fundamental beliefs and values and one's actions. I discuss these features in dialogue with sociologists Vannini and Burges (2009). These authors (see also Vannini 2006) understand authenticity and inauthenticity as emotional experiences which also allow them to say something about how we detect authenticity or inauthenticity in our lives.

In general, authenticity refers to the condition or quality of realness. When we say that something is authentic, we mean that we find it genuine, the real thing, and not false, counterfeit, or an imitation. When this assessment is applied to ourselves (i.e., "self-authenticity"), it also refers to matters of realness or falseness. In the self-referential case, the indicator of realness or authenticity is the degree of congruence between one's actions and one's core self-conceptions—consisting of fundamental values, beliefs, and identities to which one is committed and in terms of which one defines oneself. When actions are congruent with core self-conceptions, one's self is affirmed and one experiences authenticated; when one's actions do not reflect or

affirm one's core self, one feels inauthentic. This is not to deny that people do not rationalize self-incongruent behaviors or find ways of accounting for such conduct. Rather, our claim is intended to suggest that when actions are defined to be congruent with one's values one will feel affirmed and thus authentic. In sum, authenticity refers to "living by laws of [one's] own being" (Berman, 1970:xvi) These "laws" consist of core values and beliefs about self—as defined and experienced by the self, regardless of its objective conditions.

(Vannini & Burges 2009, p. 104)

Some parts of the interviews I made with the high school students and the middle-aged woman seemed to resonate with this formulation. For instance, a participant brought up a case where she had to, in order to be true to herself, stand up against the practices of her working community, because these practices were both illegal and unethical. She felt she had to do something, which she did, and succeeded in changing the practices, but it cost her the job. Regardless, she was content with what she did, because she had been true to her values. Another participant brought up an incident where she had not stood up in a situation, where she felt she had not been treated right in her work place as a case where she was not true to herself. However, the reasons for why she did not stand up were not just about external pressure. She also believed it was a minor thing and that it was right not to make a fuss out of this kind of minor things. Hence, there was an internal value conflict, and she was not just giving in to external pressure.

Indeed, much of the empirical data I gathered could be explained by leaning on literature like Vannini and Burges. Values and fundamental beliefs do stand out from the data as topics around and with which people think about their authenticity. However, there were also things that did not fit the idea that authenticity would be about being true to one's core values and beliefs. There was pondering on whether it is possible to know who one is. What if I do not know at this point who I am and what I want to be? There was an insight that in different situations we are different, different things are important for us and we can show different sides of ourselves. There was an insight that sometimes it is good to re-think one's values and choices, try different ideas, explore what you want to be. In order to do that, sometimes it's good to be intentionally untrue to yourself. In addition, there was a palpable difficulty to grasp and get a grip of what it means to be true to oneself.

This difficulty touched me and spoke to me much more than the well-formulated sentences in the empirical literature on authenticity. In addition, my own experiences with the question of authenticity did not seem to match with the explanations of authenticity as being true to one's core values and beliefs.

To clarify the discrepancy, let us assume, for the sake of an argument, that I can readily identify some of my core values and beliefs²⁷. There are indeed some values that have sustained me throughout my life, at least as far back as I remember, which I feel remain crucial for me. For instance, I believe that each living being has an inherent dignity and value and that one should struggle to make the world a good place for everyone, one should strive for institutional structures that embrace diversity and equality and that those who are better off should take more responsibility for this process. Then, according to Vannini and Burges, I should feel inauthentic when I fail to act according to these values.

I fail all the time. I violate my values every day. I eat meat even though I believe it violates the dignity of the animals. I spend money on vanities even though I could donate to children's vaccination programs and make their lives better that way. I spend my evenings in the car driving around and taking my children to their hobbies, even though I could give free gymnastics training for instance in the local primary school or parish. Hence, instead of strengthening equality producing societal structures I participate in structures that strengthen the gap between the rich and the poor and are harmful to the environment. I am not living in accordance with my core values.

However, these transgressions of my own values do not trigger a feeling of

27. Vannini makes a distinction between authenticity as a metaphysical notion of being one's true self and a psychological feeling of being true to oneself and says that "feeling true to oneself has nothing to do with the existence of an absolute and universal "true self." (Vannini 2006, 237) Hence, even though core values and beliefs are mentioned, if there has been no shift in his thinking, no true self is implicated here either. However, it remains unclear what makes a certain belief a core belief. Vannini claims that his social psychological approach does not rely on metaphysics or ideology but rather, on pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, looking at human beings primarily as meaning seeking beings. I agree with him in that the feeling of being true to oneself does not imply the existence of true self. However, I believe our core beliefs are deeper level ontological (metaphysical) beliefs that affect how we make sense and find meaning and hence, metaphysics is inescapable. In addition, no framework of research is free from metaphysics, that is, the fundamental assumptions of what exists. Therefore, I believe we cannot understand meaning seeking processes without interrogating these ontological levels.

inauthenticity in me. They make me feel guilty and frustrated, but they do not raise the question of authenticity or the feeling of being inauthentic. Likewise, in situations where I act according to my values, I do not feel authentic. Most of the time I do not even realize it, and I just happily live on. When I help someone in need, or I am nice to my family, or buy fair trade bananas, I either pay no attention or, when I choose the more ethical option, I am satisfied afterwards. But in my experience, these feelings have nothing to do with authenticity.

Vannini and Burges (2009, 108) also claim that engaging in actions that go against one's core beliefs and values is inauthenticating. Could it be true for me, that for instance letting my children take part in hobbies that require massive amounts of commuting makes me less authentic, less true to myself? Even though I try hard, I cannot think or feel inauthentic. Driving for the sake of hobbies is a fiber in the fabric of my life, and also that of my family and the world around us, and living in this fabric means balancing, molding, interpreting my beliefs and values, trying to make the whole of my life good enough. I am aware that this is not the best possible world, and that I could do better, but I do not feel that engaging in these actions is inauthenticating.

How about my encounter with the Authenticity Scale, could that be inauthenticating? I believe that quantifying and measuring authenticity is harmful. Do I feel less true to myself after having engaged with it and, having given space for it in my own investigation? I feel sick about the idea of being analyzed with the scale. I believe such an analysis would be an unfair and demeaning activity. But I cannot imagine becoming less authentic by trying out the scale for the sake of investigating it. However, I can imagine a connection with authenticity, if forced or if my imagination permits. Thus, I agree with Vannini and Burges that authenticity is connected to emotions; a feeling of being untrue to oneself can give us important clues into self and authenticity. Yet, to understand authenticity, we must go deeper.

At this juncture a summary retrospective is in order to shed light on what it means to delve deeper into authenticity. In my experience, quantitative measures and many qualitative approaches to authenticity operate on a level that is too superficial to make much sense about authenticity. Values and beliefs are inexorably linked to the concept of authenticity, but the processes around them are not as simple as for instance the literature discussed here suggests. For me the question of

authenticity did not arise when I was “living by laws of my [own] being” but rather, when my own rules did not work²⁸. It is possible to govern oneself according to one’s own rules without asking oneself what is the origin of the set of rules or if these are the rules I should have. Likewise, authenticity is a deeper phenomenon and requires interrogating one’s own rules. I believe the question of authenticity comes up when there is a crack, an unexpected opening, a tickling feeling that there is something important to be found, an urgent call or a panic laden feeling that there is something *I need to* find out, something that is intriguing and possibly dangerous. Such an instance, might not allow me to follow my own rules but rather, pulls me to transgress them.

Many empirical studies on personal authenticity make at least a brief reference to existential philosophy, especially to Heidegger and Sartre. Neither Heidegger nor Sartre, however, advocate a view of human existence as having a certain true or core self. On the contrary, they explicitly deny that authenticity would mean being in correspondence to a pertaining self. Jean-Paul Sartre uses the term ‘Authenticité’, as an opposite to ‘mauvaise foi’ (bad faith), which is an attempt to coincide with our egos, and to escape from our human condition, that is, freedom and responsibility, to create ourselves through our choices (Flynn 2013). Heidegger maintains that authenticity and inauthenticity are both inescapable modes of being and selfhood is to be understood as a way of existing, not as an entity present-at-hand (e.g. Heidegger 1962, 312). In the following I will take a look at Heidegger’s notions of authenticity and start to get closer to my own understanding of authenticity.

4.4. Authenticity without true self

In his early masterpiece *Sein und Zeit* (1927) Heidegger discusses authenticity as a mode of being of *Dasein*, being-there. *Dasein* is, as Schalow and Denker put it, “the formal indication of the entity that is ontologically distinguished from all other entities by the fact that, in its very existence, the challenge and meaning

28. I consider “Living by laws of my own being” is better understood as well-grounded autonomy, that is, self-governance according to one’s own rules.

of existing is an issue for it. Being-there is a way of being of human beings, which harbors the possibility of raising the question of being.” (2010, 67)

What does it mean then that authenticity²⁹ is a mode of being for Dasein? Heidegger distinguishes three modes of being for Dasein: undifferentiatedness, inauthenticity and authenticity³⁰. Most of the time Dasein is not authentic: it is fallen, and lost into the ‘they’ [*das Man*], the average everydayness of anyone. This everyday they-self, is to be distinguished from the authentic self, “*the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way [eigenssergriffen]*” (1962, p. 167 italics original)³¹. When we are fallen into the ‘they’, we are fascinated about the world and absorbed in the world, doing things that everybody does. In falling and losing oneself to the publicness and the idle talk of the ‘they’, Dasein fails to listen to its own self. (Heidegger 1962, e.g., pp. 167, 315)

Authenticity and inauthenticity are disclosed as an option for Dasein in anxiety. Heidegger writes:

Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being -that is, its *Being-free* for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. ... In anxiety there lies the possibility of a disclosure which is quite distinctive; for anxiety individualizes. This individualization brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its being.

(1962, pp. 232, 235 italics original)

29. Instead of the word ‘Authentizität’, Heidegger uses the term ‘Eigentlichkeit’. Eigentlich as an adjective means ‘actual’, ‘real’, ‘true’, ‘original’, and as an adverb, ‘actually’ and eigen means for instance ‘proper’, ‘own’, ‘peculiar’ and ‘private’. Eigentlichkeit is Heidegger’s own derivative noun. Eigentlichkeit could be translated also as ‘ownedness’.

30. Often only inauthenticity and authenticity is mentioned when referring to Heidegger with regard authenticity. However, as Carman (2007, 285–297) points out, Heidegger actually seems to present two kinds of structures: two dimensional (authenticity-inauthenticity) and three dimensional (undifferentiatedness, authenticity, inauthenticity). According to Carman, the latter structure is value-laden and the former is not. These two structures get fused in Heidegger’s text and therefore the text lends itself for both evaluative and non-evaluative interpretations. The three-dimensional structure fits better to my experience and thus, I will build on that.

31. I use the MacQuerrie and Robinson translation of the original text. They capitalize terms such as Being and Self out of loyalty to the special meanings of the terms for Heidegger. However, recently the translation and scholarship on Heidegger has abandoned the convention of capitalizing these terms. Hence, in paraphrasing I use lower case.

The average everydayness in the 'they' Heidegger describes as a tranquillized self-assurance, 'being-at-home' in publicness. In contrast, in anxiety one feels uncanny, everyday familiarity collapses and one enters into the existential mode of the 'not-at-home'. (Heidegger 1962, 233–234) Hence, only after having become face to face with these two possibilities, inauthenticity and authenticity, one can choose authenticity.

What is authenticity then? Heidegger describes authentic mode of being as "anticipatory resoluteness" [*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*]. Anticipating, or fore-running, means anticipating death. Heidegger writes: "Death is Dasein's ownmost possibility. Being towards this possibility discloses to Dasein its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, in which its very Being is the issue". (1962, p. 307). Death here is understood in an existential sense, referring to inherent instability of the world and my identity. For Heidegger, Dasein is dying as long as it exists. Fore-running into death means then embracing a fragile and particular set of possibilities, even if they tend to dissolve in their own inertia. (Carman 2007, 291)

Heidegger describes resoluteness as "letting oneself be called forth to one's ownmost *Being-guilty*" (1962, p. 353). This being-guilty does not mean being guilty for a certain deed, but rather, recognition that one is the ground of one's own becoming, that whatever I am, it is because of me. 'Entschlossenheit' means decisiveness, but it also means literally disclosing, remaining open. (Carman 2007, p. 291) Hence, anticipatory resoluteness can be understood as openness for possibly fragile, open-ended future possibilities, which are disclosed in anxiety and in the awareness of death and as taking the responsibility to hold fast to my first-person understanding of the emerging possibilities and happenings instead of relying (merely) to generic explanations.

Authentic existence is not, however, "nothing which hovers over entangled everydayness but is existentially only a modified grasp of everydayness" (Heidegger 1996, p. 167). Neither are the 'they-self' and the 'authentic one's-self' clear cut and immutable but rather in constant organic contact with each other. After becoming aware of its fallenness and in bringing itself back from there, "the they-self is modified in an existentiell manner so that it becomes authentic Being-one's-Self" (Heidegger 1962, p. 313).

I am greatly indebted to Heidegger's account of authenticity. As mentioned

earlier, it was Heidegger who suggested the link between experiences of not-being-at-home and authenticity and made me name my question 'authenticity'. In many places his texts resonated strongly to my experiences. For instance, the central role of anxiety and disclosure are crucial also for my understanding of authenticity. In addition, I follow Heidegger in thinking that our being is always being-there and being-with, that is, we cannot break away from the world or other people.

Heidegger's insight that our being is fundamentally tied to the place which we inhabit in each moment, which includes the world and the others and also the road there, that is, the history of how we got there, became tangible for me in my investigation. For those who view human existence in atomistic and individualistic terms, there is a temptation to interpret Heidegger's authenticity emphasizing the Dasein's possibility to detach from the 'they-self'³². For me the more enticing interpretation is to emphasize our embeddedness in the world and others and to trouble and interrogate the need to detach and stand out from others, because even if authenticity involves negotiations with others, these negotiations take place in the world and with others. As I come to express this, our authenticity becomes fabric-ated within the fabric of the world and the fabric of others, who bind me with their threads.

Heidegger's notions of undifferentiatedness, inauthenticity and authenticity gave me a tool to organize my experience in a way that made sense. However, in my experience these concepts clarify in a slightly different way, peculiar to my experience. Like Heidegger, I believe that it is in a disclosure where we become aware of authentic and inauthentic possibilities of existence. We can end up in inauthenticity, listen to the voices of everyday, average 'they-self', try to escape the call of a primordial voice that originates somewhere deeper, beyond the 'they'. Or we can recognize and become attuned to a different kind of listening, where something emerging, emergence of my own being is called for, allowing the touch of the call and following it.

