LIFELONG LEARNING – SIGNS, DISCOURSES, PRACTICES

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Aims & Scope

"Lifelong Learning" has become a central theme in education and community development. Both international and national agencies, governments and educational institutions have adopted the idea of lifelong learning as their major theme for address and attention over the next ten years. They realize that it is only by getting people committed to the idea of education both life-wide and lifelong that the goals of economic advancement, social emancipation and personal growth will be attained.

The *Lifelong Learning Book Series* aims to keep scholars and professionals informed about and abreast of current developments and to advance research and scholarship in the domain of Lifelong Learning. It further aims to provide learning and teaching materials, serve as a forum for scholarly and professional debate and offer a rich fund of resources for researchers, policy-makers, scholars, professionals and practitioners in the field.

The volumes in this international Series are multi-disciplinary in orientation, polymathic in origin, range and reach, and variegated in range and complexity. They are written by researchers, professionals and practitioners working widely across the international arena in lifelong learning and are orientated towards policy improvement and educational betterment throughout the life cycle.

Lifelong Learning – Signs, Discourses, Practices

by

ROBIN USHER
RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

and

RICHARD EDWARDS
University of Stirling, United Kingdom

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EDITORIAL BY SERIES EDITORS

This volume is a further flowering from the ***International Handbook of Lifelong Learning***, which was jointly edited by David Aspin, Judith Chapman, Yukiko Sawano and Michael Hatton, published by Springer (formerly known as Kluwer Academic Publishers) in 2001. In the ***International Handbook*** we laid down a set of agenda for future research and development, analysis and expansion, strategies and guidelines in the field of lifelong learning. It had become clear that the domain of lifelong learning was a rich and fertile ground for setting out and summarising, comparing and criticising the heterogeneous scope and remit of policies, proposals and practices in its different constitutive parts across the international arena. Certainly the scholars, researchers, policy makers, and educators with whom we discussed this matter seemed to agree with us that each of the themes that were taken up in the individual chapters of the original ***International Handbook*** would merit separate volumes of their own – to say nothing of the other possibilities that a more extended mapping, analysis and exploration of the field might quickly generate.

This volume is a further development of important issues that were raised in the ***International Handbook***. It is the work of our colleagues Robin Usher and Richard Edwards. Their intention in writing this book was to foreground and examine the semiotic complexity of the phenomenon of ‘lifelong learning’ particularly within policy discourses. Their focus on semiosis involves regarding everything as if it is a “text”: in other words, they see semiosis as the task of attempting to understand and interpret everything as in some way a phenomenon of communication and as involving representation. They argue that the common feature of any mode of ‘meaning-making’ is that no sign has intrinsic meaning: anything can be a sign, anything can carry meaning, so long as it is interpreted as signifying something. Their position is that semiosis is a social phenomenon and, when it is deployed, human social ‘meaning-making’ practices are foregrounded. Their emphasis is on how meanings are fashioned and mobilised, as against the search for foundations and the discovery of truth. Their presupposition is that there are no single or eternal truths, since all truths are related to a certain time and place in history, in culture and in discursive systems.

Accordingly in this book Robin Usher and Richard Edwards seek to examine possible significations of learning, alternative ways of signifying learning, and thus alternative codings of lifelong learning. They note that policy-makers at national and supra-national levels are incorporating lifelong learning into the discourses and practices of economic rationalism, where the needs of the economy and of the labour-market are to the fore. On this account lifelong learning discourse is

incorporated into being an adaptive strategy through which to respond to change and through which a knowledge economy can be brought into being and maintained. While recognising the significance of this discourse, Usher and Edwards argue that there is a need to go further if the full complexities and multiple significations of lifelong learning are to be understood. As a counter to what they see as the limiting and limited economic discourse of lifelong learning, they argue for a more expansive way of conceptualising and understanding it, that goes beyond economic discourse, to locate lifelong learning in a variety of practices – social, cultural and political.

Many will see this as highly provocative and contentious contribution to the debate about the nature, character and work of lifelong learning discourse, policies and programs. But we believe that Robin Usher and Richard Edwards have done us all an important service in the preparation of this text. They have argued powerfully that there is no such thing as a 'grand meta-narrative' of "lifelong learning", that should determine and dominate what is to count as a valid and allowable lifelong learning policy, program or practice. They have made a major contribution, we believe, in sharply challenging the domination of the economic in fashioning understandings, policies and practices of lifelong learning. They do not suggest that they are presenting the "true story" of lifelong learning but they do present what they call "various takes" on lifelong learning, which are highly challenging and conceptually rich, rewarding and thought-provoking.

We are pleased that this work by Robin Usher and Richard Edwards helps carry forward the agenda of the Springer Book Series on Lifelong Learning. We thank the anonymous international reviewers and assessors who have considered, reviewed and assessed the proposal for this work and the final manuscript and who have played such a significant part in the progress of this work to completion. We trust that its readers will find it as stimulating, thought-provoking, challenging and controversial as we ourselves have found it. We commend it to all those working in the field. We are sure that this further volume in the Springer Series will provide the wide range of constituencies working in the domain of lifelong learning with a rich range of new material for their consideration and further investigation. We believe that it will encourage their continuing critical thinking, research and development, academic and scholarly production and individual, institutional and professional progress.

March 2006 David Aspin and Judith Chapman

FOREWORD

Texts can often have a long genesis. They also reflect the shifting emphasis in the work of the authors. Since the early 1990's we have worked together on how best to conceptualise the changing arenas of adult education and lifelong learning in the context of wider practical and conceptual changes in the world of which we are part. Such a task is inevitably always itself incomplete and we have been learning as we have gone along. The initial encounters with postructuralism and postmodernism caused much consternation. This was added to by our more recent work with others giving a positive 'spin' to rhetoric. In this text we have taken this interest in a further direction with a broad focus on semiosis.

Underlying all these writings is a concern with meaning-making and meaning-taking in education; how these are understood and the implications of understanding them in particular ways. The meaning of meaning is therefore our focus and thus the reflexivity that has become an important part of our texts. This continues to motivate our work together. In some ways, this interest has become more pronounced as the discourses of adult education have to some extent and in certain spaces and places becomes displaced or replaced by those of lifelong learning. Why and how has that occurred? With what significance? What are the implications? How can we engage with such a shift? These are questions we have begun to address in this text.

Such a text has inter-textual traces and much of this text has been trailed and trialled elsewhere. Some of it has been on our own, some in shared writing and some with others. We are grateful to all those who have contributed to the work that has gone into this text. We would particularly like to thank the editors of this Series for their support for this work, as we are aware that our concerns are not always mainstream to the educational community. Richard Edwards would also like to thank his colleagues at the University of Stirling for covering for him for a semester while he was helping to complete this text. He would also like to thank staff at the Organisational, Vocational and Adult Learning Research Centre at the University of Technology, Sydney for providing an alternative home for him while writing. He also acknowledges financial support from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland during his trip to Australia. Robin Usher would like to thank Professor David Aspin for his support and encouragement and his colleagues in the Research Training Group at RMIT University for making his "day-job" so unburdensome thus allowing this and other work to be completed.

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network . . . The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands . . . Its unity is variable and relative.
>
> *(Foucault 1974: 23)*

Foucault has a point. In writing a book, we cannot escape intertextuality, that no text exists without a relationship to other texts. The point is exacerbated by the diversifying forms and multimodality of communication in today's world. Both in terms of the artefacts of communications – books, computers, mobile phones, games – and the genres of reading and writing – extended prose, texting, images – there is increased complexity, hybridity and possibility. This is the case for all texts. It is particularly the case with this one and consequently it presents difficult authorial challenges. To argue as we intend for the importance of the semiotic, implies that everything is a sign and that no meaning is either original or final. To put it another way perhaps, when it comes to signification there is no root and no telos – no 'natural' foundation from which to start, nor a 'natural' point at which to end. There is only the constant 'play' of meaning. Where therefore to start in this text? Any starting point will itself be a sign pointing to other signs. Any claim as to what learning *is* will potentially be another discursive fashioning and materialization of learning. The statements we make about learning will themselves be open to the question – what do these signify? — and to the counter-argument that we have failed to recognize the reflexivity of our own text about learning. We can anticipate certain reviewers' comments already. Yet we go on . . .