However, what we choose when we follow the call is nothing more than willingness to listen to the emerging voice. I am reluctant to say it is my authentic

32. This is, according to Guignon (2006, p. 268), the way Heidegger was interpreted in existential psychology, due to the influence of the more accessible existentialists such as Sartre, de Beauvoir and Camus.

self that I choose there, because when I choose to listen, I don't know what is to come, and when I have listened, I notice that I have done the listening in the midst of others, with the help of their binding, weighting and squeezing, with the different voices in my world. Hence, I am inclined to say that authenticity is nothing but openness to the emerging forms of being and willingness to listen to voices beyond the 'they', the average everydayness of our being. Inauthenticity then would be staying with the 'they-self', reluctance to open oneself to new possibilities of becoming.

What then is undifferentiatedness? I believe it is mode of being where the questions of our being are sleeping. It is tranquility in ignorance. It is a different kind of tranquility than what Heidegger calls tranquility in inauthentic being. Tranquility in inauthentic being is pursued through 'hustle', through engaging in idle talk. It is alienating tranquility. (Heidegger 1967, p. 222) I believe this kind of tranquilizing never really reaches tranquility and thus, should not be called being-at-home. Rather, it is an attempt to feel at home in a place that has become a no-home. Tranquility in undifferentiatedness is different. It is innocent being-at-home in undifferentiatedness. Innocent dwelling in average everydayness, because the question of authenticity is sleeping, it has not cried out its call yet.

This helps us to elaborate the notion of being-at-home. I believe there are two kinds of modes of being-at-home and one, which Heidegger calls being-at-home, but which I would rather call 'trying-to-be-at-home-in-no-home'. First, there is an undifferentiated being-at-home, as described above. An inkling of another kind of being-at-home takes place when we hear the call of being echoing through a rupture, a crack in our being. This call holds a promise of a tranquility of new kind, a differentiated tranquility. However, this promise is revealed with violence and tact. It never comes alone, but always together and along with the opposite possibility, alienating escape in the 'they-self', a false promise of being-at-home in the everyday hustling. The tranquil differentiated being-at-home is achieved after one has given in to the touch of the question, explored it and found a way to a new home, where "the they-self is modified in an existentiell manner so that it becomes authentic Being-one's-Self" (Heidegger 1962, p. 313). That means, one comes again to be at home in the midst of others, in that particular place where one is.

How about value-ladenness and normativity of authenticity, if authenticity

is conceived this way? I believe in general it is good to be receptive to the call and open up oneself to new possibilities of becoming. However, the 'general' never really takes place in our lives. We are always in a certain place, in a certain situation. Sometimes we have a chance to say yes and delve into self-exploration, listen to the emerging possibilities. Other times it may be good to try to find tranquility in hustling. I will come back to the question of normativity later. For now, I leave this topic with a remark that I believe it is rather a strength than a weakness that Heidegger's notion of authenticity can be interpreted both as value-laden and not value-laden³³.

Where I also depart from Heidegger is the relation between anxiety and authenticity. Contrary to Heidegger, I believe anxiety itself does not disclose anything, but rather, it forces us to allow the touch of the question and give in to Eros, which creates growth through bursting out of the disclosure, or the crack in my being, as I call it.

In addition, even though Heidegger has given me valuable tools to make sense of my experience by describing the structure of different modes of being, he does not really delve into describing what happens in the momentum of disclosure. He does not open up what happens there, in the eye of the disclosure, and how is it that we find our way back. That way, the role of touch, love and imagination are left concealed in his approach. This is what I aim to do in the following: to describe the disclosure of authenticity and the conditions that made it possible. Having done this, I remain doubtful of how much and what we are really free to choose when the question of authenticity takes a hold of us. And yet, choose we must.

33. The connection between authenticity and morality in Heidegger has been interpreted in various ways and the discussion continues in Heidegger scholarship. For a deeper discussion see e.g. Wrathall (2014).

5. BROTHER CHRONICLES

2017

I'm thinking of going to Brother's grave. I have been there before. Often. Or not that often. But almost every year. At Christmas. It doesn't feel much of anything. There are stones. Mom speaks something. Now I'm going there for the first time out of my own will. Alone. I would like to go with Friend but I go alone.

I walk slowly towards the grave. It is underneath a birch. My grandma is also there, beneath the ground. Sunlight filters through the leaves of the trees. Little red stones on the lane are engorged tightly next to each other. I walk slowly, careful not to step on shadows. I come to the grave. There is a small bird engraved on the gravestone. My little brother from the world of angels. I stand still. What should I feel? I have been working on my past and on my feelings. I have tried to face the fear, loss, sorrow, love. I'm standing here and it feels nothing.

• • • • •

It didn't really go like that. I didn't go to the grave alone. I don't want to go there alone. I want to go with Friend. I want to drink a bottle of wine, go there with him and then make love with him.

2013

I can't help it. I start trembling. A cry bursts out, then tears. I gasp for breath. I want to throw up. I gasp, cry and tremble. I go to a corner of the room and cradle myself. My partner comes to me. "What happened? What's wrong?" He asks. "I don't know." I answer.

2017

I awake on the floor in a fetal position wet with tears and sweat. I want to call Friend but can't find the phone. Good, I couldn't speak anyway. I remember having crawled from the bed to the floor because it is cooler and doesn't sink. I get up and drag myself back to bed.

1984

Mom looks beautiful with her big belly. One night dad takes her to the hospital. I'm afraid. Mom was to go in the daytime, it was to be a planned section. Later dad takes me and sister to the hospital to see the baby. It is a boy. I think he has a weirdly small butt.

• • • • •

Mom walks at nights with Brother. Brother cries and wrings his head backwards. His butt is still too small, but I'm getting used to it. Mom wrings his head forwards and cradles him. Brother is a boy and he gets a fine red truck from his godfather as a baptism gift.

• • • • •

I'm sitting in a car with my sister. We are listening to music. In the cover of the cassette there are black people. I love this music. It's a hot weather. We are on a trip in Kuopio. I'm wearing leather shoes with two kinds of leather, light brown and dark brown. The shoes

are beautiful and I wear them even though they make my feet stink.

Brother is on the trip too, kind of. He is in the hospital. The hospital smells weird. The doctor is grave. Brother has been examined. He is blind. Dad is sitting in a chair and crying.

Later we find out that Brother can see but almost everything else is wrong.

2017

I have been feeling uneasy for a long time. I don't know why. As if I had an invisible corset on me. For some reason I want to call Friend. We agree to meet.

"I just wanted to thank you for being there then. It was important for me. Somehow that period of life has started to bother me."

I don't remember very well so I ask him to tell me. He tells me that sometimes I went to his place. Sometimes I stayed overnight. But for the most part he didn't know what I was doing and where. Sometimes mom called him and asked if he had seen me or my sister. I am puzzled. I thought I was there often. Otherwise I was in my trainings or piano lessons. And I didn't know that mom had been asking after me.

"Why didn't we ever go together?" I ask. "I have always loved you."

He looks at me surprised and a bit amused. "I don't know." He says. "Perhaps there was never an opportunity."

"We were a bit restless together?"

"Yes..."

"Do you ever miss that time? And the restlessness?"

"Yes, I do."

Talking about old times feels good. A warm feeling overwhelms me.

At home the uneasy feeling gains new aspects. Why is it that I don't remember? What has happened? Where have I been? I run in my mind through the forest to Friend's place. He hugs me and I'm safe. I dig up the letters we wrote back then, more than twenty years ago.

"Why didn't you tell me I was acting weird?" I ask him later.

"Well, I thought you had your own problems and so did the rest of us."

"But you were worried about me."

"Yes, we were."

The thought of them being worried about me makes me cry. I try to recall things that were going on then. Matriculations, piano examinations, European championships. I survived them. I remember having read a lot of novels. I remember Brother crying night and day, mom going between kitchen and bedroom her steps fierce and worried. I remember having visited the hospital between the exams. I remember places, events, moments, but fail to glue them together.

Suddenly the memories flow over me and the feelings burst out like a storm. To save myself from drowning I start to write a letter to Friend.

• • • • •

My past is interfering with my research. Damn that I can't define the topic. Well, in qualitative research and philosophy researchers' backgrounds travel along and the topics evolve. I try to take it easy.

"Perhaps you could write about it." My supervisor says.

"No... I don't think so." I mumble. I don't want to. My past has stolen too much time of my life already.

And then I burst again. The text is flooding out of me. I write and throw away, write and throw away. I don't want to write. There is no story. I try to think about

what to write but can't think of anything. There is nothing interesting to write about, and I can't write. I have nothing but this one story that I cannot write. There is too much. Too much of life, death and love. Too much of me and others. Too much of bursting, flooding, blushing, disobedient text.

• • • • •

Well, perhaps I could write down some moments, I think. Perhaps I could tell how I used to do gymnastics with Brother. He had a roll on which he could sit in a way that it was possible to stretch his petrified limbs. I would place the mirror so that I saw his face. I did the same movements than the physiotherapist but in a different way. In between I hugged and kissed him. Sometimes I stretched too long and he cried. Then I eased up and waited. Then we went on. We were resilient and proud of ourselves.

Or perhaps I could tell that he liked to have sauna. I took him to the uppermost bench. Mom couldn't, because he was heavy and slippery. I could, because I was an athlete and strong. When going down one had to be careful. He was slippery like a fish. But I wouldn't ask for help. In the shower I had a chair. I leaned one foot on the bathtub and leaned back so that his weight came on my body and I was able to open the shower with the hand that was left free. He would look at me when I showered him.

Now my own daughter weights as much as he used to in the end. I think about him when I carry her to her own bed after she has fallen asleep. Her muscles and joints are strong and flexible and more difficult to carry when relaxed as opposed to my Brother, with petrified limbs and little flesh. A surge of love flows over me. My child can run, play, eat, drink, laugh. When she cries her eyes fill with tears. I stay with her for a long time, just looking at her beautiful little figure.

Perhaps I could also tell how I would climb into his bed to read. He would listen even though I didn't read aloud. He would listen to my presence, my breath, my skin on his. Sometimes I fell asleep and when I woke up, he was still listening.

Perhaps I could tell how I sometimes took him in my bed to sleep overnight so that mom could sleep. I placed him on the wall side so that he would not fall down. I guess he wouldn't have because he couldn't move himself. But just to make sure, in case there had been an epileptic convulsion at night. That was before the machines came. The older he got, the more machines we had to keep him alive. One for bathing, one for eating and four for breathing.

1990's

"Could you stay awhile with Brother, I'll be back soon!" Mom leaves to supermarket. After a while Brother starts to cry. His body twists, the arms stiffen to the left side of the body and the head to the right. Normally I go to him, put his arms in the middle, put one arm behind his neck and the other one under his knees. His body gives in and I can take him on my lap, where I hold him until he stops crying. This time I don't do it. I stop at the door. I look at him and then turn around. I go to my own room. I feel I'm going to throw up. I tremble. A cry bursts out of me. I'm gasping for breath. I feel my guts are coming out of my mouth. After a while I curl up in a corner and put my hands on my ears.

Mom comes back. "What has happened?" She is upset and goes to take care of Brother. After a while he stops crying. "What happened?" She asks again. "Nothing." I answer.

2017

Children are playing with our old toys in mom's living room. The red truck has been lifted on the floor, but no-one is playing with it. "Look, isn't it gorgeous." I say. The kids take a glance and go on with their play. "Look, here reads 'Brother'" I try again. The kids look again, but only the smallest one stays while thinking about the truck. "Did Brother play with it?" he asks. He doesn't remember yet that Brother didn't play. "No, he didn't". "Why?" "He couldn't." "What could he then?" he goes on starting to get interested.

"Brother could swallow his food, smile, cry, look and listen. And piss." "How about poo?" He asks laughing. "Mom helped him." I answer. Before my child has time to

ask more, mom comes in. “Brother was a gift from God. He was an angel. He was perfectly good, there was no fault in him, he never did anything bad.” She says. “Yes...” I say and go to my old room.

An angel who stole my youth, I think. An angel who haunts me after fifteen years of his death.

2002

Oh my God, I think. I haven't been at the hospital. I'm terrified to realize I haven't remembered to go to hospital. For how long has he been there? Two weeks? Two weeks and I haven't been there? How is it possible? Is someone there? Who is there? How is he?

I wake up and look around. I'm here. He is dead. It was just a dream. I sigh relieved and stay in my bed until I feel easy again.

2017

“Why didn't you... want to be with me?” I ask Friend.

“You were never there, never available!” He exclaims. “Not mentally nor physically.”

“Oh...” I answer slowly. “Perhaps I wasn't...” How come I haven't thought about this before? Was that so? Perhaps, but the thought is yet too young to be able to be known. “... and neither were you.” I say. “But still, you were there for me.” The thought still makes me cry. “And you are here now.” Being here with him feels so natural and so weird. “Will you stay?” I ask and search for his hand, suddenly afraid of something.

“I'm here. I'm not going anywhere.” He says and squeezes my hand.

• • • • •

“No one remembers everything. I don’t remember everything that happened.”
Friend says when I’m worried that I don’t remember.

“But it doesn’t bother you. It doesn’t make a hole in your life. I know it’s impossible to remember everything. There are many other things I don’t remember but they don’t bother me. This bothers.”

“Fitzgerald has a fine novel, where the protagonist walks on the street with a ten-year old hole.”

“Oh, what do they do?”

“I don’t remember.” We smile at the idea though.

“Well, perhaps I don’t have big holes in my life.” He goes on. “And I have tried not to make a story of my life. But I have points where there are too many memories. Points where the memories don’t fit into the stream of life.”

“I think this hole is becoming such a flood point. I don’t know which things fell from the hole and as I am fishing now, I get also things that didn’t fall.”

“Perhaps you can choose a bit what to pick?”

“I wish I could. Well, I can. I prefer to dwell in this love thing. But I know the more difficult things are lurking there, hungry to get out.”

• • • • •

“Mom, why did that man have a hole in his throat?”

“Which man?” We are walking on the street with my daughter.

“The one that just passed us. He had a hole here.” She is pointing to her throat, below the Adam’s apple.

“Ah, perhaps he had a tracheotomy. Brother had that too, because he didn’t get enough oxygen.”

“How was it done?”

“I don’t know.”

“How could he then eat?”

“They put a tube from his nose straight to his stomach and we gave him liquid through that. Brother was already so ill that he couldn’t have eaten anyway.”

“Did he get his stomach full then?”

“Yes he did. The liquid contained all the nutrients a human being needs.”

“Is it possible to talk with that kind of hole in throat?”

“I don’t think so. But Brother didn’t talk anyway.”

“Did you ever try to teach him?”

“Not really. Imagine trying to teach a small baby to talk. He has no readiness to learn that. So it was also with Brother.”

“But did he go to school?”

“Yes he did.”

“What did they teach there? Were there other pupils? Were they like Brother?”

“There were others. Everyone was unique and different. But everyone had special needs. I don’t think anyone was able to speak. But some may have learned to use some signs.”

“What are they?”

“Signs that you show with your hand and body in order to communicate. This for instance means ‘pee’ and this means ‘out’. I show her some signs we were using at some point with Brother.

“Were the kids separated in different groups so that in one group there were kids that could do something and in the other those couldn’t do that much?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think so.”

“Did he always sit in a wheelchair? Did they all have their own wheelchairs?”

“I believe all of them had their own chairs. It was not really a wheelchair but a special chair made for him.”

“Who did it? Was it expensive?”

“We got it from the health center. We didn’t have to pay.”

“What?! Did you get it for free?!”

“Yes. But we had to give it back when he died.”

“Did you ever go to swimming hall with Brother?”

“I don’t think we did. But sometimes he had physiotherapy in a pool. And he had a bathtub at home. We got that also for free.”

“How did he bath in it?”

“One of us took him in the lap and held him so that no water entered his ears. He liked bathing.”

“How did he become like that, disabled?”

“We don’t know.”

“Did you try to find out?”

“Yes. He was examined at the hospital but no cause was found. Sometimes the doctors find the cause of a handicap and sometimes they don’t. In Brother’s case they didn’t.”

Child’s mind wanders back to the hole in the throat.

“Did they put the throat together when we got better?”

“He didn’t get better anymore.” My mind roams into the hospital and tears start making their way into my eyes. I try not to burst. “I don’t remember if he had it before that. Perhaps grandma remembers. Ask her.” My child stops asking.

I think but I’m not sure. How does it happen, I start to wonder. I search in the web. No, it was not a tracheotomy after all. He just had a tube in his throat, from mouth to the lungs, to keep the pharynx open. And an oxygen machine that was pushing oxygen to the lungs.

• • • • •

I stand naked in front of the mirror wondering how my life would be if I had a disabled child. Would I look even older? Even more tired? Would I be standing here looking at myself in the mirror? I wonder how my life would have been if mom and dad hadn't demanded medication then. Brother was in the hospital. The doctor had decided to give up medication because it was unprofitable. "He wouldn't live long anyway." I remember he said. Mom and dad protested. The medication was continued. Brother lived ten years after that. There were more periods in the hospital, many of them. A lot of machines and nurses at home paid by the society. It must have cost tens of thousands, perhaps even hundreds of thousands of euros. And then he died. The doctor was right, it was unprofitable. He didn't pay a single euro back.

•••••

"Do you remember how we used to talk about books?" I'm having a coffee with Friend.

"Yes I do."

"We read Henry Miller. I liked the atmosphere, the floating restlessness."

Friend laughs merrily. "People lost with themselves, trying to find their way out."

"Yes... But Miller has also a little book about two clowns. The one is really famous and successful and the other one admires him. The famous clown wants to help his friend reach his dreams and become famous. But in his aspiration to help, he ends up doing things for him. His friend gets fame, but he cannot be proud of himself, because the fame didn't come out of his own doings. So, instead of being proud and happy, he feels even more inferior."

"Hmmm." Friend seems to think about something.

"What have you been reading lately?" I continue.

"Haruki Murakami" He says enthusiastically. "He has interesting stories that play with the idea of different worlds and realities."

• • • • •

“I didn’t feel anything, but I was hoping that someone would console me.” Says the girl dressed in pink in Murakami’s novel when asked how she felt when she found out that her parents will never come back from the car ride.

My mind goes back to a conversation with my aunt. She asked how I feel that my parents are divorcing, Brother is crying all the time and sister is in the hospital. “Nothing.” I answered. It was true, I didn’t feel anything.

I am proceeding slowly with Murakami. I have also started to read psychological literature, to find a diagnosis for myself. I wonder if Murakami is as crazy as I am. Yes, he must be. Perhaps even more crazy.

• • • • •

“I’m sorry! That didn’t cross my mind.” Friend exclaims when I tell him that my experience with Murakami came a bit too close.

“No no, no need to be sorry, it was good, it helped me to go on. I have also been reading psychology. I think dissociative amnesia resonates quite well to my experiences.”

“Amnesia I understand and it makes sense, you really don’t seem to remember, but what does dissociative mean?”

“Well, it can take different forms, but in my case I believe that I have dissociated feelings from incidents during that period when there was too much going on. I guess I was just saving energy. I can remember things, but they feel somehow scattered and it’s difficult to remember in which order they took place. I can also get a grip of some feelings, but the feelings and incidents are not connected. For instance, I remember having been at the hospital, but when I think about it I feel nothing. When I feel something and I know it has to do with that time, I can’t associate the feeling with any concrete happening. But I remember having felt safe

with you.”

“Interesting” he says, thoughtful. “We didn’t spent so much time together though.”

“I thought we did.”

• • • • •

I’m thinking of going to therapy. Should get my head in order. Associate feelings with incidents, get things in order and construct a story with which I can live. I tell my story to a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a therapist. I tell and cry and cry and tell, until the whole thing starts to feel stupid. The whole system starts to feel stupid. If this is the way to make people normal I know already I don’t want to. I don’t want to be that kind of normal. I want to keep all my worlds. But I don’t want cry this much.

• • • • •

“Were you afraid that your child will be a special needs child?” I’m watching my sister change a diaper for her baby.

“No, not really. Were you?” she asks.

“Yes, I was scared as hell. Well, not that much. But sometimes pretty much. How come you were not afraid?”

“I don’t know.”

“I wanted to have five children but couldn’t bear that fear anymore.”

“Is that the reason you didn’t have more children?”

“No, not really. I was too tired anyway. Why is it that I’m so tired all the time?”

“Well, you are doing a lot of things. You go to work, take care of a family with three kids, do your research and writing on your free time. That is quite a lot.”

“I feel feeble.”

“Weed out something.”

“I already eliminated the therapy.”

“Do you think that was a good idea?”

“Yes I do.”

• • • • •

“I didn’t go to therapy”

“Oh, why not?” Friend is surprised. “It sounded like a good idea.”

“I don’t want to be part of that system. Do you know how it works? In order to get therapy you need to have a diagnosis, for which you need a psychiatrist. I met the psychiatrist twice. In the first meeting we discussed a bit, she had also read the papers that the psychologist wrote, whom I had met three times. Then she asked me to do the tests. I looked at the papers for a while and told her I don’t want to fill these because if I do, you’ll give me a mania diagnosis. She said that just do it, that she won’t do the diagnosis just based on the papers. I filled the papers and then we discussed things. She said that indeed, papers indicate mania. I told her that I believe the reason for high mania points is that the process of trying to find out what was forgotten aroused suppressed and dissociated feelings and thoughts. They involved feelings of love towards my Friend. Love makes people manic. Perhaps those feelings were dissociated feelings that came out now, or perhaps it was some kind of erotic transference, a way to get in touch with the difficult feelings that were hard to face, who knows.”

“Did you really say so?”

“Yes I did. She thought about it for a while and then said she won’t give me a mania diagnosis because I seem to be so well aware of my own condition. After having left the office I went to the toilet and cried for a long time. I felt madness had passed me only an inch away. What if I had gone there without finding things out first?”

“Perhaps you would have gotten help for those things that were in your mind then?”

“...Perhaps...”

• • • • •

My partner read the draft. He believes I want to be with Friend. “It’s fiction.” I tell him. “It didn’t really go like that.” How could I explain to him it is not possible to be with Friend, perhaps it never was. And that fiction is more beautiful than reality. But that reality is also beautiful, because Friend is so good. And perhaps he is so good because he never existed. Partner doesn’t want a partner who exists only partly for him. He wants a real person, fully for him. I don’t know if such persons exist. I’m am not so stationary. I’m dispersed in the world. I am in Brother’s grave, in my children’s needs, in my partner’s wishes. There where I was and where I was not, in the depths of my own subconscious. Everyone gets only a small part of me. I get only a small part of myself.

When I read the draft again I realize that most of it is true. I lied again. I’m deceiving everyone, including myself. I was not what I promised to be.

• • • • •

“But things didn’t end up badly, did they?” Friend asks when I’m bitter about my past. “We got a wonderful world, or worlds.” When I think about what I got the tears burst out of my eyes.

“What did I get? An un-lived youth. A lost love. Eternal longing.”

“How can you say so? Look at your life. You have a partner that you love, wonderful kids and a job that you like. And we had a good youth. We did things, had friends, had fun.”

“Yes, but I’ll never find out how things would have been if they had been otherwise.”

“Of course you don’t. We never find out everything. When we think we have found

something we lost, the world has already changed. We always long for something. And when we get what we longed for, we notice that it wasn't what we thought it would be. Most of our lives happens inside our own heads."

"But will you stay in my life?"

"You know I will."

• • • • •

I'm lying in bed. I imagine myself in the hospital main door. I don't want to go in. I put my hand on my left cheek and imagine Friend on my side. I hold his hand and we go inside. We walk to the intensive care unit. I press myself closer to him. A nurse lets us into the room. It's dim inside. Machines are beeping. Brother is lying in the bed almost naked. He is being rubbed with alcohol in order to get the fever down. They have already fed him the maximum amount of medicine. I reach out to touch him, but the nurse stops me by saying that often patients in the intensive care unit say that touching feels bad, because their body is under such stress and so sensitive. I pull my hand back. I look at my Brother and the silent pain in his face and body. Then we leave the room. Outside I bury my face in Friends chest. He holds me and I cry.

When I open my eyes I'm exhausted. I do the same exercise the next day and the following. Many times. I change my hand to the right cheek. It feels more difficult but I can do it. I change Friend to my partner and do it with him. Slowly I'm getting less and less tired.

• • • • •

"I've been doing exercises. I try to connect feelings to incidents. I feel that involving my body by touching my cheek during the exercise helps. When I place my hand on my left cheek it's easier to go to the hospital in my mind. I wonder why it is so."

"Perhaps it has something to do with brain lobes." Friend suggests.

“Perhaps. Or perhaps I’ve been having milk more from the right breast when I was baby.”

We burst into jovial laughter.

“Does it matter if it helps you to go on?”

“No. Not many things matter anyway.”

“You matter.” He looks at me and squeezes my hand.

I put his hand on my left cheek and lean on it for a long time.

• • • • •

I’m in the summer cabin. The whole family is there. I go to the kitchen to get breakfast. Suddenly I feel someone behind my back. I feel arms around me. They belong to Friend. “It’s me, your boyfriend.” he whispers. I take his hands off. “You shouldn’t be here”. I say. I go to the dining room. He follows. I wonder if anyone else sees him. I expect not. I’m right. He sits on the bench, purposively so that others fell on the floor. Then he evaporates.

My sister runs to the tractor on the yard. I run after her. I see that Friend is sitting in the trailer. She takes the wheel and starts driving. Then she jumps away and Friend takes her seat. I run past the tractor. I see a fox lying on the ground. “Come. fight with me,” I shout to the fox. Friend drives fiercely away from the house along the coast. After awhile he turns the vehicle to the water. When the tractor sinks and he dives into the water, he is transformed into thousands of little aliens. They start crawling up towards the house. I take a firm position and prepare for the fight. When the aliens reach me, I take them and look at them. I think about Friend, stroke the aliens gently and then throw them back to water.

“Guess what was my favorite part in the dream?” I ask Friend.

“The fox?”

“How did you know? I was sure that you would say the evaporation.”

“That was my favorite. You asked what was yours.”

“Right. So you also thought it was your favorite?”

“Yes. I always wanted to learn to apparate.”

“Perhaps it was a premonition. Tell me when it happens!”

“Yes, I will.”

• • • • •

“Mom, why doesn’t that woman have arms?” My daughter asks when seeing a woman with no arms, her hands starting straight from shoulders.

“We are all different. Some of us have long arms, some have short and some have no arms.” I answer.

My daughter is happy with the answer.

2019

My past is still interfering with my investigations. Fine, I’ll finish this first.

The night my brother died was surprisingly quiet. Surreally quiet. I was sitting in the hospital corridor with my sister and talking about how we would organize Brother’s care after he gets back home. I think we knew already. That he would not return. That we would not organize any care shifts anymore.

I write these six sentences and start to cry. I go to lie on the floor. I call Friend to help me. After a while I get up. There is a red puddle on the floor. My nose is bleeding. “It’s time to let go.” Friend says. He is right. If I only knew how. I stuff my nostril with a piece of toilet paper and make a cup of coffee. Back to writing.

“I cannot be away for a longer time.” I tell Friend. I’m about to leave to Brazil for a month. It’s difficult to find more people to help there. Now I managed to make a deal with the

nurse that I'll do some of her shifts now and she works more hours when I'm away. But a longer time would be really difficult to organize."

"But it's not your responsibility to organize your brother's care, is it?"

"Of course not. But if I don't then no one will. We all do more than we can already."

When I come home from the trip Brother is in the hospital. It's pneumonia, as usual.

I finish my coffee and burst into tears again. "Mi hermano murió, Mi hermano murió..." The sentence is spinning in my head. I go on writing.

Returning to routines after brother's death feels as surreal as his death. "Mi hermano murió." I burst into tears when my Spanish teacher asks where I have been. He holds me for a long time. "Tranquilo, está bien. No hay prisa. No hay ninguna prisa."

The most difficult of all courses at the university is the course of the philosophy of love. I leave the class and go to the corridor to cry. Friend comes after me.

"I'm fine, you can go to the class." I say.

"I'm here with you." He stays and we sit there crying, both of us. After a while we go back.

Again, a couple of sentences and then crying. I cradle myself. I squeeze myself in temples. I want to hurt myself. I go on writing.

Mi hermano murió... Is it easier to say it in a foreign language? Minun veljeni kuoli. Minun veljeni on kuollut. I taste the words in Finnish. I want someone to hold me. Teacher's warm pullover and his big lap still feel good.