In doing so we recognize these reflexive difficulties and consequently we signal at this point that we will, from time to time, appear to be discoursing about lifelong learning in terms of statements about what it is, for lifelong learning is both real and enacted (Law and Urry 2003) and trying to separate these aspects is impossible. We do this consciously, partly for tactical reasons, in order to clarify our position and energize the reading of this text, and partly also for strategic reasons to do with issues of genre in the practice of writing and publishing academic texts. It is a sign of the times that such will be the case.

But first a confession. It is now well over ten years since our collaboration saw its first fruit in book form, *Postmodernism and Education: Different Voices, Different Worlds*. At the time of its publication in 1994, we were surprised by the response

to a text that was designed to be open and exploratory. Some certainly found it a text of the sort we intended. But others of our peers were intellectually and sometimes personally hostile to that text and some of our subsequent work. Given our own positioning, we have not sought to defend ourselves or that text from the many interpretations we and it has been subject to over the years. Authors do not control the meanings that readers find in texts. Yet, as authors, we have nonetheless grumbled to each other at what we have at times felt to be careless reading of the text. At various points in time, we have discussed not a rejoinder to our critics – we have moved on in our own thinking – but a follow up to *Postmodernism and Education*, a sequel.

This text was not intended as such. Sequels are dangerous, as any movie fan or book lover knows. For every *Lord of the Rings, Alien, His Dark Materials*, or *Harry Potter*, there is many a *Matrix* or *Star Wars*. It is the case that in our joint and separate work, we have in some ways been seeking to destroy rings of power, despite the temptations to hold on to them. We have both fought invasive life forms and been invaded ourselves, become alien. Maybe we have also at times tried to wield a subtle knife and cast spells. And all of this has been to make the real strange and to explore the ways in which the real is, well, realized. But we have not sought to explicitly write a sequel. Yet, at the end of writing this text, we have returned to the start of the introductory chapter with a confession. This text on the semiosis of lifelong learning can also be read as *Postmodernism and Education, the Sequel*.

But what sort of sequel? We feel that we are more in the territory of *Alien* than *Harry Potter*, as the story does not follow on in a direct or linear way. The Sequel, if indeed it is such, is also a new trajectory with characters, some familiar, some new, and with a different storyline. It is therefore possible to read this text without having read the first, as it is possible to view *Aliens* without viewing *Alien*. However, the intertextual traces between the two books like the films means the reading of each is best achieved through engaging with the boundary zone or frontier between them. How else can we understand the significance of the cat to Ripley in *Aliens* unless we have sat viewing the closing scenes of *Alien* shouting at the screen, 'f ... the cat, get out of there!'? Readers of this text can try and identify our cat and its vanishing smile.

So, a sequel. We present it to you as such. But is it the end of the story?

1. POSITIONING LEARNING

In the text that is about to unfold, the focus will be on learning because we take the view that it is impossible to position lifelong learning without first considering the nominal part of this signifier. We will look at different ways in which learning signifies (conveys meaning) and is signified (given meaning). Our position (and here comes an 'is' statement!) is that learning is neither invariant nor unchanging because 'learning' is a socio-culturally embedded set of practices. Given this, lifelong learning therefore is a way, and a significant way, in which learning is fashioned. It is a significant way in which learning is signified in a variety of

contemporary discourses, including but not confined to the educational, in certain spaces and places around the globe.

We will not therefore be discussing the classic question – how do people learn? What we will present will not be unfolded through disciplinary psychology nor enfolded in mentalist explanations. We will not be analyzing the merits or otherwise of the various codings of learning which different schools of psychology have put forward. Similarly, while we will more emphasize those social conceptualizations of learning that have become significant in recent years in many quarters, we do not see our task as that of assessing their adequacy or otherwise. We will not be concerned with the 'truth' in a conventional sense of what different positions have to say about learning, but rather with what and how learning is signified through these positions – what meanings are given to learning in these positions. To put it another way, our interest is in what these fashionings of learning signify, the practices they construct and order as learning.

Following Foucault (2001), our interest is in the *practices* of truth-telling and meaning-making as an activity rather than in the truth per se. This involves examining meaning-making practices within the 'communicational landscape' (Kress 2003) of the contemporary. In effect therefore, we deploy an argument that as learning unfolds in practices, it is enfolded in semiosis, and we will 'perform' this argument by looking at learning semiotically:

> . . . learning and sign-making are two sides of the same sheet of paper . . .; which side we choose to look at depends on the perspective from which we are looking. Both learning and sign-making are dynamic processes which change the resources through which the processes take place – whether as concepts in psychology or signs in semiotics –and change those who are involved in the processes. This makes both learning and representing/communicating into dynamic active processes, far removed from inert notions such as 'acquisition'.
>
> (Kress 2003: 40)

Each conceptualization or fashioning of learning is itself a sign system – a structure of signifiers and signifieds that codes learning in a particular way. As such, these categories function to not only describe what learning is but also to *perform* it into being. They attempt to mark a certain territory in specific ways. Certain practices are inscribed as 'learning' and endowed with particular meaning and significance. Thus, the same event might be described as playing music or as learning music. Furthermore, because meaning-making is 'constantly transformative of the set of resources of the group and of her/himself' (Kress 2001: 407), every category 'speaks' a discourse that signifies people, making them subjects in and of learning and in this way also shaping identity or sense of self. In terms of the example of music, do we describe the person as musician or learner? Since 'we transform ourselves through acts of representation and communication' (Kress 2001: 407), to signify learning is to signify someone who is a *learner*, and who is *doing* that learning.

Every discursive mobilization of learning brings certain practices into focus *as* learning rather than something else e.g. playing music, and provides differing signs

of learning with which we as ‘readers’ can engage with or take up. This depends in part on the affordances of different codings and different modalities through which meaning is made. This is why we argue that learning is semiotic. All learning is fashioned semiotically, that is, through the deployment of a sign system where learning, however it is mobilized, must itself involve the use of such a system. This implies that learning involves processes of interpreting, the making, conveying and taking up of meaning through the assembling, transforming and communication of signs. Thus what counts as learning depends upon the semiosis of the practices engaged. What practices are signified as learning and what as lifelong learning are marked by a struggle to inscribe and convey a particular (and often powerful) meaning into those practices.

When for example what was once inscribed as a hobby becomes re-inscribed as learning, hobbying becomes discursively transformed into a domain of learning. The signification then is that one is learning, no longer simply pursuing a hobby. Similarly, in relation to workplace practices, when work is re-signified as learning, there is an attempt to transform the meaning and significance of work. And of course, inevitably this becomes a contested arena where questions are posed about who does the work of inscribing and with what consequences? Does the hobby or work lose their hobby-like or work-like meanings when signed as learning, or do the latter simply expand the richness of the meanings associated with those particular practices? If learning is coded as lifelong and lifewide, is there a danger of *reducing* all practices to learning when their significations are richer and more diverse? In extending the educational discourse of learning, is there a danger of reducing other meanings and identities within the social order? Or are we extending opportunities through extending the meanings of learning?

The dominant Western world view of knowledge and learning has been that bequeathed by the Enlightenment myth. Most significantly, this powerfully inscribed a technical-rational coding or mode of understanding and acting in the world. Knowledge became unreflexively fashioned as a matter of theorization within disciplinary frameworks that would enable the discovery of the ‘true’ nature of things – the world ‘as it really is’. Out of this, learning signified the acquisition of knowledge, or the truth, about the things of the world, including the truth about self. Furthermore, it was believed that knowledge about learning, gained using the scientific methods of psychology, would lead to the true nature of learning itself being understood.

This world view or myth has had a number of consequences. First, learning has been dominantly signified as the acquisition and internalization of generalized, decontextualized and disciplinary knowledge and so the practices of the everyday or the quotidian were not considered a site of, and for, learning. The discursive practice of psychology fashioned a specific domain of learning outside of the quotidian. Second, modelled on the natural sciences, the role of theorization was seen as that of discovering lawful generalizations enabling prediction and intervention in the world. Hence how learning occurs, what it *is*, was considered amenable to a scientific analysis, which would not only describe how learning occurred but would

also enable appropriate interventions to make learning more efficient and effective. This can be clearly discerned in various theorizations of learning. For example, both behaviourism and cognitivism fashion and inscribe particular meanings to learning, the former signifying learning as conditioning, the latter as information-processing. In both, certain kinds of pedagogical intervention follow from these significations. Even humanistic theory, which self-consciously places itself outside of the natural science paradigm, fashions learning in such a way as to make it amenable to intervention, in this case through student-centredness, counselling and therapy.