"You cried a lot during the first years when we met." My partner says. "I had your mascara on my shirt so often that I avoided using white shirts." Was that so? I don't remember having cried that much.

200X

The night when Brother dies is surprisingly quiet. It is surprising that it's quiet. It's sur-

prising that no one is quarrelling. It is surprising that mom is still. My brother is taken by Death which is surprisingly gentle. He does something amazing to my mom and she lets my brother die.

We are with him in shifts. The level of oxygen in his blood goes down. Then it goes a little bit up and goes down again. He has a tube in his throat.

Between the shifts I go home to sleep for a while. Before I fall asleep an unusual peace overwhelms me. "It will be fine." The peace seems to be saying.

I wake up when my phone rings. I take my bicycle and go to hospital. Mom, dad and sister are sitting next to brother. He is still breathing. Do I stroke his hair? I'm not sure.

I don't know for how long we have been there when he opens his eyes and looks at each of us for a while. Then he closes his eyes. Death is with us for a while and folds us in a mantle of oblivion and timelessness. When I awake, brother's skin is already cold.

2019

I did it. I wrote about my brother's death. I bury my face in my hands but I don't cry. I'm out of breath. Now it's enough. I go to the couch and have a rest.

• • • • •

6. AUTHENTICITY WITH FABRIC-ATED SELF

The call of the question of being

Some circumstances and happenings in life can originate a call of one's own being. Some configurations of the world in certain time and place can shake one's being and open new ways of seeing oneself and asking about oneself. As our lives and life-worlds are unique and complex, it is impossible to make a comprehensive list of things that can work as triggers for the question of authenticity. A trigger is needed, however, a trigger that creates a crack in our sense of being. The trigger can be a dramatic earthquake, such as the death of a loved one, revealing a crater in one's life, or a light touch of something nearly imperceptible, yet creating a fissure. For Heidegger the triggers were the existential challenges one faces, such as death and anxiety. However, a trigger would not have to be a challenge. Even an unexpected feeling of joy and peace can initiate the call of the question of being.

I believe there has to be at least a premonition of both, the blissful and the dreadful, experience of being-at-home and not-being-at-home, for the call of being to be heard. They may take place in different occasions yet point to the same demand, the demand of one's own being. The call is not always commanding. When it becomes commanding it becomes violent and turns into a touch that is both violent and tact and therefore, alluring. After the initial awakening new triggers emerge and they fuse and fission creating a whirl of constructive destruction. Joy

turns into anxiety and anxiety into enjoyable dwelling within the binds of threads of the world – but only after one has exposed oneself to the touch, after one has been squeezed, weighted and thought by other bodies³⁴.

Being touched by the question

Once upon a time, ... a certain question took hold of me ... with as much violence as tact at its fingertips, ... “she” invaded me before I had seen “her” coming: “she” touched me before letting “herself” be seen.

Jacques Derrida (2005, p. 1)

The process of authenticity starts with the touch of the question of one’s own being. This question is brought forth when there is a crack in the sense of one’s own being, and when one’s own values and beliefs become unready-to-hand, that is, they don’t give answers for how to deal with that crack. It becomes difficult to govern oneself according to one’s own rules. Hence, “I”, the smooth operator of our existence stumbles and starts to question itself. Even though we might have heard the call of being, the touch of the question comes as a surprise and it is beyond our control. As the quote from Derrida suggests, the question takes hold of us before we realize it has done so. Questions originate beneath the consciousness and therefore, when we fully become aware that something is going on, the process has already started.

In my case, when an unexpected experience of joy touched me, it made me realize there is something I need to discover, perhaps there is a hole in my existence I had not seen and felt before. I was not sure what it was and how I would find out, but I knew that I must. My beliefs and values did not help me much there. I felt trapped in my own existence, not at home in my life and *as if I had an invisible corset on me*. I had a feeling that in order to find out, I need to get beyond my beliefs and values.

The journey got violent. My means of finding out transgressed the ‘they’³⁵ as

34. This expression is from Jean-Luc Nancy.

35. In using the term ‘they’ I follow Heidegger and refer with it to expectations and explanations

well as my own beliefs and values. For instance, instead of going to therapy and trying to understand the process of becoming aware of myself and my past in safe settings designed and reserved for that by the society, I chose my own methods. I made choices that were impossible to defend on the basis of my own values. I did things that put myself as well as my close others in difficult situations. Did I choose to do so? Of course, in a way, and then again, not really. Had I chosen otherwise, I had not found out what I found.

At the point when the question squeezed me so badly that I felt I cannot breathe, *I started to write letters*. I wrote about my past, honest and raw, what I remembered and what burst out from my subconscious as I was writing, in letters and sent them to an old friends, friends who were there then, by the time that I had forgotten and was now revealing itself as a hole in my existence. I did not know if it was true or fabricated what I wrote, but it made me blush and I knew it was something the 'they' don't do. 'They' go to therapy and it is safe for everyone. The only explanation I was able to offer was that I need to find out, and I had an intuition that no therapist could help me, because no therapist was there then, but my friends were. Hence, in order to find out I needed others, but not just any other. I needed others that touched me, squeezed, weighted and thought about me, others to whom I was entwined, and who kept me entwined.

To build on a previous point, the touch of a question of authenticity is both violent and tact, it frightens and lures at the same time. It has to be violent, otherwise it would not be able to open anything. It also has to be tact, otherwise I would not dare to listen, to see what it is that is making its way out. This paradoxical combination of violence and tenderness makes the opening enjoyable and alluring. In the opening, with all the tears, trembling, gasping for breath, bursting out, wanting to be squeezed, I am most alive.

The body delights in being touched. It delights in being squeezed, weighted, thought by other bodies, and being the one that squeezes, weights and thinks other bodies. Bodies delight in, and are delighted by bodies. Bodies, meaning areolas withdrawn, partes extra partes, from an undivided totality that doesn't exist. A body delectable

coming from our average everydayness, that is from how we are used to think and act based on our everyday life with others. It is not a negative or undesirable way of being, just inadequate for providing answers for the question of authenticity.

because withdrawn, extended to one side and therefore, offered to touch. Touch creates joy and pain – but has nothing to do with anguish.

(Nancy 2018, pp. 117, 119)

Indeed, when I expose myself to the touch –to the touch of the question and/or to the touch of other bodies, or to the touch of their threads (which *are* bodies) through which I am weaved to my places: past, present, future, people, things, nature, animals – in short: world, anxiety dissolves. As Nancy (2018, p. 119) asserts, “anguish does not accept the *not*, the *step*, of touch, the swerve of the other edge.” Anguish is self-centered, trapped in itself, like a dog hunting its own tail. Exposing oneself to touch, however, releases one into being that is bound, squeezed and held up by other bodies, the threads of the world, and the anguish is dissolved in the world in and through these binds and the sliding gaps in between them.

The opening reveals intruders that are at the same time intimate and strange, unprecedented, surprising. They feel like your own, but violently so. “The contact is constituted asymmetrically from the stranger on, a stranger that precedes my own circles; something has hit me, it affects me, moves me, wounds me, hurts me, takes hold of me” (Santanen 2017, p. 247 [translation, author]). Yet, touch is dyadic. I cannot touch without being touched by the one I touch, and I cannot be touched without touching the one touching me. Hence, to explore the question to find out what it is about, one needs to expose oneself to it, to allow the touch and touch back.

After having been touched by a question, and after having exposed oneself to it, the question starts revealing itself in various ways. Intruders come and go and make one feel uncanny, disoriented, distorted, yet enchanted. There comes a day, a moment, when you give the question a name, or names. Labeling a question steers the way of its becoming just as labeling a problem directs its solutions.

For me the academic investigation of authenticity and the Brother Chronicles were two different ways in which the question of my own being made its way out, two different ways of listening to the question, becoming with it and fabricating it. I started to write the story of my brother aside from my research, not really knowing the reason for doing it. It was just something I wanted and needed to do. I knew it was related to that what I needed to find out, a part of the enigma, but which

part? And part of what? Only after having finished the story I realized it was part of the same process, or phenomenon, as with authenticity. It was another try, another way of learning about myself. It was the most difficult, the deepest, the most frightening and the most intriguing way to learn about myself as it summoned all of my ways of emoting, feeling, and knowing and even added a few new ones. I revealed to myself parts of my subconscious, solved some guilt trips and created new ones. I questioned my childhood and my relationships and my thought processes.

The touch of the question was violent, tact and erotic. It gave an unarticulated promise that I could find something I lost, something of great value. It burned me and lit a passion to find out. It also insinuated that something has to be broken. But what is it that is there to be found and what is it that has be broken? No literature gave me answers for these questions. I needed to listen. The literature, however, among other things, offered me places in which to listen. Places that made the question echo in different ways, in different tones, different words.

To summarize, sometimes the fabric of the world pushes and pulls us in a way that it creates a crack in our sense of being. The question of what it means to be true to oneself makes its way in and out of the crack and touches our being. We become non-ignorant, but, not yet well-informed either. This condition is erotic, it lights the desire to know. In order to know we need to listen.

Listening to the question: Eros at work

... a certain question took hold of me -as if it, or "she" [la question], came of me, to me.

Derrida (2005, p. 1)

Listening is a metaphor often used with authenticity. In order to be true to oneself one needs to listen to oneself, listen to what is the most primordial in oneself. What is it then that one is listening when one listens to oneself? In the true/core self-framework this listening would obviously mean turning inside, trying to get in touch with the values and beliefs one finds in one's core/true self. In my case, listening to myself did not take me to a core or true self. When I had given my

question the name authenticity and started to listen to what it means to be true to myself, I did not end up with values or beliefs or a core self. I encountered Eros, the life force.

The touch of the question is erotic. The touch of the question of who I am is certainly erotic. It lights a fire, a passion and an embodied desire to know. It makes us work passionately to find out and become connected. It is the work of Eros that makes us so passionately affected by the touch of some questions.

The goal of Eros is the growth of an organism. It originates beneath our consciousness, creates new life, new possibilities, new ways for growth. Growth happens through questions that Eros brings out from the depths of our being. It brings the questions forth, allures and pushes us to listen to them. Eros is always looking for ways out, places where growth and connection is called for. When the fabric of the world in its constant movement is pulling and pushing our threads, opening the cracks, Eros finds the cracks and starts to bring intruders in and out of our being. When we feel the touch of a question, Eros is already at work. It is looking for possible ways of creating growth.

According to Freud (1922), Eros and its counterpart Thanatos are the primordial instincts that guide our lives. Eros unrestricted is just as destructive as Thanatos. Therefore, civilized societies restrict the functioning of Eros by repressing it and by channeling it into “tamed” ways of operating. For Freud this is a necessary feature of all civilized societies. Marcuse sees the possibilities of the functioning of Eros in a civilized society more optimistically than Freud and believes that even Freud’s own conceptual basis presupposes a possibility for non-repressive society (Marcuse 1966, 5). I am more inclined to follow the more optimistic lead of Marcuse and believe our chances of listening to Eros are not zero. However, as I personally witnessed in my struggle for authenticity, listening to Eros indeed poses challenges in civilized societies.

In my case there were two kinds of repression involved. First, there was my personal repression of feelings in a situation that was too stressful for me to cope with. The constant fear of my brother’s death and looking at and feeling the pain he was suffering were too much for me. To be able to go on in my life, without realizing myself what happened, I disassociated the feelings from the incidents and managed to live my life in a way that at the first glance did not differ much from

the normal course of a young people's life in general. I did my exams, enrolled in the university, graduated, got a family and hoped for normality.

This personal suppression of feelings was not dictated by the society, it was rather my personal way of coping. However, when the time came to pay the price for that coping, I encountered what Marcuse calls surplus repression. We are not supposed to let Eros mess around when trying to make sense of our lives. Who told me so? How do I know? No one in particular and yet, most people. I had a built-in feeling that I am not supposed to unravel my issues and explore my life with the help of erotic impulses that were revealed in my struggle to remember. Therefore, I did not talk about the whole thing to many people. I was afraid of being considered immoral. Yet, surfing on the tide of Eros helped me get in touch with the suppressed, encapsulated feelings and that way, be able to face the things repressed.

To summarize, listening to the question of what it means to be true to oneself means being attentive to the work of Eros. Listening to and looking at what it is that it is bringing forth. Straining to the meanings that are not immediately accessible. However, as Eros is wild and fierce and indifferent to human suffering, we need balancing forces and solid foundations for the listening. Love can offer a foundation where we can diminish the surplus repression and where listening to Eros builds more than destroys.

Love

- If you were to watch a documentary about a philosopher - Heidegger, Kant or Hegel, what would you like to see in it?
- Their sex life... I would like to hear them speak about it.
- Why?
- Because it's something they don't talk about. I would like to hear about something they refuse to speak about. Why do these philosophers present themselves asexually in their work? Why have they erased their personal life or never talked about anything personal? There is nothing more important in their private life than love.... I want them to speak about the part that love plays in their lives.

Derrida in Ziering Kofman & Dick (2002)

According to Taylor (1992, p. 45), in the contemporary culture of self-fulfillment, love relations are seen to be the prime loci of self-exploration and self-discovery. I also believe love has an essential role in authenticity. The quote above from Derrida, taken from an interview in a documentary about his life and work, reveals three issues related to love that are important for the present investigation. First, it links sex and love. Second, it raises a question why the philosophers he mentions presented themselves asexually in their work and never talked about anything personal. Third, it claims there is nothing more important in their private lives than love. What Derrida fails to ask, but what he implies and what I would especially like to know, is what part love plays in their work, in the work of thinking?

For me love played an essential role in being able to listen to myself, to remember my life and to rethink authenticity. Love was revealed not only as a place of 'at home,' but also as a foundation for transcendence, for overcoming the 'they' in the search for my self. In love one can feel at home, yet it also provides a foundation for breaking away from 'at home'. My own experience of trying to think about authenticity phenomenologically, which essentially includes my personal level, makes me inclined to think that many philosophers, and other scholars as well, do not talk about love or other personal issues because it is scary, too fuzzy and too intimate. The leap from love to sex, to transgressions with Eros and to insanity is too viable, too easy, and possibly too destructive. The risk is more readily admitted to Bohemian artists than the rational philosophers. Yet love, or the absence of it, molds our lives and our thinking in profound ways.

"With him/her I can be myself." "He/she brings out the best in me." "He/she loves me regardless of my faults." These are the phrases often stated when people talk about their loved ones. The self that love lets us be is a self that is good and beautiful. When I am loved, I see myself reflected as good and beautiful from the eyes of the one who loves me and therefore it is of great value for me that I can be myself with his/her love. Love provides a place where one can be and become with a feeling of being good enough. Like Søren Kierkegaard writes, love builds up. Love is both the foundation and the process, it provides the foundation and then builds on that foundation, and in doing so, it builds those who love and are loved:

... love is the foundation, love is the building, love edifies. ... and to edify is to build

on this foundation. ... the lover presupposes that there is love in the other man's heart, and just through this presupposition he builds up the love in him—on that foundation, in so far as he affectionately presupposes that it exists at the bottom. The lover who edifies has but one course—to presuppose love ... Thus he lures the good forth, he encourages love, he edifies.

(Kierkegaard 1949, pp. 174–175)

Also Heidegger did write about love, if not so much explicitly in his works, he did so in his private letters. When working on *Being and Time* and formulating his ideas about authenticity, he was immersed in a love affair with Hannah Arendt. In his letter to her he uses the very same words he uses in *Being and Time* when he talks about authenticity: “Do you know what is the hardest thing given to a human being to carry? ... To be in love = to be pushed into our ownmost existence. *Amo* means *volo*, *ut sis*, said once Augustinus: I love you – I want you to be what you are.” (Arendt & Heidegger, 1998, p. 31, [translation, author]) Likewise, in his lectures on Nietzsche he maintains that love first opens us our ownmost ground and then gathers our being on it, making us stand on our own feet and become empowered by the being in us (Heidegger 1961, p. 59). Hence, love seems to be connected with authenticity in Heidegger's thinking. Love corners us in our own most existence, hence, pushes us to our authenticity. It also makes us want our loved ones to be what they are. It is both my love toward another as well as his/her love to me, the love in between us that enables authenticity and pushes us to authenticity.

Love also gives us a promise of eternity, because “...that is what love is, a declaration of eternity to be fulfilled or unfurled as best it can be within time: eternity descending into time.” (Badiou 2012, p. 47). When I love someone, I cannot imagine not loving him/her. Of course, later it may turn out that love faded away and died, but when I love I cannot imagine that someday it might die. It is precisely this promise of eternity that makes love a foundation for transcending the ‘they’.

Love as a transcending force is an age-old idea. For instance, Plato describes in *Symposium* love as a force in our souls that attracts us to the true beauty. In Christianity the love of God provides humans eternal life and the love for God motivates them do good deeds for others. Transcending to the good and the beauty with the help of love are important human experiences. However, for the purposes

of present investigation, the *transgressive* potential of love is even more interesting. Love is not just safe and homey, but it also enables us to transgress when growth is at stake.

In the Greek mythology, it is through the love of Eros, a son of God, that Psyche, a human being, transcends the human world and gets in touch with the divine and eventually becomes a goddess herself. However, transgressions are needed. Not only Psyche, but also Eros, breaks away from the 'they'. Eros defies his mother by falling in love with Psyche and marrying her and Psyche enters into an unconventional marriage where she is not allowed to see her husband and only meets him at night in bed. Convinced by her sisters and contrary to her own experience, she lets herself believe that this unconventional marriage cannot be good and true, and breaks her promise to Eros, thus breaking the marriage. Love, however, sustains and in the end the lovers get each other again and reunite in divinity. (Apuleius 1910) Likewise, in Christianity eternal love and eternal life do not descend on humans without violent transgressions; God sacrifices his own son, part of himself, out of love for humans. This sacrifice enables humans to transcend death and provides them eternal life assuring that their lives are build up on a foundation that is love.

For me love was an essential condition for being able to re-call, reconstruct and put in place my past, present and future, my life and myself. It was the foundation and the building on and in which I was able to search for myself, to ask the question what it means to be true to myself and what is this self I am trying to be true to. The things I had forgotten were so painful that I resisted facing them. At the same time, I knew, perhaps more intuitively than consciously, that I must free them if I want to grow and regain the joy in my life. Friend was there for me and with his love I was able to transcend my own fears and get in touch with my past. His love, or perhaps I should say the love I presupposed in him, created a place that was safe enough for me to face and live through the suppressed pain and agony.

Love cannot, however, fuel the transcending alone. Eros is needed to take the risk of shame, which comes along with transcending the 'they'. The erotic desire lured me to go on in my process. At the same time, love gave a foundation on which I was able to do it my way, to transcend the demands of 'they'. I presupposed love in Friend and that way, was able to build enough love in myself and believe I

am good enough even in transgressing what the morality of 'they' demands.

Love is also needed to bear the shame involved in listening to the life force. New openings of possibilities of becoming always brings along a possibility of shame. There is no authenticity, no real listening of what it means to be true to oneself without a possibility of shame. Listening and imagining oneself as something one is not yet brings forth a question, what if it will not be good enough? The promise of love's eternity enables the belief that whatever it is that is coming, it will be good enough. Whatever you will become I will love you.

The essential feature, or the truth that I needed, revealed for me in being-together with Friend was love. His love, and my love for him, helped me to go deeper, transcend the obstacles of remembering, and to choose growth. In order to re-visit and fabricate my past I needed to believe that Friend loved me and still loves me. Eros and love got fused and created a place where the erotic desire lured out what I needed to find out, and love created the foundation for this search.

Did Friend love and care for me the way I thought he did? Maybe not. But there was enough ground for me to be able to imagine that he did. It would have been possible that he was in the intensive care room with me and held me. Filling the emotional gaps in my memories with love helped me in getting in touch with the more difficult emotions of fear and loss.

Hence, it is easy to agree with Derrida that there is nothing more important in my private life than love. Not just to be loved, but to be able to presuppose love in others and hence, be able to love.

To summarize, love provides the foundation and the building in which the listening to oneself can happen in a way that one remains bound to others yet is able to transcend them. It admits space for destruction yet anchors Eros into the work of construction in the long run. Love cannot, however, explain how one manages to navigate and negotiate the destructive forces necessary for growth. In order to understand the management of destructive forces, we need to understand the role of imagination in the process of listening to oneself.

Imagination

Imagination helps us to manage the dangerous ways of Eros. It is a balancing force that makes sense of the creative chaos that Eros brings forth and finds constructive ways of channeling Eros. Imagination needs Eros and is fueled by Eros. They work together. Eros enables the growth and imagination finds ways to channel the process to the ways that are not too destructive. Together Eros and imagination can find ways to go beyond the 'they' and do it in a way that still enables constructive co-existence among the 'they'.

With my imagination I can explore the cracks in my being and the questions being revealed through them. With my imagination I can build up possible worlds, go through them and learn to understand also those things that I cannot/could not live through in my real life. I cannot go to the grave with Friend and make love with him, which I believed would have helped me get in touch with my suppressed feelings. However, I can imagine it and learn of its importance as I go through it in my imagination. Likewise, I cannot go back to the intensive care room to visit my brother, but I can imagine that I go, and with these fantasies I can live through my feelings and fabricate the past for myself. With my imagination I can remember, but I can also mold my life, the past and the future. I can create happenings and make connections that were not present at that moment, but that were, however, possible. No friend was there when I visited my brother in the intensive care room, and I did not cry. But someone could have been there. He could have held me, and I could have cried.

Can I imagine anything and fabricate any kind of life for myself? For instance, is it enough to presuppose love or does love really have to exist between us? For my experience of being loved and for this to be a building experience, is it necessary that my friends really loved me? Or can I just imagine love and create any kind of past for myself? Is it enough for me to imagine that I am loved? Imagination needs seeds of truth. Even in the case of amnesia, which could be thought of as a fruitful spot for fabricating anything, I am bound by the truth. It is true that I am loved. We are all loved by someone or can be loved by someone. It is not impossible that even the love of God and the erotic desire for him, for instance such as described by Theresa de Avila, can create the fuel and the foundation for listening to oneself.

For most of us, however, another person in flesh and blood is a more probable space for the listening.

Becoming convinced: self as fabric-ated, authenticity as listening to Eros

A genuine test of hospitality: to receive the other's visitation just where there has been no prior invitation, preceding "her", the one arriving.

(Derrida 2005, p. 1)

As described above, sometimes it happens that the world posits itself with me in a way that it makes me stop. It makes me listen, and wait, then explore. The threads of my being are moved and a view opens for something new, unexpected, yet obvious. Eros gets a chance to destroy and create. Obviousness, and becoming convinced, however, comes only later, after having made sense of what came.

Writing the *Brother Chronicles* and the academic investigation on authenticity revealed to me a sense of self that I'm at ease with. I do not mean being at ease with my past, or with who I am. I mean an ontology of 'I' that feels my own. The works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Luc Nancy gave me important insights in trying to make sense of my experience. For instance, Nancy's essay "Intruder," an autobiographical philosophy around his heart transplantation touched me deeply. I felt as if he was writing to me, about me. As if he was with me, that we were in this together, me, him and the strangers in our bodies, trying to make sense of what is this strange 'I', this 'I' that is strange and familiar, that keeps on coming and escaping. Merleau-Ponty's efforts to think about subjectivity in a way that is essentially entwined with the world helped me describe how I experience my relation to the world and to others. To sum up my findings about my self and its possible authenticity, I will now take yet another look at the question of self as I became to make sense of it and to the question of how authenticity could make sense with this kind of understanding of self.

The intruder introduces himself forcefully, by surprise or by ruse, not, in any case,

by right or by being admitted beforehand. Something of the stranger has to intrude, or else he loses his strangeness. If he already has the right to enter and stay, if he is awaited and received, no part of him being unexpected or unwelcome, then he is not an intruder any more, but then neither is he any longer a stranger. To exclude all intrusiveness from stranger's coming is therefore neither logically acceptable nor ethically possible.

(Nancy 2008, p. 161)

As long as the intruder remains a stranger, he keeps on intruding, and this intruding causes disturbance, a trouble in the midst of intimacy (Nancy 2008,161). The story of my brother came to me, it came out of and through me, as a stranger. As someone I did not invite, someone I needed to write out of me and yet, someone whom I needed to stay with me. With the question that I named authenticity, strangeness intruded my being, that what had been and what would be. The intruder, which was both the question and the I that I had forgotten, did not care about my rules. She lured me to hidden doors, opened windows I did not know to exist. She shook my constitution. She weaved her fabrics into mine and I to hers, we did it together, we fabricated together. For Nancy the intruder was his own heart that ceased working. For me it was my past that became an intruder. The experience was similar though.

After [I found out that I had forgotten³⁶], any sign could fluctuate, any data be reversed. Without further reflection, certainly, without even identifying an act, a permutation. Just the physical sensation of a void already opened up in the chest, a sort of apnea where nothing, absolutely nothing, even today, could help me disentangle the organic from the symbolic and imaginary, or disentangle what was continuous from what was interrupted: it was like a single gasp, exhaled thereafter through a strange cavern already imperceptibly opened up and like the spectacle, indeed, of leaping overboard while staying up on the bridge. ... How do you become a representation to yourself? A montage of functions? And where, then, does it go, that potent, silent evidence that was holding things together so uneventfully?

(Nancy 2008, pp. 162, 163)

As the story made its way out of me and through me, I became a stranger to

36. The text in Nancy is "they told me I needed a graft".

myself. My self was revealed as more dispersed and more complex as ever and it made me waver, it made me wonder if there is anything that I could call my self. This strangeness came from inside of me, inside of my life and pushed me with her questions. What is my own life? Was it really 'my own life' that I had been living? What was and what is the 'I' living here and there? Was it the one doing her stuff, taking care of her responsibilities ignorant of her feelings and of her strangeness? Was it the one living in her imagination, or perhaps the one whom I wrote afterwards? What was my self, before I encountered the intruder, when I fabricated with her, when she became part of me? Where am I when I am holding my crying child and in my mind running away from my brother, when I imagine myself underneath the ground, in lover's arms, or at a friend's home?

"Long-standing discussions revolving around self-consciousness have demonstrated *usque ad nauseam* that every attempt to constitute self-consciousness by reflection presupposes the self it is looking for. Even so-called auto-poiesis, i.e., self-fabrication, is not free from such difficulties." (Waldenfels 2004, p. 240) This was also my experience in trying to figure out who I am. Gazing into my past or the life-at-present did not work. At best, it made me fabricate. Thinking or gazing inside did not work, self escaped. How do I then could get in touch with my self? The best answer I found was to be sly, approach my self indirectly. I have to try to lure out the self (or no-self) by looking at my experiences. Before I grasp it, it escapes. I get hints though. Inkings hovering around my experiences. My experiences are informed by many kinds of fields and things, a diagnosis, reading philosophy and talking with others and all these provide also hints for making sense of my experiences and of that "I" which seems to have those experiences. But in the end, the experiences never fit to any framework. My self escapes the interpretations and slides.

However, in the midst of interpretations and making sense, I come to places, to moments where I feel 'at home' in myself. But these are not the moments when I think of myself but rather, the moments when I forget about myself. Or should I say: I feel my being, when I do not try to think what I am. My self escapes thinking, but at the same time, I can think around something that I can call 'I'. And sometimes, when I let thinking go, when I just am, with the things around me, with my stories, with the ones I love, with the forest and the lake, birds, flowers and ants, I

can feel that I am. The more I feel that I am, the less I need to ask what I am, or who I am. Even less I need to ask if I'm authentic.

Yet, no home stays the same, new intruders from our past and future will ever invade our homes and we are doomed to move on, we are nomads in our own being, being which takes place in various places.

Bodies are places of existence, and nothing exists without a place, a there, a "here", a here is, for a this. The body-place isn't full or empty, since it doesn't have an outside or inside, any more than it has parts, a totality, functions, or finality. It's acephalic and aphalic in every sense, as it were. Yet, it is a skin, variously folded, refolded, unfolded, multiplied, invaginated, exogastrulated, orificed, evasive, invaded, stretched, relaxed, excited, distressed, tied, untied. In these and other ways, the body makes room for existence.

(Nancy 2008, p. 15).

Body is a place where being happens. My body is a place where my being happens. But it is not the only place where my being happens. My being reaches beyond my body, stretches and entangles with other bodies, other things and other beings, and I am not making a difference between organic, symbolic and imaginary. My being continues its being over and beyond my body. Or should I say that it is my body that stretches beyond and transcends the boundaries of my skin? "My own body is a half-alien body, charged and even overcharged by intentions, but also desires, projections, habits, affections and violations, coming from others." (Wandenfels 2004, p. 247) and yet, at the same time, it is truly my own, my own place, my own fabric-ation.