It is from these significations that certain dominant understandings emerged which were to powerfully influence the practices of learning:

- An individualistic conception where learning is signified as a possession of the individual
- A transmission model of pedagogy where learning becomes the acquisition and internalization of knowledge through teaching
- The notion that learning is something that can be separated out from living
- The monopolization of the signifiers and discourse of learning by disciplinary psychology
- Contextual and social factors being deliberately excluded in order that scientifically a universal truth about learning could be discovered

In this text, whilst we find them problematic, we do not reject these dominant understandings as ‘untrue’. Rather, we want to stress the important role they have played as *signifiers* of learning, as ways in which learning has been mobilized and institutionalized as various kinds of theory-based practices. Moreover, as sign systems, they have coded learning as more than just a theorization. On the contrary, they have functioned as significant and necessary aspects of discursive practices that confer particular meanings on learning, meanings which have been performative as well as denotative.

In this text we seek to examine different possible significations of learning, alternative ways of signifying learning and thus codings of lifelong learning. Here we draw upon the current interest and work in more activity-or practice-based significations of learning. We do so without also claiming, either explicitly or implicitly, that this alternative coding ‘really’ describes the ‘true nature’ of learning. However, we do see this alternative as both interesting and productive in that it provides a space for tactical moves that enable us to proceed with our narrative, but which at a later point in this text will need to be examined reflexively.

In this signification, learning is fashioned as *socio-cultural*. This meaning foregrounds the relationality that is involved in learning rather than the psychologistic and the internal – learning is not understood as something that happens internally, in one’s head as it were. It is not seen as the possession of individuals but as embedded in, and generated through the *interactions* that individuals have, their participation in practices. It is to do with active knowledge formation rather than with passive absorption of disciplinary knowledge transmitted by pedagogues, although it is also the case that this has been and to some extent continues to be a powerful signification of learning. As relational and active, learning is thus

signified as a social process, a significant aspect of which is part of daily living and inseparable from the totality of our activities as human beings – 'participation in everyday life may be thought of as a process of changing understanding in practice, that is, as learning' (Lave 1996: 6). However, given that much of the quotidian is mundane – something which is lost in explorations which fashion the everyday, such as workplaces, as in some ways exotic – 'the memory of the learning process has simply been erased' (Moran 2005: 126). In other words, the practices of the quotidian are not generally signified as *learning*.

In this fashioning then, learning is unequivocally assembled with significations of the social, with variously context, interaction, activity and situatedness. Human beings are conceived as enfolded in a material and social world with learning itself embedded in a variety of practices within that world. As such then it signifies a process of conceiving and carrying out activities, giving and taking meaning, where activities are inherently relational and semiotic (meaning conveying). This is both signified in the discourses of lifelong and lifewide learning and responds to the socio-cultural theories of learning upon which we draw.

At the same time, to speak of activities as social means that they are subject to norms or dominant meanings, and these constrain and shape the ways in which activities are conceived or understood, and the way they are carried out. In this way, we have to consider the play of power. These things, including interactions, are themselves 'learnt' and they comprise the knowledge that shapes the 'what' and 'how' of communicating, what constitutes an interesting enquiry, how policies are interpreted and so on.

This social dimension we have foregrounded does not signify that no activity is ever done alone or without others. Here 'social' does not exclusively signify 'in the presence of others'. Equally, to say that learning is 'situated' does not exclusively signify 'in a specific location'. Rather it is 'situated' because, as an activity, it is enabled and constrained by a person's socio-cultural understandings, the meanings taken, of his or her place in a social process as well as by the materiality of their condition. Furthermore in this categorization, learning has no beginning and no end – as we mentioned earlier, no root or foundation and no telos. On the face of it, this would seem to have strong resonances with the contemporary significance given to lifelong learning but, as we shall see in the text ahead, there is a different connotation here which we will explore.

To summarize this fashioning of learning therefore, we understand:

- Learning as material and social.
- Learning is 'done' and 'does'; it involves action and work
- It is embedded in practices, we learn through participating in these practices
- Learning occurs as a function of the activity, context and culture in which it is embedded.
- Meaning is fashioned as one learns and fashioning meaning is learning.
- Lifelong learning needs to be understood as a socio-cultural process with multiple significations rather than just as a policy, a mode of provision or some mystical form of meta-learning.

In the text ahead, we will look at the ways in which learning is signified in the contemporary socio-cultural order and we will foreground the signifier 'lifelong learning' and examine its codings. For the time being, we will run with the position that learning needs to be understood in relation to its practice, or more accurately, the *practices* of learning. We will examine what these practices of learning are and their significant characteristics. We will ask...why are these practices enfolded in semiosis and what signifiers are generated in and through these practices? But first, we need to say more about the meaning-making practices of meaning-making upon we which we draw.

2. SEMIOSIS

> The making of signs, outwardly as articulation or inwardly as interpretation, complex or simple, large or small, in the socially shaped environment of everyday lives is the process of semiosis. That process is ceaseless, and for most of the time the process is invisible.
> (Kress 2003: 44)

As we will stress throughout this text, our argument is not grounded in the formal discipline of semiotics. Nonetheless we will appropriate in an eclectic and strategic way some of the 'tools' found in that discipline. At this stage we want to say something about these tools and show how they are productive in further exploring the conception of learning we have just outlined.

Semiosis is not something that has been a major concern either for scholars of learning or for practitioners, such as teachers and educators – at least not explicitly. An exception to this is some of the research on literacy practices, multi-literacies, genre and media education, where semiosis provides an alternative horizon of possibilities that can take account of multi-modal meaning-making derived from the screen as well as the page. Much educational research, however, has been written in the light of what is often referred to as either the linguistic and/or cultural turn in the social sciences and the disciplines more widely. Both of these turns could be said to have put much traditional scholarship into a spin. Here, rather than a concern simply with structure and agency and the various enfoldings or leanings to one side or the other of that dualism, the focus has shifted towards the practices of meaning-making and meaning-taking, or 'writing' and 'reading', in which we all participate as human beings. Most significantly, this embraces not merely the coding and decoding of signs on surfaces, but also the complete range of meaning-making and meaning-taking in which human beings engage – image, text, gesture, etc. and the values, purposes and exercises of power inscribed in them. The practices of meaning-making and meaning-taking located in the lifeworld, or to put it another way, the semiosis of everyday life have become a central focus in recent years. Since the middle of the twentieth century, this has become a key concern for at least one significant understanding of practices. It is one we have shared over the years through our interests in post-structuralism (Usher and Edwards 1994) and, more recently, rhetoric (Edwards et al. 2004).

In this text, however, we wish to explore learning as a signifying practice and those practices that signify *as* learning. That is our aspiration at least, even if reflexively we recognize that our own signifying practices in the text – an inevitable artefact of the academic text book that has to be written in a certain genre and read in a particular way by a particular body of readers – might not signify in quite the ways in which we would expect, given that its uptake and interpretation is dependent on you the reader.

Our starting point is that to focus on semiosis is to regard everything *as if* it is a *text*, or to put it another way, it is to understand and interpret everything as in some way a phenomenon of communication and as involving representation which conveys meaning. Meaning-making very often involves the combining of different modes of communication with some for example, Kress (2003), arguing that in contemporary practices of communication, there is now a greater importance given to the screen and image than to the page and writing. However, the common feature of any mode of meaning-making, whether conveyed through writing, image or gesture is that whilst all these constitute a sign or sign system, the sign has no *intrinsic* meaning. Anything can be a sign, anything can potentially carry meaning, but a sign has to be *interpreted* in order to signify or mean something.

Equally everything has the potential to mean something, even though not everything signifies. For example, in Western social orders wearing clothes does not signify much in itself. It is just a habitual taken for granted, mundane action. However, not wearing them certainly does! Equally *what* clothes are worn also signifies something to many, if sometimes not all, within particular cultures because how and what clothes are worn is coded with meaning, for instance, the controversies over the wearing of the veil in schools by young Muslim women. Here particular items of clothing signify but they signify very different things for different groups – modesty, religious devotion, freedom from the male gaze, female oppression, etc.