What is it then that holds up my being? My dispersed, fabric-ated, centerless being is always also a bound being. What holds my being together is not a core but the threads that bind me to Others. My being lingers in and between the threads of others and the world, which bind it, and without which it would not exist. My self is fabricated in the entanglements with the threads of Others and the world. These threads extent over time and over my visible body, live their lives in places I have never been to, in other people's lives and minds. The threads are fabricated in and through language, but not just with words and sentences. The fabrication involves body and body languages as well as spiritual experiences and connections that take

place beyond words.

“Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since world is flesh?” asks Merleau-Ponty (2000, p. 138). For him, one’s being is just a fold in the flesh of the world, same substance all. The same question remains when I think of myself as fabric-ated. I am part of the fabric of the world. The threads of my being are inescapably woven into the threads of the world. Some threads are more mine than others, some threads bind me more than others, some threads have molded my constitution more than others. They continue, extend over time, fade out, get stronger or weaker, are always in movement. They are physical, imaginal, imaginary, symbolic, audible, tangible, kinesthetic; whatever they are, they are real as long as they bind me, squeeze me, weight me and think of me.

To be in touch with and to be bound by others, we need strangeness, we need intruders. Touch happens at the limits, where strangers meet and expose themselves to others. And to intrude, to enter and to break out, an intruder needs a fissure, and Eros, the wild horse on which the intruder can ride in and out. Gradually, however, the intruder weaves its threads into what I used to think was mine. By doing so, it also closes the crack. Right here, right now, I can still feel the difference between me and my intruder, my question of authenticity that this time took the form of the story of my brother. My intruder, the one with whom I have been fabricating this story, this research, these conclusions, this body, I can feel the space between us, but I know it’s blurring. The story we fabricated is becoming mine, part of me, the story I tell of my own life.

The genuine test of authenticity for me was to receive the intruder’s visitation just where there has been no prior invitation preceding ‘her,’ the one arriving. To listen, to let her reveal herself, to become with her. To become the way she invited me to, she, who did not care about my rules.

The question of authenticity took a hold of me when the fabric of the world pulled my threads and opened a space for Eros, the life force, to push and pull the question in and out of me. In other words, I was struck by a glimpse of myself as joyful, and perplexed about what had happened to this joyful me that I used to be. Anguished by not having an answer I exposed myself to the touch of the question, gave it a name authenticity and started to investigate what was going on.

The academic writing, including the autobiofictional work, notes and jour-

naling, became places where I thought about my question, places for Eros to do its work and places for the question to be asked, pondered upon and answered. Love built up foundations for my investigation, for my growth. Love also enabled transcending the ready-made answers for the questions of what it means to be true to myself as well transcending the ready-made options for how I should listen and find answers for my question. Eros fueled my search, made it a passionate journey careless and curious enough to follow the lures outside of the conventional. Imagination helped me to find ways to investigate the question in ways that gave space for Eros but also channeled it into ways that were not too destructive, ways that had enough of 'they' and enough of 'me' (which, in the end, are just different kinds of folds, or binds in the fabric of the world). Hence, I was able to answer my question in a way that was my own and yet, not just my own or fully my own (because it is also others'), but enough my own so that I want to think of it as my own.

And finally, the question of authenticity. What does it mean to be authentic, to be true to myself? For me it is a multilayered process of listening to the question of what it means to be true to oneself. Listening to how Eros dwells in my deepest caverns, blows through my beliefs and values, binds me to the fabric of the world violently and tactfully, opens up new views, strengthens my bonds to the fabric of the world. Dwelling in love, being squeezed, weighted and thought by other bodies, being entwined and being free though, because of and despite of the binds. Fabricating my life in a way that is beautiful, bound with others and open to strangers.

As I understand my self as a bunch of threads that entangle in multiple ways with the threads of the world and becomes fabricated in these entanglements, listening to what it means to be true to myself means also listening to how my being resonates in these different entanglements. Listening to what kind of timbre, rhythms and melodies are enabled and created in different layers of the fabric. Being attentive to how the threads in the fabric squeeze, weight and think about me and how I squeeze, weight and think about them. Sensing how anxiety dissolves in and between the threads when I expose my self to the touch of questions and the touch of other bodies.

Hence, for me, authenticity is not about standing apart from others, being

unique and different from others, being true to one's values and beliefs or about wholehearted commitments. Rather, it is a process of becoming to feel fine in the midst of others – until I do not. It does not exclude any of the things mentioned above, but it cannot be reduced to any of them either. Neither can it be operationalized, measured or standardized. Our lives are too complex and too unique for such endeavor to succeed. More probably, such attempts will lead to vain compartmentalizing and hindering of the listening of the question what it means to be true to oneself.

Yet, as authenticity happens in the midst of others, it cannot escape negotiations with the 'they'. However, it is only from inside that it is possible to know how much of 'they' and which parts of 'they', can be fabricated into my authenticity. Conformism may be inauthentic for some and authentic for others, and for each of us because of different reasons. And in different times, with different issues, the question of authenticity takes different forms, and I end up thinking about my self in different places, and it opens up different views, fabricates different bonds to the 'they', to the things, to the world.

Hence, no guidelines for discerning authentic persons from inauthentic ones can be traced from the present investigation. Listening to the question "who am I?" or "What does it mean to be true to myself?" reveals that it is a different question for each of us and that the answers we find depend on where and how we listen and search for answers. In addition, we never become ready with the question. It surprises us again and again in places we cannot foresee. However, being touched by the question of one's own existence, exposing oneself to the question, listening to it, using one's imagination and being loved are the constituents that make it possible for us to search and find. And in our search, we may be surprised by the familiarity of others' questions and epiphanies. As we reckoned, for Nancy it was his heart that made him ask about himself, for me it was becoming aware I could not remember certain things in my past. However, his words, his thoughts from far away, different place and time, thought and written in different language, made me delight in sharing, in inspiration, in belief that I am not alone.

Perhaps what has been said so far offers a glimpse of why authenticity may not be a fitting goal in institutional learning processes. The unconventional ways of Eros may be too challenging when set free in schools and universities. However, perhaps what has been said also gives an inkling that it might be important and

gratifying to embrace Eros in learning. In the following I will argue that there are advantages in, if not implementing Eros in institutional learning (which would not be possible), at least being aware of it and its role in growth. I also propose a view that by nurturing imagination and love also in institutional learning we can give more space for Eros and thus, to authenticity, while staying, for the most part, on the constructive side of chaos.

7. REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY AND EDUCATION

7.1. On autoethnography

From autoethnographers I learned that research can be explicitly personal, and I truly admire their willingness to soak oneself in the research and aim to write in a way that touches and makes a difference. The issues I would like to continue thinking about with autoethnographers are twofold, the difficulty of autoethnographical research and truth.

I believe doing autoethnography is difficult for many reasons. Like all autoethnographers, I was forced to take a stance on vulnerability and consider how much of it I am ready to embrace. Writing about personally vulnerable topics feels awkward. The reason for that is that a researcher does not know what is coming. I ended up facing layers of my own life I had not been aware of before and did not feel comfortable with, and I could not foresee this before delving into research. I found things I had suppressed and becoming aware of them was painful. Hence, I do not quite agree with Chang (2008) that autoethnography is researcher friendly as it provides easy access to primary data, that is, the researcher herself, and a holistic, intimate perspective on this 'familiar data'. I think autoethnography is easy only in a practical sense: there is no need to spend time finding participants and scheduling interviews.

In some cases it may be true also that there is an easy access to data, as Chang suggests. In my research this was not the case; even though some of my autoethnographical 'data' were easy to access, there were also the unpredictable streams of my subconscious, the strangers, the intruders, and they were extremely difficult to face and to let them reveal themselves. Therefore, I would say that autoethnography is researcher challenging to the utmost degree. Yet, I believe it is a good thing, something to be proud of and something to embrace even with greater force. Not just to stay with what happened but to struggle to dive into the underworld of our consciousness, underneath of what really happened, to the emerging meanings of the questions that burn us.

Even though I was inspired by the courage of autoethnographers, my own investigation took me to ontological and epistemological questions for which I did not find much support from autoethnographers. Even though for instance Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis claim that "autoethnographers must take seriously the epistemic (claims to knowledge) and the aesthetic (practices of imaginative, creative, and artistic craft) characteristics of autoethnographic texts" (2015, p. 23), and pay careful attention to how the aesthetic characteristics are achieved, no corresponding aid for considering epistemic or ontological levels of research is offered in their article.

Some guidelines are offered in for instance Ellis and Bochner (2011) and I do find them useful to a certain extent. They claim to value narrative truth, verisimilitude, narrator's credibility, and usefulness of the story. Verisimilitude means that the story evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true. Narrator's credibility means that the narrator could have had the experiences described, given available 'factual evidence', and that the narrator believes that this is actually what happened to her or him. In discussing credibility Ellis and Bochner introduce an idea that 'fiction' can be demarcated from 'a truthful account' and the narrator may have made an informed choice to use fiction instead of 'a truthful account'. Narrative truth and usefulness of the story are both described as the stories ability to be put in use by its readers, and how it helps participants, readers or researcher communicate and improve their lives. (Ellis & Bochner 2011)

Verisimilitude and usefulness point to the importance of the audience in

determining the value and the truth of the story and hence, that of the research utilizing the story. I agree this is an important remark and part of what makes the research plausible. On further reflection, the notion of a researcher's credibility points to the origin and construction of the story. There I believe a more detailed discussion of what is meant by truth could be helpful.

When read and re-read my journal, the thoughts and experiences I have written, drawn and recorded, and then look at my Brother Chronicles, or the whole story of my research, the question "Does the narrator believe that this is actually what happened to her?" does not make sense. "Did this really happen to me" does not have a clear target anymore, if we accept – like Ellis and Bochner wish to do – the idea that fiction is also an appropriate way of building an auto-ethnographic research. In this investigation I have made use of the notion of truth as *aletheia*, in order to shed light on how different kinds of notions of truth can help us understand how we become convinced of what we believe to know through our research³⁷. I believe a more rigorous interrogation of how we become convinced of our autoethnographic stories –whether fictional or factual – could enhance the plausibility of autoethnographic research. For instance, as a phenomenologist I have to add questions "Does the story help me reveal the essences, that is, the meaning structures of the phenomenon under investigation?" And also "Is the story truthful of the meaning of what happened to me?" rather than is it accurate with the facts.

7.2. On post-qualitative research

I was drawn to post-qualitative research because there is an admirable effort to re-think things and because I was delighted by the willingness of many post-qualitative researchers to explore and expand the ways of scientific writing. For instance, St. Pierre's (2011) insights about how adhering to traditional qualitative methods may rather strengthen the normalized discourses rather than reveal new insights, Koro-Ljungberg, MacLure and Ulmer's (2018) interrogation of the nature and meaning of 'data', Jackson and Mazzei's (2012, 2018) insights about thinking

37. About the importance of *aletheia* in Qualitative research, see also Huttunen & Kakkori (2020).

with theory in qualitative research and diffractive analysis based on Barad's (2007) philosophy employed for instance by Davies (2014), Mazzei (2014), Lenz Taguchi and Palmer (2013) opened my eyes to see that qualitative research does not have to obey particular set of rules but can take many forms and be informed by philosophical practices in multiple ways.

In addition, for instance Koro-Ljungberg's (2017) tangible way of expressing her ideas with words and pictures about the forest as a context of thinking and Guttorm's (2014, 2017) poetic style of writing opened my eyes to see how creative, poetic and literary explorations with language and pictures can be an important part of scientific language. I also appreciate the willingness of many post-qualitative researchers to interrogate ontological and epistemological foundations of research.

Ontological and epistemological questions are precisely the issues I would like now to continue re-thinking with post-qualitative researchers. The effort of re-thinking among post-qualitative researchers is strongly motivated by and rooted in post-structuralist philosophy. I believe post-structuralism offers a welcome alternative and valuable resistance to positivist tendencies that sometimes slither into qualitative research by offering a different kind of language games through which to think about being. However, I would like to invite post-qualitative researchers to consider if phenomenology, especially the practice of reaching out for essences could add to their toolbox in the aim for radical re-thinking of phenomena.

Post-structuralist philosophy is integrally rooted in phenomenology. For instance Derrida and Foucault were well educated in Husserl's work and wrote very much in dialogue with his thinking, often with a critical approach but certainly, inspired by the questions raised by Husserl. In addition, the philosophy of Deleuze is perhaps not that far away from Merleau-Ponty than for instance Deleuze (1994, p.12) himself claims it to be. Rather, there are converging themes especially in late Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze such as the interest towards articulating the conditions for thinking being and the belief that these conditions are immanent to being (Wambacq 2017). Likewise, being inspired by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy made me ask same kind of questions of the relation (entanglement) of the researcher and her topic in the becoming of the research process as many post-qualitative researchers have been asking with the help of Barad's (2007) philosophy.

Indeed, there is much in common between phenomenology and post-quali-

tative research. For me it was phenomenology which finally gave me tools to think about entanglement and drawing conclusions in a way that I was able to say that I have become convinced of my conclusions. To get there, trying to understand the nature of essences and truth became vital to me. Because post-qualitative research seems to adopt the post-structuralist suspicion towards essences, I would like to invite re-thinking of the meaning of essences in doing research. I will do this invitation in dialogue with St. Pierre, who has actively worked in establishing post-qualitative research as a field of its own and has also taken a stance towards phenomenology and essences (St. Pierre 2016).

To return to a point in Chapter 2, St. Pierre reminds us that we need to delve deep into theoretical and philosophical literature, because otherwise “we have nothing much to think with during analysis except normalized discourses that seldom explain the way things are” (St. Pierre 2011, p. 614). I fully agree with this approach. We need to read philosophy also to be able to *find our own ontological, epistemological and ethical stance*, which is necessary for achieving the reflexivity required for a qualitative researcher, which includes understanding how one’s own ontological and epistemological assumptions steer the research.

What is striking to me, however, in the work of St. Pierre is that she is so strongly advocating Deleuzian ontology³⁸ and posing it in opposition with phenomenology, which St. Pierre presents as a form of empiricism in which “phenomena exist in the world as pure essences and present themselves in their givenness, in a pure, *a priori* state to an individual’s consciousness that has bracketed all else that is *a priori*.” (St. Pierre 2016, p. 115). As has hopefully become clear from the discussion of phenomenology in Chapter 2., this is not my idea of phenomenology and nor does it describe the phenomenology I have used as a source of my thinking. I agree with St. Pierre (2016) in her queries about some empirical forms of phenomenology³⁹. However, I believe there is something important she fails to understand

38. Sometimes she writes in a way that gives an impression she would like all of us to become Deleuzian. She writes, for instance that “It seems to me that transcendental empiricism insists we study Deleuze’s and Deleuze with Guattari’s philosophy, demands that we read and read and read until its concepts overtake us and help us lay out a plane that enables lines of flight to what we have not yet been able to think and live.” (St. Pierre 2016, p. 122)

39. For instance, I share with her suspicion that we would be able to understand and describe someone else’s experience.

about phenomenology, precisely, the importance of trying to grasp essences, even though we would personally be attached to fluid and rhizomatic ontology as exemplified by Deleuze.

For instance, I am personally more comfortable with ontology that recognizes the entangled, process-like nature of our being in the world and doing research, be it called rhizome, flesh, fabric or something else. I believe research, among other things, is constant becoming with no clear starting point or end. Life, research and concepts are for me fluid rather than clear and stable. Yet also I believe we are bound to consider the possibility of essences when doing research, not because they would exist as immutable and rigid structures, but because we need the possibility of something being universal or general, just like we need the possibility of truth in order to make any meaningful utterances.

The search for essences, that is, structures in experience, or our topic, whatever it is, is useful even for a researcher who believes in fluid ontology, because it helps to make sense of those experiences and to look at them from different angles and with different tools. In addition, it helps—at least has helped me—to trace the evidence for my conclusions and become convinced. As I hope my investigation has shown, there is no need to think about essences as objective structures in a sense that they would reside in a realm of platonic ideas or in the world *an sich*, but rather, as structures that have convinced me after I have gone through all possible alternatives I can think of with the help of empirical data, philosophical and theoretic literature and with my imagination.

I argued that the investigation of essences when doing research is usually warranted because we must be interested in investigating and concluding something that transcends the mere meaning-for-me, here-and -now. Perhaps a comparison with language will provide another point of view to the importance of reaching out for essences.

Explorations with fluid and entangled ontology has inspired some researchers (e.g., Koro-Ljungberg 2016, 2017, Guttorm 2014, 2018) to produce texts that break the traditional formats of writing research in order to question traditional ontological and epistemological assumptions. St. Pierre (1997) argues the importance of troubling the language also as an ethical demand:

Those who find the differences enabled by a poststructural concern with language confusing and sometimes difficult to understand demand clarity. On the other hand, those who find difference hopeful and productive continue to trouble language. To this point, it appears that the demand for clarity has won out. However, an emerging body of literature (Britzma, 1995; Elam 1994; hooks, 1990; Lather, 1996; Spivak cited in Danus & Jonsson 1991/1993; Trinh 1989) addresses the politics and ethics of clarity and accessibility. It should not be surprising that such a reaction formation has emerged in response to those who reject in the name of Ethics a complexity that refuses to simplify issues that many, in the name of ethics, believe should remain complex.

(St. Pierre 1997, p. 185)

Indeed, life is messy and that there are no easy solutions for difficult ethical dilemmas or life questions. Moreover, our thinking processes are often not linear or straightforward. However, while calling for troubling the language, St. Pierre herself often writes with delectable clarity herself and there seems to be no ethical dilemma in trying to describe things also with clear literal language. The same way, striving to investigate essences can be compatible with fluidity and does not necessarily mean adhering to rigid ontology. Even though we may not be convinced of the existence of essences, or even though we would never become convinced of their existence, we should consider their possibility and interrogate their possible nature, because otherwise we fail to reach for the aim essential for any activity that claims to be research, namely, the aim of arguing something that possibly applies more generally than for me here and now. In addition, we will never reach a position where we could say that mess is more fundamental than clarity or vice versa⁴⁰. We need to consider both options, just as we must consider different languages and usages of languages. Hence, I believe it is useful to bracket the post-structuralist ontology as well in the game of re-thinking our topics.

I believe, in accordance with many post-qualitative researchers, that mess and clarity, being and becoming are all fundamental human experiences and trav-

40. Hanna Meretoja (2014, p. 95) points out interestingly that behind the idea of the fundamentality of non-continuity of experience found among some post-structurally influenced authors there is an ontological stance that assumes that 'raw' experience is the fundamental plane of existence. Underlying such radical views is, according to her, a positivistic-empiricist tendency to regard as most "real" that which is given in one's supposedly immediate sense perception.

eling between them is what makes life and research interesting and enjoyable. Yet, no matter what I believe, the battle around the question will and should go on. We cannot prove our ontological beliefs. Neither should we assume that a certain language game grasps reality better than others. We can only articulate our beliefs in different ways and see if they resonate with the experience of others, if they touch someone. We can look at how different language games build up worlds and try to attach to the ones that we believe makes the world better. And to really think anew, we need to try to do the impossible, to try to get beyond the authority of existing language games, including those of post-structuralism. If post-qualitative research is designed to re-think phenomena, why not go even further than challenging the data with the help of a post-structuralist ontology? Why not try to bracket that as well, engage in free imaginative variation and the search for essences and truth and enjoy the impossible attempt of trying to re-think the phenomena free from all possible frameworks, one at a time?

7.3. On phenomenology

Even though there is a constant interest in phenomenology in philosophy and also in qualitative research, phenomenology has not gained a mainstream popularity in the qualitative fields nor regained the enthusiasm it had in the beginning of the 20th century philosophical field. It has never, for instance, gotten much space in the series of *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. What comes to philosophy, as Thomas Sheehan points out, the phenomenological research of today tends to focus more on studying the ideas of the phenomenologist gone by than trying to approach phenomena with phenomenological method:

In a sense, phenomenology has just become another stock in trade of philosophy today, doesn't have that passion and excitement...There's no more people doing creative phenomenological work within philosophy. It's become the locus of reflection by other philosophers, doing their philosophy by philosophizing about Husserl, or about Heidegger.

(Thomas Sheehan 2011)

Yet, various kinds of approaches, empirical and philosophical operate and grow under the name phenomenology. Some of them, like van Manen in education, admirably strive for and encourage engaging in phenomenological inquiry, like a poet writing poetry, instead of writing about phenomenology like writing about poetry (van Manen 2014, 23). I believe, however, that many qualitative researchers doing phenomenological studies would benefit from taking a deeper look at the philosophical foundations of phenomenology. Straining to the philosophical questions, interrogating one's own basis for approaching the phenomenon, that is, interrogating the questions such as what makes a phenomenon unique, how do we know and how do our ontological and epistemological beliefs and the tools used affect the phenomenon and the conclusions we get, enhance the self-reflexivity which is fundamental for any qualitative research. It also grounds the research on a basis more rigorously examined. Adopting a certain method, even though it calls itself phenomenological, does not guarantee self-reflexivity or rigor.

This investigation of authenticity hopefully has given one example of how we can interrogate the fundamental philosophical questions with different kinds of empirical data. It is, however, just an example. In other investigations these questions come in different ways. In addition, I hope my investigation has shown why we cannot rely on a set of pre-determined steps when investigating phenomena. When doing phenomenology, it is the phenomenon that should show us the way, not our preconceived notions. When we start, we cannot know what is to come. We need to listen, and we might get surprised. If we stick to a certain pre-determined framework, we unnecessarily restrict the revelation of the phenomenon. Finally, there is no way to a phenomenon that could bypass the investigator's role in it. Therefore, even though we can use many kinds of empirical data as tools, it is for us, the investigator, to whom, and through whom, the phenomenon is revealing itself, and this should be taken into consideration.

What comes to philosophy, I doubt that phenomenology as 'philosophizing about Husserl or Heidegger' as Sheehan puts it, can be truly phenomenological. Philosophizing about someone else's thoughts is aimed at being truthful to his/her thoughts, not at letting the phenomena show themselves. This kind of investigation has worth, it has for instance helped me a lot in trying to find my way of doing phenomenology. It has also made me feel somewhat fearful and insecure

because no matter how hard I try, there are always new interpretations of Husserl and Heidegger, disagreements about those interpretations and about what is phenomenology in the first place. If I try to keep up with them, there will be no time to think about the phenomena really burning me. Hence, I would love to see more phenomenological studies that have the passion and the excitement for the phenomena, phenomenology that proceeds from the first-person perspective interrogating the essences and the conditions of phenomena as they reveal themselves in consciousness. There I believe many philosophers could learn from the autoethnographers who are willing to make themselves vulnerable in approaching their burning questions.

It is always a researcher's consciousness (and subconscious) in which the revelation of a phenomenon happens and hence, researchers cannot escape interrogating their own lives, which is the context, the platform and the instrument of this revealing. This means that phenomenology, no matter whether philosophical or qualitative (and I am reluctant to draw a strict line in between) is always autobiographical. Just as each of us has a different, unique line when we draw, timbre when we sing, style when we dance, we also have a unique style of letting phenomena reveal themselves. This style encompasses our whole history, the different planes of our being, the conscious and the unconscious, embodied memories and things forgotten yet stored in our bodies. It is through this multilevel embodied being that the phenomena reveal themselves to us. This is what makes phenomenology so difficult, but also so sensuous, enjoyable and exciting.

I understand the reluctance to go deep with personal insights. It is because it is tough. I did not really want to get this personal. However, listening to the phenomenon of authenticity did not give me a choice. In order to do this investigation in a way that the phenomenon was calling for I had to get personal. Having done it, I'm fine with it. Like a nudist gets used to being naked and feels no shame of her body, I have gotten used to being naked in my research. It is my life, my body, it's my instrument for making sense of the world. I know it is not perfect but I also know that I am learning.

Not every phenomenon demands the kind of self-disclosure like mine here, now. However, courage and willingness to be vulnerable always makes better research than playing it safe with a certain ready-made form. Therefore, here I stand,

naked and vulnerable.

7.4. On education

Authenticity has made its way to educational literature. The motives behind this movement are good. A deeper look, however, reveals pitfalls in the research on authenticity in educational settings and in application of this beautiful ideal.

The pitfall related to many qualitative studies aiming to shed light on authenticity by asking teachers most probably only increases the conceptual mess by bringing in all kinds of unreflected associations related to the word. As I have argued, these kinds of data are not useless, but it requires us to go deeper than just thematizing them. We need try to reflect upon it until the phenomenon starts to make sense and starts to emerge as something unique, not as reducible to other features we value in education. Quantitative studies aiming at measuring authenticity and saying something about its relation to other constructs fail, because operationalizing authenticity does not make justice to the concept. It is a desperate endeavor, just like trying to operationalize wisdom. Authenticity operationalized can never catch *my* authenticity, for example, which is always unique and situational.

Pitfalls related to authenticity as an educational ideal have to do with its paradoxical nature. In his analysis of authenticity as ideal in larger societal level, Varga argues that “authenticity has become an institutionalized demand toward subjects; the very attempt to realize it creates conditions under which the probability of its realization is reduced“ (2011, 124–125). I cannot say if authenticity has become an institutionalized demand toward subjects for instance in Finnish educational institutions, but I am worried that it will, considering the enthusiasm toward it in educational research. If that happens, I believe it will actually diminish our possibilities to be true to ourselves. Perhaps we will see curricula in authenticity become iatrogenic, that is teaching people how to be untrue to themselves, just as one might catch a new disease in a hospital or how one might learn crime in a prison.

When authenticity is taken as an ideal for education, a logical conclusion is that educators should somehow promote authenticity. This seems to be also

the motivation behind majority of the studies on authenticity in education. The challenge is that when an educator aims at intentionally promoting authenticity of students based on her own understanding of it, she is actually imposing a load of ontological, epistemological and ethical beliefs and expectations on the students, which actually undermines the whole endeavor of promoting authenticity. This problem is highlighted in my explorations with authenticity scales. Authenticity captured in the scale was someone else's authenticity, not mine. When we are imposing a certain conception of authenticity on our students, whether in form of a scale or in definitions of any kind, we are actually pushing them into inauthenticity, asking them to adopt a frame that is not their own. Thus, if we truly want to engage in the topic of authenticity with scales or definitions offering substantial descriptions of authenticity the best we can do with them is to ask ourselves and our students to interrogate them and invent our own. Otherwise, authenticity through mandatory conformity could be viewed as the ultimate absurdity.

Another danger in authenticity as an educational goal is what Taylor calls flattening and narrowing of human existence. For Taylor this is the malaise of self-centered interpretation of authenticity, which does not recognize how our identities are formed against communal horizons. I believe there is also a danger of another kind of flattening and narrowing of human existence, and thus, another obstacle for authenticity, when authenticity is taken as an educational ideal. This danger has to do with presentation of self.

The rising interest towards authenticity in education is in line the general enthusiasm on self both in the public sphere and in education. With the rise of social media, the presentation of self has become more important for instance in working life. Social media has also made it easier to present oneself from certain perspectives leaving others invisible. Personal branding has entered the work life and even universities offer courses for that purpose. Authenticity plays an important role there. In order for a personal brand to succeed, it has to give an impression of authenticity (Rampersad 2010). The problem in this kind of 'authentic' presentation is that it has to appeal to others in order to be successful. Authenticity, however, requires taking a deeper stance to the foundations of one's being and willingness to question what is considered acceptable and appealing by others or oneself. When I think about my interrogation of authenticity, I cannot imagine I

would want to make a brand out of it. Making it appeal to others would undermine the painful beauty of the whole process and of myself. An authentic personal brand, if authenticity is regarded as an honest and profound listening to oneself, is a travesty of authenticity. Linking authenticity to popularity is a fools errand.

The demand to present oneself as authentic also puts one in an intangible yet binding web of power. Of course it is true that educational institutions and any social context has always demanded a certain kind of presentation of self. All practices have their written and unwritten norms and thus push individuals to certain kind of ways of being and presenting themselves. However, the demand of presenting oneself as an authentic person places one in a power structure very different than for instance a demand of presenting someone as obedient to the rules of the school, such as to not bully anyone or not be late from the lessons, or to be honest and be friendly to others. Schools are simply not designed to permit students to be authentic, at least not during school hours.

The rules of the school are much more concrete than authenticity and it is quite easy take a stance toward them. One can understand what it means to comply or not to comply, recognize the risks in non-compliance and make an informed choice to comply or not. Authenticity, to the contrary is so amorphous, that it is hard to resist. Like the empirical research on authenticity in teaching shows, authenticity in education is often interpreted through other desirable educational values than being true to oneself and hence the enthusiasm to authenticity actually carries along other values that easily remain unarticulated if authenticity becomes a commonly accepted jargon. In that case individuals have to read and fulfil the implicit hints of how they would have to be in order to be considered as authentic. Hence, the power structure of authenticity as an ideal for education is so subtle, invisible and difficult to grasp that it actually leaves less opportunity to resistance and thus less space for authenticity than for instance the demand to comply to rules.