Interpretation is a social activity or to put it another way interpretation is embodied in interpretive *practices*. In this chapter and indeed in this text as a whole our position is that semiosis is therefore and inevitably a social phenomenon of (interpretive) social meaning-making practices. What we are foregrounding is how meanings are fashioned and mobilized, conveyed and received – a position that questions any search for foundations or ultimate final meaning and the discovery of truth in the underpinning structure of language. The presupposition here is that there are no single or eternal truths since all truths are related to a certain time and place, or to put it another way, are located in history, culture and in discursive systems. Ways of talking about things, processes and systems of technical action are all best understood as practices of categorization (Bowker and Star 1999). Furthermore since meanings are socially fashioned in this way there is always the possibility of a variety of meaning from one socio-discursive community to another.

Meanings then are always *made* in systems of social interaction and these systems are, depending on circumstance and power, dynamic and open to a greater or lesser extent. Signs signify, or are invested with meaning, but only against a background of meanings always already there and shared within language and discourse networks.

Signs then do not stand alone but are part of a culture or a group within a culture and thus insofar as signs 'represent'

> representation is always 'engaged', it is never natural: that which is represented in the sign, or in sign complexes, realizes the interests, the perspectives, the positions and values, of those who make signs.
>
> (Kress 2003: 44)

We can say than that meaning is relational – signs relate to other signs, both similar and different within the semiotic system (or network) that is culture. Every social order has its semiotic networks and these are material because they are enfolded in practices. These practices constitute the ways in which members of an order perform meaningful actions. Thus we can say that all practices, *as* practices, are semiotic and they are semiotic because they are meaningful in any given social order. They are located in a culture that invests them with certain meanings and values, however mundane, in the process shaping the subjectivity of individuals and forming them as social beings within that culture. To put it another way, individuals become 'subjects' when they 'speak' their culture and conversely when their culture 'speaks' them. We shall delve into this further in Chapter Two.

The meaning of an action or event depends on the relationship between it and its contexts, so both in meaning-making and meaning-taking signs must be connected to contexts (Russell 2005). Thus the importance of *genre* to meaning-making, because to use the wrong genre of discourse within a particular context, for example, the chant of the football crowd in the lecture room setting, would be, to say the least, disruptive of established patterns of meaning-making and meaning-taking. It is also important to note that here context does not *explain* songs and their usage, but rather that these co-emerge as mutually constitutive of each other. For instance, concert halls can be used for concerts, but also scientific demonstrations, religious meeting, political gatherings, etc. The context signifies in different ways through the signifying practices in which people engage.

Thus meaning-making practices can be looked at in two ways. First, they are actions which make sense within a social order. And they can make sense, or convey meaning, whether or not we approve of them, although the senses or meaning made may differ. Second, they include the actions by which we make sense of other actions, events and things. Social orders are composed of people and artefacts *acting* relationally rather than of people per se (we shall say more about this in Chapter Seven). It is the patterns of interactions that define an order or group, how they are similar to and different from other orders and groups, how they stabilize and maintain themselves, and how they might change. Every material process is invested with a meaning in terms of how we communicate about it and how we act with respect to it. What this also means is that representation or the conveying of meaning through a sign is always already a form of action – this is why we have described signifying practices as material.

When texts of whatever kind are created we can refer to this process as encoding and decoding is when they are interpreted. 'Decoding' involves not simply basic

recognition and comprehension of what a text "'says" but also the interpretation and evaluation of its meaning with reference to relevant codes' (Chandler 2002: 175). Codes are combinations of meaning that function as general maps of meaning, belief systems about self and others. Embedded within them are views and attitudes about how the world is or ought to be. Any practice has meanings which arise from the code within which it is enfolded. If a sign does not function within a code it cannot function as a sign – as Hall (1980: 131) puts it, 'there is no intelligible discourse without the operation of a code'. Thayer (1982: 30) argues that 'what we learn is not the world, but particular codes into which it has been structured so that we may "share" our experiences of it'. Since the codes are located within specific cultures and sub-cultures, they express and support the way these cultures are organized and they have a significant role to play in the fashioning and maintenance of 'realities' and orders. This now introduces a political and ideological dimension in the sense that all meanings, since they are encoded, are to some extent dependent on the political/ideological situations of communication use and the exercise of power.

At this point we need to also say something about *denotation* and *connotation*, terms used to describe the relationship between a signifier and signified. Denotation and connotation refer to two types of signifieds with meaning encompassing both. Denotation is the definitional or, literal, obvious meaning of a sign. Looking up a word in a dictionary provides its denotation. Whilst it may not be immediately apparent, denotation involves the use of codes because denotation has no *natural* connection to the thing it signifies. It too is culturally fashioned. Connotation refers to the socio-cultural and personal meanings, or what a sign evokes. Whilst the meanings evoked are personal in the sense that they are typically related to the interpreter's class, age, gender, ethnicity and so on, they should not be construed as referring only to the subjective because they are enfolded within the codes to which the interpreter of the sign has access. Cultural codes therefore provide a connotational framework that is organized around oppositions and absences. Connotational meanings are more open or polysemic than denotational meanings. Whilst we note that lifelong learning has denotational meaning, it is the connotational meanings of lifelong learning that are the primary focus of this text.

In addition to denotational and connotational meanings, signs and codes are generated by myths and in turn serve to maintain them. Here we are not deploying the popular usage of this term as something heroic but false but rather in the sense of myths functioning as extended metaphors enabling sense to be made of experiences within a culture. They express and serve to organize shared ways of fashioning something within a culture. For Barthes (1977), myths have the ideological function of *naturalizing* the cultural. To put it another way, myths make particular values, attitudes and beliefs seem entirely 'natural' –

> normal, self-evident, timeless, obvious common-sense and thus objective and true reflections of "the way things are" rather than the dominant and historically contingent values, attitudes and beliefs of a particular culture
>
> (Barthes 1977, 45–6)

Myths enable a form of 'ontological gerrymandering' (Potter 1996), naturalizing those meanings that arise from practices. In this way 'realities' are articulated that appear to be natural – the world as it really is – rather than socio-culturally contingent. Any 'reality' therefore has authors and is authorized through embodiment in myths and enfolding in codes. These are the truth-telling practices to which we referred earlier. But the possibility of many realities does not imply that realities can be multiplied without limit. Rather, realities need to be understood as the product of socio-cultural definition, therefore as such limited, and far from equal in status or authority. Realities are very often contested and their representations become the sites of power, struggle and conflict with some more dominant than others and that are therefore better able to have their meanings accepted.

We now have some conceptual tools that will enable us to begin our particular exploration of lifelong learning. In the rest of this text we will deploy these tools to fashion our own readings of lifelong learning. These readings will draw from existing meanings but will also and inevitably construct structures of meanings of their own. These will unfold during the course of this text's development.

3. EXPLORING LIFELONG LEARNING – A GUIDE TO WHAT LIES AHEAD

Our starting point for this book was an overarching concern that lifelong learning is dominantly signified within the codes and genres of policy as an instrument to address trends such as globalization, increased economic competition, social exclusion, etc. These have become the dominant mythic codes of lifelong learning. They are deployed in fashioning powerful signs of learning. However, lifelong learning is also signified through other codes to foreground everyday practices, the quotidian, as themselves learning activities. Each representation is engaged in a struggle to inscribe certain practices as learning. In the chapters that follow, we seek to explore that struggle more closely in order to make the invisible work of semiosis in the discourses of lifelong learning more visible, and to explore the work that certain representations of lifelong learning might be said to be doing.

Our intention in writing this text was to foreground and examine the semiotic complexity of the contemporary phenomenon of 'lifelong learning' primarily within policy discourses. We noted that policy makers at national and supra-national levels are incorporating lifelong learning into the discourse and practices of an economic rationalism where the needs of the economy and labour market are to the fore. In this context, lifelong learning is increasingly signified as essential to the development of what is being referred to as 'fast capitalism' and the 'knowledge economy'. Here lifelong learning on the part of individuals, organizations and social orders is discoursed into being as a necessary adaptive strategy through which to respond to change and through which a knowledge economy can be brought into being and maintained.

We recognize the significance of this discourse but we argue that there is a need to go further if the full complexity and multiple significations of lifelong learning

are to be understood. Lifelong learning as a phenomenon needs to be located in trends and globalizing processes that result in what we are naming a 'society of signs'. As a counter to the limiting and limited economic discourse of lifelong learning therefore, we want to argue for a more expansive way of conceptualizing and understanding it, that goes beyond this to locate lifelong learning in a variety of practices – social, cultural, political. In these alternative conceptualizations, practices of lifelong learning that are to do with positioning in relation to the market take their place alongside other social practices such as lifestyle and confessional practices. All of these practices need to be theorized in the context of a social order shaped by globalizing processes, where the growth of the media of various kinds and, more generally, the mediation of meaning are becoming ever more critical. Distributed across these practices, lifelong learning can have a variety of significations. What we seek to do therefore is to position lifelong learning semiotically in relation to the practices that shape subjectivities, learning and ways of knowing.

Our point of entry is that of the linguistic turn in the social sciences that foregrounds semiosis and meaning-making. From this perspective we argue for a critical approach to the understanding of lifelong learning, which recognizes that:

- learning does not reside in individual minds but is distributed in a multiplicity of situations including the situations of the everyday
- learning is not a matter of mental processes but is embedded in practices and hence is both social, material and semiotic
- being distributed and located in a variety of practices, learning has a variety of different significations

We will deploy a range of theoretical perspectives and conceptual resources to illuminate these arguments about learning. These resources provide the means by which practices of lifelong learning can be understood differently. We move away from more conventional and dominant understandings which signify lifelong learning in terms of structures of provision or in terms of the cognitive processes involved in learning. We consider what lifelong learning signifies when it is:

- consumed for its sign value
- floating in the hyper-real
- a language game in a social order constituted by language games
- a postmodern condition of education
- an intellectual and disciplinary technology in governmentality
- a technology of the self
- mobilized as a performative strategy for the construction of a lived space
- embedded in actor-networks
- in an electronically connected world characterised by speed and immediacy
- part of a social order where it is frozen in strata but can also take off on lines of flight
- a 'stammering' practice

Examinations of policy discourse on lifelong learning form a continual thread throughout this text. We will ask – what conceptions of lifelong learning have

shaped policy and to what extent has policy shaped the development of lifelong learning practices? We will argue for a way of understanding lifelong learning that takes account of semiosis and the 'society of signs'. In this sense we adopt a critical approach toward dominant significations of lifelong learning but unlike other critical works which tend to simply focus on alternatives to an economic signification, such as social inclusion, personal development or empowerment, we argue for a more complex and radical re-evaluation of lifelong learning in which 'and' displaces and adds to 'or'. We shall examine this further in Chapter Nine.

In Chapter Two then we look at 'fast' capitalism, the contemporary sign economy and the society of signs, and notions of simulation and representation in social practices. We discuss Baudrillard's hyper-reality and how contemporary practices are about the consumption of signs. We consider the relationship of hyper-reality to consumption in fast capitalism and fast culture. We ask – what is the place of 'lifelong learning' both as conceptualization and practice in the sign economy that plays so significant a part in the operation of the social order? We suggest that lifelong learning is located in contemporary lifestyle practices, a consumption of signs fuelled by desire which can never be satisfied.

Chapter Three is an examination of lifelong learning as a semiotic process. We argue that lifelong learning can be understood in a general sense as a text with multiple meanings realized in a variety of texts and practices. Lifelong learning both as a concept and a set of practices is therefore semiotic and we consider what sort of 'realities' are constructed through these various significations and what are the implied values? In particular, we focus on the representations of lifelong learning in policy texts.

In Chapter Four we will draw upon Lyotard's discussion of the postmodern condition of knowledge. We will examine how lifelong learning can be considered a symptom of a 'knowledge economy' and the performativity it foregrounds where commodified knowledge is both an outcome and a resource. Lyotard took the view that society generally, mirroring the contemporary information order or knowledge society, becomes structured as a system of signs where social relations are extended, free ranging, in constant process and above all reflexive. We take up the notion that the resultant social order is composed of a network of language games where lifelong learning may be one of the games, but also a means that enables taking part in games. With performativity, vocational practices become significant and we examine the significations of lifelong learning that emerge from these practices.

Chapter Five draws on the work of Foucault to explore the ways in which lifelong learning has become embedded in policy discourses that constitute the educational in new ways. We examine Foucault's notions of 'discourse', 'governmentality' and 'technologies of the self' and consider the extent to which policy functions as an indispensable instrument in the mobilizing of citizens as 'active' and 'autonomous' in post-welfare social orders and how this connects with the technologies of the self that are now such a significant dimension of governmentality. We will explore how the confessional practices mobilized under the policy sign of lifelong learning

themselves promote forms of flexibility and adaptability that can be linked to the postmodern condition.

In Chapter Six we explore the relationship between signs and spaces, the ways in which semiotic practices fashion particular spaces as particular types of place. In particular, we examine the ways in which lifelong learning has been mobilized in European Commission policy discourses as part of the wider strategy of developing a European space. We chart the ways in which European Union policy discourses mobilize lifelong learning as part of a performative strategy for fashioning *Europe* as a lived rather than simply a legislative space. Thus the policies of the European Union have become focused on actions which seek to construct Europe as a cultural space with a historical continuity. In this policy, lifelong learning is a sign of the development of a specifically European space and European identity, promoting actions that seek to mobilize Europe as a single if diverse space. We argue that lifelong learning has a critical role to play here in the construction of that space – (or perhaps it is that space?) – through the opportunities for mobility among learners across Europe and the development of European dimensions to the curriculum.

Drawing on the argument in the previous three chapters, Chapter Seven deploys Actor-Network Theory to examine the ways in which learners are mobilized as particular learning subjects – as lifelong learners. The practices of lifelong learning can be seen as actor-networks where participants and participation are ordered in time and space and where there are configurations of the human and non-human within these practices. In particular, we focus on the notion of a 'knowing location', where rather than the emphasis being on a 'learner' constructed psychologically, we can envisage a learner as an actor or subject who comes to know because they are located or positioned 'at the right place in a network of materially heterogeneous elements' (Law and Hetherington 2001: 3) and the types of pedagogic and spatial practices through which persons so located are mobilized. Through a case study of learners and learning in different contexts, we will seek to illustrate the ways in which different 'actants' are mobilized in webs of lifelong learning rather than being confined within the spaces of enclosure of the educational institution.

In Chapter Eight we examine the semiotics of the Internet where lifelong learning is transformed into wider contexts, which themselves start to stretch the discourse of context as a way of framing its practices. In an increasingly globalized and connected world, we argue that the Net is a mode of communication that goes beyond the merely instrumental, that it is on the contrary a meaning system that increasingly shapes many significant dimensions of contemporary forms of life—including practices of learning and knowledge production. We examine the forms of silicon literacies that become part of lifelong learning online, the different forms of communication and the practices surrounding them. We explore both the forms of mobility, virtuality, and community associated with the extension to the Net. The location of lifelong learning within discourses of globalization that are opened up by electronic technologies is also significant here, particularly as with this comes the challenge of globalising and globalised practices for the spaces of enclosure that have shaped modern education.

In Chapter 9, drawing upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari, we argue that lifelong learning can be framed as a rhizomatic practice, both lifelong and lifewide, popping up all over the place and becoming entwined in other practices. This rhizomatic understanding is in contrast to the arboreal, which looks for roots, trunk, branches, twigs, the steady growth of knowledge and understanding. The latter locates learning in certain places, while a rhizomatic understanding mobilizes learning on routes and networks, with learning both literally and metaphorically becoming a 'moving', if often mundane, experience. The chapter will also examine the discourses of teaching and learning that are being deployed to enable lifelong learning to be fashioned as 'technique'. In particular we explore the 'and' that glues teaching and learning together and we suggest, using Deleuze and Guattari's fruitful idea of making language stammer through a radicalization of 'and', that is, the gluing of more bits together. Here lifelong learning can be viewed as a 'stammering' practice.

Finally, in Chapter Ten we engage in some reflexivity asking what our text has performed and some of the questions it poses when one takes semiosis as the name of the game. In opening up lifelong learning as an everyday practice, subject to multiple significations, we have attempted to make the real strange and the strange real, but perhaps in the end we have made the mundane exotic and the exotic mundane. In the quotidian practices of academic research, perhaps this is the inevitable fate of texts such as this one.

Having read this far, and despite the preceding attempt at summary, it is perhaps clear already that the text to follow will not pursue a clear, linear narrative path. We highlight this up front because we do not wish to give the impression that we are presenting lifelong learning's 'true story' – its *bildung* as it were. We do present a story but it is one with many lines of flight, with many layers of signification and with no clear and definitive meaning to fashion lifelong learning. Some may find this shocking and accuse us of incoherence. Some may accuse us of mundanity. Some may be seduced, some engaged, and some entangled. So be it, because we are not presenting a totalizing narrative and we are not attempting to 'master' lifelong learning. What we do try and do is present various 'takes' on lifelong learning using the conceptual resources provided by writers who have interesting things to say and where the deployment of these resources enables us to say interesting if not exotic things about lifelong learning. We hope you think so too.