I believe we would promote authenticity in education best by not imposing the demand of becoming authentic on our students. We do not need any tests or assessment criteria for authenticity. We should not try to implement authenticity in our assessment practices, neither for teachers nor for students. It will only lead to false self-presentation. (Would you like to be assessed of how well you managed to be true to yourself?). But imposing a demand is not just a matter of explicit action.

Whenever we cherish a certain ideal, it glows through our being into our action and when we are in a position of authority, as teachers are, it is also transmitted to students in implicit ways. Therefore, a careful scrutinizing of authenticity and its implications is necessary, especially because it seems that we cannot escape its force as an ideal.

If paying attention to the authenticity of students is not a good idea for the reasons mentioned above, what can we do then? Based on this investigation, the useful ways I see to promote authenticity are fostering the use of imagination and love. Implementing learning practices that invite and embrace imagination with regard human condition will help students imagine possibilities of becoming in their own life. In addition, perhaps the most important pedagogical tool for promoting authenticity is strengthening the belief in students that they are loved and will be loved, that they are good enough and will be good enough. The question of authenticity will take care of herself, it will hit them at some point of life, and if they are equipped with the belief that they are good enough, that they are loved and they can imagine and fantasize, they are better off trying to listen and answer the question of what it means to be true to myself.

In more concrete terms, a better approach might be to give more space for ever unfolding and creative, phenomenological processes to think about self and the world. The best place for a teacher to start is in her own life. In my case learning about myself through phenomenological research has led to awareness of infinite complexity of human existence, reluctance to define self, my self or anyone else's self, reluctance to build models, steps or guidelines. There is no road from my own authenticity to teacher authenticity or student authenticity in general. To be precise, I believe trying to define any kind of general account of teacher authenticity or student authenticity is a waste of time. Yet I believe that developing self-awareness and embracing the paradoxical nature of human condition is necessary, especially for teachers. If we can embrace the paradoxes in our own lives and feel their beauty, we can open up ourselves to the beauty of infinite complexity of others. This process can open up ways of becoming that neither of us, the seer and the seen, the toucher and touched, can yet grasp. My gaze, my touch can lure the good into the visible, settle the ground for the good to become real. Or it can shut down and close the way from the unexpected and the good.

In addition, exploring our ideals in a larger context of good life, unfolding and fabricating our own ideas of good life and our selves together with others, including our students, would support growth processes better than trying to implement authenticity in learning and assessment practices. The exploration of ideals and good life can happen anywhere, anytime. Some fields of inquiry may, however, lend themselves to these kinds of investigations more easily. For instance, philosophy and religion are by nature directed to ask questions of being and meaning. Arts offer means and tools for asking being and its meanings in ways that can reach beyond the cognitive meanings. On the other hand, natural sciences can offer glimpses of infinity, eternity and other aspects of life that are hard to grasp or conceive. The call of being may surprise us anywhere.

Scrutinizing the deeper ideals and forces of life are not important just for their own sake but also because they are present in the interpretations of more mundane ideals of education, such as self-directed learning and intrinsic motivation. For instance, I believe that if we want to see self-directed learning, intrinsic motivation or growth in learning, we have to admit and embrace the risk of the life force breaking out. If it happens, surprises, cracks, value shifts, ontological shifts, violence, radicalization, joy and excitement are likely to occur. This kind of learning processes spill over the edge. Such epiphanies do not fit into schedules, working hours, school buildings and norms. They may not end up into passing exams, top grades or becoming successful pieces of scholarship. But most probably, when supported and guided with love, they will result in excellent and highly meaningful learning.

We can never fully grasp the meanings of things related to our existence. However, revealing and keeping vigilant about the complexity of human life can be of great value for individuals and communities especially during times where quick and easy solutions even for educational challenges seem to sell well. Craving for depth and embracing controversies may not lead to non-anxious or harmonious life, but I believe it will lead to deeper, more touching, and more enjoyable learning. I hope my research will help educators consider the complexity of life and view the paradoxical beauty of each individual life. There is no reason to be afraid of controversies and to give space for different ways of being and becoming humans. To learn together and to be willing to embrace the paradoxes of being in

their full diversity.

Sounds fine, you might think, but let us see how she will survive in the classroom! I know, it is not simple. Reality melts down fine ideals faster than we can think about them. I have no practical solutions, no programs to offer. However, I can reveal that based on my own experience, embracing complexity is rewarding and helps me encounter challenges. Soaking myself in and letting my imagination fly has made the learning process enjoyable, touching and intriguing. Being loved and being supported on my own terms has given me the courage to delve into and embrace this process, the most difficult learning process in my life so far. When being a teacher, a friend, a mother, a partner, another human being, I hope I can love and contribute to creating spaces where imagination can fly as free as possible.

7.5. On imagination, love and touching

Research, like life in general, is an ontological play. Each player brings to the stage his or her ontology and invites others to participate and act with it and in it. When I, you, we and they enter the play, the stage is altered, the multiontology becomes tangible, the different worlds start their interplay and ever new acts and worlds emerge.

My imagination helps me to join, to read you and to write myself. With my imagination I can write beautiful stories, stories that touch me gently, make me want to be good and to join, be part of the fabric of you, we and they: the world. Stories that invite love. Imagination also creates a possibility for you, the reader, to participate in the fabric of my stories, my research. You read my text and enter my world, my fabric, and if it touches your threads, if you allow the touch, I write you. You make it your own, you make me your own by imagining me and my issues into your world and your issues, your fabric. My words and sentences become absorbed in yours and our worlds intertwine, the threads in our fabrics cross and ride together for a while. And through my imagination, you are already part of my fabric before you even read this. I am writing this for you, leaving the space open for you, hoping that you will participate, hoping that there will be a touch between us. Perhaps there was, perhaps there will be. Thus, my scholarly agenda for the

future must be inter-subjective, inter-fabricated, and all about, love, imagination and touch.

8. EPILOGUE - AN ALLEGORY

Once upon a time, in a beautiful moment, a certain Question looked upon the world from her vantage point and she became angry. She saw her forests, her rivers, lakes and mountains being cut down, tried out, flattened, impoverished. The fields where she used to dwell, imperceptible yet sensible, were misshapen, constructed into something that seemed to her like a factory. Instead of listening, playing with her and running free, the people were building machines, machines that were supposed to bring more followers to her name.

“I have to do something about that,” she said to herself. She spread her wings and flew all the way down to the earth. She landed among people and cried to them. “Hey, shut down the machines, I can’t breathe! I need to run free! Come, follow me, I’ll show you!”

“Did you hear something?” a man said to another. “Did the machine cough?”

“Yes, there was something.” answered the other man. “Yes, perhaps there is something wrong with the machine. Let’s see, we can fix it, I’m sure.”

And they went on with their machine grinding and roaring even more loudly. The Question cried until no sound came out of her throat. But no one stopped to listen to her. So, she took her wings and flew back to her heights. On reflection, she went

to Eros for help.

“Oh, it doesn’t work like that,” consoled Eros. “To make them listen you must be sly. I’ll help you. Here’s what we will do. We will brew a magic potion together. We’ll give it to an innocent and brave messenger. When she drinks the potion, she will fall in love with anyone with a scent of your name. We will spill the potion on certain lures. She will follow those lures and eventually find you. Then she will listen to you and she will go back to others and they will listen to her. Then you’ll get your forests, your lakes and your rivers and your mountains back. And you can play with the people and they will listen to you.”

“Why would you help me like that?” asked The Question suspiciously.

“Because that is what I do, help people fall in love. And besides, it will be an adventure. I like adventures.” replied Eros. He is concealing something, thought The Question, but started to brew the magic potion because she saw her space narrowing and there was no time to waste.

“Whom shall we choose?” asked Eros, looking down on people hustling in their chores. “Look at that bold young lady. She is brave, walks with head held high, fire in her eyes.”

“No, she is too brave,” said The Question. “See, she’s not listening, just insisting upon her own ways.”

“How about that one, she is beautiful and people gather around her to listen to her.” Eros leaned to the beautiful girl longing to hear her voice. The Question pulled him back.

“No, don’t you see it is only admiration that she wants? She’ll drop my message if people don’t like it.”

“Look, do you see that girl over there? Or is she a young woman? What is she doing? Is she wounded?”

“She is walking with others but taking little sidesteps. She appears to be exhausted. And she is carrying something. Something heavy.”

“I can’t see her carrying anything.”

“It’s behind her. A large jug of water.”

“You’re right. She has the water but she does not drink. She is too weak for our purposes.”

“No, she is not weak. Can’t you see how heavy the burden is. She is very strong. If she could drop the burden you would see her strength.”

“Perhaps you are right. But why does she carry so much water without drinking it. Does she carry it for others? Ah, she seems to be searching for something. Look, she is searching after you! It is her, she is our chosen one!” Eros squealed with delight and looked at The Question.

“Yes, I believe she is the right one,” agreed the Question, still looking at the girl. “But how shall we help her let go of that burden?”

“The potion will allow that to happen. And her journey. Trust me. I know how to make people enjoy their challenges. She must permit herself to drink the water and quench her thirst. She will then carry her load with more purpose.”

So they made a plan. Eros would fly down with two bottles of the magic potion. One of them he would give to the girl while she was sleeping. The other he would spill over certain people and things that could help her on her way. Down he went and the girl took the potion gladly, with a beautiful smile on her face, without showing any sign of waking up. The other bottle of potion was spilled on her friends so she would have company on her journey, on some old books which might enlighten and inspire her journey, and on the forests and the lakes for her soul to have some rest on the way. Then he took his wings and flew back. But he didn’t notice that the bottle remained open and a couple of drops fell down on the graveyard, on strangers, even on the machine and the people building it.

Early the next morning Eros and The Question were up and waiting for the girl to wake up, excited to see how the potion would work.

“Now she opens her eyes,” whispered Eros.

“She doesn’t look happy. She is gasping for breath. Did we stir a wrong potion?” asked The worried Question.

“No, it hurts a bit at first. She’ll be fine.”

They observed the girl tearing her hair and trying to take off her clothes, as though she struggled for breath. But then a friend came to her, held her and she seemed to calm down. After a while they were laughing and it looked as if her burden shrunk a little bit. Indeed, after they left, there was a puddle of water on the ground, indicating that she allowed herself to become refreshed.

“You see, she’ll be fine,” said Eros with contentment as the two friends were now walking hand in hand.

For forty days and forty nights stayed Eros and The Question looking at the girl making her way towards the Question. They delighted in her joy and suffered with her pain, as did all her friends and strangers whom had been touched by the potion and had an air of the Question around them. They were surprised to see her visiting the machine, but were delighted that she continued her journey. Had they known that the potion had spilled on the machine they would have laughed and delighted that the potion loses its scent when out of touch with living tissue. They saw her falling in love with her friends, with the books and with the forests and the lakes. And they saw her burden growing smaller every day.

“She is ready, I want to go down and play with her,” exclaimed the Question one day.

“No, she is not ready. You’ll spoil everything if you go.” Eros had to take her by the hand to keep her at her place. “She’ll come here and then you can play, and then she will be ready to hear your real name.”

The Question gave in and they stayed still, watching the girl grow stronger, braver and more reckless. Sometimes her friends had to hold her back from dangers she did not see in her inspiration. Her thirst was satiated and she no longer felt the need to carry such a load of water behind her.

“Look, she is becoming too excited. Now that her load is lighter she is bold and getting bolder, hoping to cross the river with a raft so fragile that any breeze would turn it over.” said The Question. “We need to help her.”

“We cannot help her, it is forbidden. She has her friends to help her, and even the strangers she meets on her way. But her solutions must be her own. And she has the books where to look for guidance, and the forest and the lake. She’ll be fine,” said Eros.

“But look, now the raft is turning over. Do something, she’s drowning!,” cried The Question and before Eros could hold her back she had blown a wind that turned the raft on top again and took it safely to the riverbank. The girl got off from the raft, bewildered but fine, and continued her journey. Eros looked at The Question stunned and shocked, and it took him a while before he could speak.

“What have you done?,” he asked.

“What have I done?,” asked The Question. She felt her powers escaping her.

“You were not supposed to help her. The magic potion will take its revenge.”

“What revenge? You didn’t tell me!”

“I was afraid you would decline the invitation. I didn’t think you would rush into helping her without listening to me.” said Eros in a low voice, not believing this was really happening.

“Tell me, what’s going on? What is going to happen?” cried The Question, her voice filled with terror and fear. After a while Eros finally gathered his courage and spoke.

“You will never be able to show her your face nor to tell her your real name. You will be expelled from here and you’ll have to live invisibly among people, crying out for them, trying to make them listen. They will sense you but they will not see you. But you will also be allowed to play with the people, dwell in the forests and the fields, in the lakes, the seas and the rivers and the mountains, but the play will always be an endless game of hide and seek.”

The Question stood still, not quite believing what he said.

“What is going to happen to the girl? And how about my forests and my lakes and my rivers and my mountains?”, she finally asked.

“She’ll be fine. She’ll make her way up here, and when she won’t find you she’ll return back home and she’ll be happy about the journey, happy about having lost her burden, happy about all the love she has encountered, happy about being free and at home within the bonds she has crafted along the way. And she will always be listening to you, and playing with you in your forests and your lakes and your rivers and your mountains. And eventually, perhaps with her help, but more probably because of their own longing, people will realize that the machines are a poor substitute for you and your forests and your lakes and your rivers and your mountains. And I won’t leave her either, I will be with her and help her go on, as I will help anyone who is listening to your call.”

“Eros, I hope you are right. But your ways are too dangerous. You must promise me to take care of her, to take her back home safely.”

“You know I can’t do that. It is not in my nature,” said Eros, with a sad echo in his voice. “But I can do something. I will go to Imagination and ask her to help me. She will take her back home safely.”

So, The Question left and continued her life in the shadows of the trees, in the gleam of the water, in the blow of the wind and in the beams of light. Sometimes it happened that someone sensed her presence and listened to her. Other people continued building up and taking care of their machines. The Question looked at them

from far away, hoping that someday they would find their way to her forests and her lakes and her rivers and her mountains. Eros continued his wild adventures and created a delightful mess wherever he went. The girl was taken back home safely and everything happened to her as Eros had predicted.

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