CHAPTER TWO

SIGNING THE SOCIAL

In this chapter we examine what we have elsewhere referred to as a 'society of signs', a term we used to denote one of the most significant characteristics of the contemporary social order. We argued (Edwards and Usher 1999) that a society of signs is one where social relations and the materiality of the world become mediated through symbolic exchanges, through the production, circulation and reception of signifying practices and where signs have value in their own right. In particular, with the impact of electronic communication and information technologies, the world is increasingly signified as one of infinitely extended flows enveloping the fabric of the lifeworld, a world of all inclusive connectivity.

Before looking at this in more detail however, we need to reiterate the position we put forward in Chapter One concerning social practices and their semiotic characteristics. We argued there that since social practices are *practices* they must therefore be social and material, albeit heterogeneously so. To signify practices in this way is to foreground what people do and what they say, to highlight actions rather than minds, to focus on meanings and interpretations. We signify practices then as both socially fashioned and socially fashioning, expressed in and through particular meaning systems or discursive forms; forms which define spaces within which these practices take place.

This has important implications for how we signify learning in this text and how learning is signified generally in the 'texts' of the social order. If learning is embedded in social practices, then what learning 'means' will be shaped by those practices. However, we want to emphasize that this is somewhat different to the more widely recognized notions of socially situated learning (e.g. Chaiklin and Lave 1996). In the latter, learning is taken to be part of everyday practices, that is, it is part of diverse situations. However, learning itself is taken to denote only certain things, such as a change in understanding. In other words, learning is articulated with a particular univalent meaning. We are arguing on the contrary that learning is not invariant in its significations but firmly located in the space-time of social practices and the social order which co-emerge through these practices. It therefore has many connotations. In this chapter we shall look at what learning signifies in relation to the practices that characterize 'fast' capitalism and its accompanying 'fast' culture.

1. FAST CAPITALISM, FAST CULTURE

In Chapter One we made reference to the three orders of signification; the denotative which is primarily representational, the connotative which is expressive

and the mythic, which reflects the concepts underpinning a worldview (Chandler 2002). According to Barthes (1977), these semiotic codes are made systematically meaningful through signs. In the coding of the social order that has emerged over the last fifteen years, the myths of the knowledge economy, globalization, the new work order and fast capitalism have been repeated over and over as the exigence for lifelong learning. It has become a powerful world view, both for those who support and those who oppose it.

Writers of popular management texts in the 1990s coined the term 'fast capitalism' or 'new capitalism' to signify the 'new work order' consequent on a hyper-competitive, global market for goods and services. They argued that in this new work order there needed to be a different emphasis on efficiency and rational management, different that is to the efficiency and rationality of the Fordist mass production work order. The requirement was seen to be for a form of management that creates a workplace without hierarchy and where work is meaningful rather than alienated, and collaborative rather than individualized. For them, this new work order was driven by the globalizing processes of increased competition where work now has to be geared toward producing customized knowledge-rich products and services for niche markets as opposed to massified and standardized knowledge-poor material goods. Fast anticipatory action and quick responses were needed for 'just in time' or speedy ways of managing and doing things. The argument is that, if businesses are to survive and remain competitive in this rapidly changing global market place, they must become flatter, leaner, decentralized, and make use of the efficiencies afforded by electronic media and computer-mediated communication. They need to become flexible and reflexive accumulators, in part through drawing on the information or 'knowledge' to be gathered through the work process (Lash and Urry 1994). Equally, workers needed to become flexible, multi-skilled team players who are eager to share expertise and who know how to solve problems creatively and collaboratively, instead of mechanically following static job descriptions and prescribed routines. The attributes of the knowledge economy required of organizations and workers are coded as flexibility, adaptability and working smarter, not harder. This then is the new 'knowledge worker' demanded by fast capitalism, a construct with clear implications for learning.

This new capitalism and the 'fast capitalist texts' of popular management writers have generated and distributed new signifiers and new discourses. These are not just about how businesses should be organized, but also about what kinds of subjectivity workers need to have in the new work order – empowered, flexible, productive, able to think critically, and work collaboratively. In effect, the identity of the worker in the workplaces of fast capitalism is being fashioned, or more precisely re-fashioned through such signifiers (Gee et al). Furthermore in re-signifying knowledge this discourse of fast capitalism also re-signifies learning. With rapid and frequent technological change and work processes becoming more complex, knowledge and innovation are now seen as critical to business success. Learning therefore becomes re-fashioned as 'lifelong' in order for knowledge workers to keep up with the pace and intensity of inexorable change.

Fast capitalism then denotes an economy where the strategic core activities of businesses play out in a global space and in real time. Today's massive movements of capital are seen as depending on the constant and fast flow of knowledge, or perhaps more accurately, knowledge intensive information, across global markets. This is an economy operating on a global scale and characterized by its mobility and celerity. Speed is thus understood to be the critical factor in contemporary capitalism's system of flexible accumulation and the practices associated with it. It is also an economy crucially dependent on ICTs for database management programs and enterprise communication tools, for selling goods and services, for the automation of the supply function and generally to operate and manage businesses.[1]

Even more significantly perhaps, multi- and trans-national businesses actually sell speed as both a key service and a critical feature of their products. In corporate advertising, the signifier par excellence is 'speed'. Telcos, which sell bandwidth technology, signify the mastery of real time obtainable by their product in terms of how all knowledge can become *immediately* available anywhere, anytime, with it. Ideas shared without delay. In share trading markets, stocks can be traded instantly. For investors, the speed of transactions is critical with this becoming a highlight in competition for business. Goods can be distributed overnight. In many parts of the globe, consumers now expect that all commodities and services will be no more than twenty four hours away, so business has to respond with just-in-time delivery of production. Speed as well as flexibility are therefore signifiers of the new economic and work order. As we shall argue later, they are also signifiers of lifelong learning.

With the space-time compression associated with globalizing processes, time and distance are positioned as no longer presenting tyrannies, obstacles to the ceaseless and relatively friction-free information flows necessary for both the control of inventories and the integrating of supply and demand in the market. Thus the growth of global markets, unified and synchronized across space and time. Paradoxically, however, as space becomes compressed, speed no longer needs to be accentuated and it 'disappears' in the sense of no longer being noticed. Speed is simply *assumed* to be fast, in effect that becomes the norm. As a consequence, it could be argued that speed therefore now shapes practices in a critical way, directly but unconsciously. Speed not only signifies the capacity for overcoming the fixity of time and distance, it also has come to connote the possibility for increased flexibility, efficiency and productivity. At the same time, speed has spilled over its boundaries in production and investment into the world of consumption and the domain of everyday life[2]. We may still be looking for fun and feeling groovy, but whether we can do it through slowing down is questionable.

Of course, if it was all as simple as this, there would be no critique. Yet the struggle to inscribe specific meanings into the social order continues. For instance, neo-Marxist critics have argued that speed is the means by which the tendency for the profit rate to fall over time is countered, even though it also has the paradoxical effect of contributing to that tendency. By reducing 'friction', speed enables an accelerated velocity of production. Most significantly for our purposes,

the argument is that the culture or sign industry spreads this tendency from the realm of production to the realm of culture by commodifying the latter. The same logic of capital with regard to material objects now also applies to the production of images (Goldman and Papson, 1996, 1998). With this proliferation and accelerated circulation of signs, there is a hyper-commodification and mediatization of culture. Thus, as capitalism grows ever more competitive in trying to extract additional sign-exchange value for commodities, the circuitry of signification speeds up, there is an accelerated velocity of semiotic particles passing through the circuits of capital (Agger 1989) and culture is turned into commodity signs. Culture too becomes 'fast'. Meaning becomes dispersed and fragmented.

The critics argue that the obsessive quest for value undermines the very condition of valuation, yet further contributing to the speed of abstraction and decontextualization (or de-territorialisation) which is necessary in a sign value economy. With image or signs already abstracted, the tendency towards deterritorialization becomes compounded because the duration of images diminishes while the circulation of images increases, once again offseting the tendency for the profit rate to decline. Fast capitalism is therefore deterritorializing, with a clear movement from fixed structures – traditions, work practices, place and nation states – to more fluid ones (Hardt and Negri 2000).

The reordering and recoding of social life as a system of signs is one effect of the discourses of the so-called information society, knowledge economy, or fast capitalism. One argument then is that the result is a world without moorings, free-floating, weightless decontextualized signifiers proliferating in search of meaning (Waters 1995). Signs become decontextualized, plundered from a variety of referent systems – nature, history, literature, exotic cultures, and projections of the future. The argument is that there are no coherent maps any longer, no ultimate authority to anchor meaning, only a cultural world in a permanent state of flux. Connotation comes to the fore over and above denotation. As Lash (2002) suggests, at one level, since their meaning cannot be grounded, signs have become emptied out, but they still need to be situated as part of the signifying practices within which they occur. It is their very emptiness that enables the play of connotation.

Lyotard (1984) took the view that the social order generally, mirroring the information order, becomes structured as a system of signs where social relations are extended, free-ranging, in constant process, and reflexive. Signs, it is argued, flow freely and promiscuously with no clear connection to a subject or a concrete referent. As the society of signs takes hold, the lifeworld becomes technologically textured, social life becomes more abstract or *virtual*, bearing in mind that the virtual is also material. This world of fast capitalism, increasingly influenced by electronic technologies and media, connects but also distances, Thus the increased role and significance of electronic media underpins this characterization of the contemporary world as a society of signs. Baudrillard (1988) sees the phenomenon of electronic communication networks and the resulting connectivity both as a symbol and an aspect of the changes taking place in the social order.

There seems to be considerable agreement then about what electronic media signify and their effect of compressing space and time, which has enabled the exponential growth of globalizing processes and fast capitalism. Alongside this, in the centres of economic power, there has occurred a culturalization and de-differentiation of public and private spheres, work and civil society, the growth in importance of culture and lifestyle practices in the aestheticization of life and the cultivation of identity. The boundaries between high culture, popular culture, the market and everyday life become blurred (Lash 1990; Featherstone 1991; Harvey 1989). The production of signs and signifying practices come to the fore. Lash and Urry (1994) identify two sorts of signs. There are signs which have primarily cognitive content and those which have primarily aesthetic content –

> The development of the latter can be seen in the proliferation of objects which possess and substantial aesthetic component... but also in the increasing component of sign-value or image embodied *in* material objects.
>
> (Lash and Urry 1994: 4, emphasis in original)

This has been signified as a culturalization of the material world of goods and products that goes alongside a materialization of the world of culture where in effect, everything becomes 'culture', what has often been referred to in terms of both affirmation and critique as a postmodern condition. Images and information – signifiers as cultural artefacts – become pre-eminent hallmarks of economic growth and innovation. At the same time, centres within the social order flourish where lifestyle concerns that are manifested through consumption rather than production become significant. The influence of fashion, image and taste pervade an increasingly all-embracing consumer culture that affects all social groups, although some more than others –

> We thus live in increasingly individuated and symbol-saturated societies, in which the advanced-services middle class plays an increasing role in the accumulation process. This class assumes a critical mass in the present restructuration: as symbol-processing producers *and* as consumers of processed symbols...
>
> (Lash and Urry 1994: 222, emphasis in original)

Both reflecting and reinforcing these trends are the developments in social theory, upon which we draw and to which we draw attention:

> from the analysis of social reality as such to the analysis of signs, languages, discourse, and talk – the media through which social reality comes into being and disperses itself across and through a body politic.
>
> (Lemert 1997: 74)

As the significance of the one grows, it adds to the tellingness or significance of the other as a way of signifying social practices. Here it is not the materiality of the world that is denied, but rather there is a foregrounding of the articulation of *worlds* mediated through signifying practices, themselves material whose workings – their production, circulation, reception – become the focus for analysis (Kellner 1995). Signifying practices, the production and re-production of meaning

through communication, whether via the word/symbolic, the visual/iconic or via contiguity/indexicality have become central to fast capitalism, critical to the process of generating and reproducing value in the global economic system.

One of the most common elements in characterizations of postmodernity is the emphasis on the increased rate of change in the world, which is signified both as a reflection of, and a contributor to, conditions such as (dis)location, disembeddedness, risk, speed and hyper-reality. With this, there is an invocation of 'the vertigo, the disorientation, the delirium created by a world of flows and images' (Morley and Robins 1995: 112). The significance of signs and concerns with meaning-making point reflexively to the growing significance of those media which we can perhaps now characterize not only as *significant* but also as *signifying* technologies. Many argue that we are already in hyper-reality, already located in a society of signs, even as we attempt to understand or give meaning to the social order in this way – 'we now live in a global and largely semiotic (dis)order' (Lash 2002: 32). However, whilst we happily put forward this proposition, reflexively it would be inappropriate for us to be definite about it, given our own foregrounding of the uncertainty and ambivalence of meaning and the assertion of very fundamentalist meanings by other actors in the social order which we find highly problematic.

In what follows therefore we are going to look at particular kinds of practices, those lifestyle practices that are embedded in fast capitalism and fast culture. We will do so by first examining notions of *hyper-reality* and then aspects of consumption that are said to characterize the society of signs.

2. HYPER-REALITY – HYPE OR REALITY?

It is in the work of Baudrillard that we witness the most provocative rendition of a society of signs, a society in which speed plays a prominent part. He talks about speed from almost every angle, from his theory of simulacra to the paradoxes of history, which according to him has come to a standstill even though its internal mechanism or 'code' is working at top speed. His work is undoubtedly extremely controversial in his, at times, apparent fatalism in the face of a revitalized consumer capitalism with all its associated pleasures and oppressions (Plant 1992, Poster 1996). He is often accused of hyperbole rather than analysis and there is something in that criticism, although it fails to understand the 'fatal strategy' that he adopts in his writing. This involves pushing arguments to their extremes in order to disrupt established common sense and often oppressive approaches to reading, writing and meaning. This fatal strategy is meant to reveal the 'outside' or limit of the all-enveloping hyper-reality which he believes characterizes the society of signs.

For Baudrillard, denotation, reference with stable meaning, has become increasingly problematic with electronic media playing a significant part in this development. The proliferation of signs seems to accelerate production of the real, but in the process fixed and definitive meanings slip away amidst a 'confusion of

signs, images, simulations and appearances' (Plant 1992: 194). Representations have always had the power to stand for the real, the true, the authentic, the meaningful, but their very proliferation as signs now results in a situation where 'ubiquitous images, simulations, and reproductions no longer distort or conceal the real; reality has slipped away into the free-floating chaos of the hyper-real' (Plant 1992: 155). In this situation, the real and that which purports to represent it become inseparable. Representations become media-ted to the point where paradoxically they become more real than the real. This is what he means by *simulacra*, copies or models that nonetheless have no originals, that are re-produced as hyper-real and where, although not without meaning, that meaning, given that it is not anchored to an external object or referent, becomes multiple and even undecidable – what we referred to earlier as weightless, decontextualized signifiers[3].

Thus Baudrillard claims, we now live in a culture of the hyper-real:

> Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory — a precession of simulacra — that engenders the territory...
>
> (Baudrillard 1995: 1)

As lives become shaped by signs that function without reference to objects, identities, or needs, simulacra—the copies of a lost reality (for example, the 'country breakfast' at a shopping mall, the 'traditional' dresses worn by every waitress in a franchised 'ethnic' restaurant, *Apocalypse Now* as the Vietnam War, people playing out their lives as a soap opera, reality TV as more real than 'reality')—combine and recombine in an apparent free play. These copies or models of the real become the point of reference. This society of signs that is shaping a new social order, where the ground for the real has disappeared, is then itself a simulation of reality rather than the reality itself of that order.

Thus, for Baudrillard, the possibilities for the production, reproduction and proliferation of signs results in a situation where it becomes no longer possible to determine what is authentic or original from that which is its simulacrum. The binaries of contextualized-decontextualized, authentic-inauthentic, etc. lose their grip – 'the real becomes not only that which can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced, the hyper-real' (Baudrillard 1996: 145–6). In other words, the real comes to us as always already media-ted and therefore always already interpreted and re-interpreted. What lies 'behind' is not the authentic, but simply another mediation, even though it is signed as authentic. Signs then are not tied to referents, but have conventional meanings gained through the struggle to signify, to turn the orders of connotation and the mythical into that of denotation. There is nothing outside of simulation in the sense that to articulate the real can only be done through some kind of system that makes articulation, and therefore meaning, possible. The important point here is that the deployment of any system immediately opens the door to simulation. Furthermore with the proliferation and accelerated circulation of images, hyper-reality is now no longer a limited experience but rather

the major condition of contemporary life. As Baudrillard (1988: 135) says, 'we do not engage with the real, but with the simulation that has everywhere supplanted it'.[4] Where there is no 'real' behind representation, but only the practices of simulation and the production of the hyper-real, the very notion of representation has to be reconfigured.

All this undoubtedly sounds strange and unreal. Baudrillard appears to be saying that there is no reality any more, that all is unreal. Is he claiming then that he himself is unreal, a mere simulacrum? Our way of reading Baudrillard however is that, contrary to appearances, he is not actually trying to *abolish* reality, let alone himself! Baudrillard's world of simulation is not unreal, nor is it the realm of the irrational. Although it is impossible to see or touch hyper-reality, it is by no means unreal in the sense of not existing, of their being no materiality of the world. Rather, hyper-reality is perhaps best understood as a *code* or structural force in fast capitalism. Equally, it is not irrational since a model or simulation 'can be used as an analytical tool' (Baudrillard 1970: 195) as he himself does in his writing. The real that is fashioned by any system, including the system or code of simulation, is one where each code creates its own real by making the world over in its image. In other words, any system *codes* the world or the real in its own way and thereby fashions a simulation of the world or the real that whilst it is a simulation is nonetheless real. Simulation is thus connotative and mythic.

For Baudrillard, simulation then is not illusion, it is not the replacement of the world by its image nor a denial of the reality of everyday events. Paradoxically simulation is not so much the loss of reality but its very *possibility* in the contemporary situation. The world as it is can only be grasped on the basis of simulation. The copies shape the way reality is perceived, or to put it another way generate meanings not only in the cultural domain but in all spheres of everyday life. Hence, as with the analysis of fast capitalism, everything becomes culturalized. One consequence is that the boundary between the simulated and real breaks down and in this hyper-real world for example, Ronald Reagan, an actor, becomes a simulation of politics, in the process signalling the breakdown of the boundary between entertainment and politics. Politics becomes a movie with the President acting or more accurately simulating the President of the US. *Apocalypse Now* and *Platoon* become simulations of the Vietnam War, war becomes a movie, in the process signalling the breakdown of the boundary between information and entertainment.

While we might not want to go as far as Baudrillard in characterizing a society of signs as one totally enveloped by simulacra and hyper-reality what we do find convincing is the notion that the contemporary social order is one of *virtuality*. Here 'virtuality' signifies not only images in cyberspace but also the intensity, autonomy and mobility of images in everyday life, images that simulate the real and themselves *become* the real. So we can ask what does 'society' signify when we engage with the practices of consuming the signifying images of culture – the hyper-commodification of culture noted earlier – and what are the implications of this hyper-commodiciation for how learning is signified?

3. YOU ARE WHAT YOU CONSUME

'We can't let terrorists stop us from shopping'[5]

Consumption is a difficult and controversial topic in education and many other social science disciplines because, whilst there is a reluctant acceptance that consumption figures importantly in people's lives, its significance is often accounted for in terms of the language of manipulation and false consciousness. There are certain influential critical paradigms of consumption. For example, the Marxist school where consumption is seen as simply a reflex of production, and the Frankfurt School where it is seen as alienated consciousness, the source of manipulation and passivity. In other words, consumption tends to be signified as ideology with ideology critique the only appropriate response. We, on the other hand, would argue that, although it is certainly the case that not all can consume equally, it is also the case that all in some way are affected by consumer culture and consumerist discourse and images, and not necessarily in a manipulative or mystifying way. We prefer to see consumerism as the code of a common 'language' through which cultural significations can be read or interpreted. In fast culture consuming is a principal mode of self-expression and the experience of social participation is often contingent on consumption. Furthermore, this is not to be accounted for simply by pointing to manipulation and the inducing of false consciousness, since it neglects the dimension of desire that is manifested in consumption and to which even oppressed groups are not immune. At the same time, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that rather than always being victims and dupes of consumer culture 'consumers can resist the dominant economic order, even as they consume its outputs, its commodities and its images' (Gabriel and Lang 1995: 139). De Certeau (1984) argues that in the practices of everyday life people can transgress economic rationality and subvert the existing order by using consumer objects for purposes different to those intended for them by their producers – in effect, resisting through consuming – and this is itself a mode of self-expression. In other words, through consumption one can engage in meaning-making of one's own, which does not simply reflect the meanings of those who produced that which is consumed.

Writers who draw on postmodern theory (for example, Featherstone 1991 Urry 1994, Usher et al. 1997) have highlighted the significance of consumption in the social order and how identities are increasingly developed through consumption. They argue that for many, experience is now more rooted in processes of consumption than production. Goods consumed shape identities in terms where what is consumed function as *signs* of identity in processes of differentiation (signifying particular difference from others) and solidarity (signifying the same as particular others). Furthermore, because the consumer market is flexible and more dynamic than earlier ways of shaping identity – for example, through production or occupation – there exists more fluidity in a cultural 'supermarket', where choice and variety are often multiple. We mentioned earlier the hyper-commodification of culture by signs and simulations, where lifestyle choices are themselves hyper-differentiating, i.e. constantly and rapidly changing. In providing opportunities for

self-expression, these choices stimulate a desire for further consumption. Thus identities can be changed more often, can be experimented with, and therefore there is less commitment than before to any singular fixed identity. This is what is signified by the argument that there is an *aestheticization* of life, a whole range of practices that revolve around the aesthetic where the emphasis is on lifestyle and its enhancement. Those sites that have become centres of aesthetic consumption are easily identified – urban areas, re-developed and gentrified, shopping malls, museums, theme and heritage parks. All of these sites *signify*, and provide spaces for new experiences and the (re)formation of new identities. This is why many argue that lifestyle has now become more significant than work or occupation in shaping many people's subjectivity and through that their sense of identity.

Earlier we referred to the consumption of *goods*. Now however, following Baudrillard, we want to argue that consumption is not so much about the consuming of goods per se, but more about the signs and significations with which the consumption of goods is indelibly imbued. Consumption in other words is a *meaningful* activity where goods, objects or images become *signs* that communicate something to someone where that which is consumed generates markers of similarity and difference that code behaviour and *bring forth* individuals as the same or different. Consumer culture is therefore semiotic, an economy of signs, where individuals and groups through what and how they consume communicate messages about position and worth.

Consumption is cultural because it always involves *meaning*. For example, in order to experience a 'need' and to act on it by consuming, we must be able to interpret or give meaning to our experiences and our situations and these interpretations are culturally fashioned. Thus consumption is articulated within specific meaningful ways of life. For example, no one simply eats, they have 'dinner' or a 'snack', no one simply eats 'food', they eat 'bread' or 'foie gras', no one simply buys a car, they buy a Ford or BMW where owning the latter means something quite different from owning the former[6]. All these differential meanings are culturally contingent. If all consumption is culturally meaningful in this way, this implies that nothing is consumed purely and simply on a functional basis. Indeed, the function of an object is just another meaning and therefore itself can be analyzed in terms of its location in semiotic systems and practices. Looked at this way, objects are not taken up just for their use or function but primarily to *communicate*. This also implies that objects do not have meaning in themselves but only in relation to other objects, bread as against foie gras, a Ford as against a BMW. Thus the important thing is to understand the ways in which meanings fashion social relations and social order. Looked at this way, consumption signifies a mechanism for the cultural production and reproduction of social relations and social order. As such it is a material and semiotic process, carried out through the practices of everyday life. Consumer objects then have an exchange or sign value, meaning that they signify something about the consumer in the context of a social system.

In the advanced economy of fast capitalism, it is meaning, not use or function, that is positioned as prior, and meaning is generated and distributed through consumer

objects. In effect, individuals 'buy' their identity or 'being' with each act of consumption. Baudrillard therefore sees consumption, not as a passive 'using up' of produced items, but as a framework that enables active relationships within a cultural system (Buadrillard 1996).

This semiotic 'system of objects' defines the 'code of social standing' of a social order, a structural and differential logic of signs (Baudrillard 1998) where consumption is a signifying substance. The object becomes a sign that 'is never consumed in its materiality, but in its difference' (Baudrillard 1968: 277). Everything exists within this logic, he argues, a logic that constitutes the *signifying fabric* of our everyday existence. Looked at this way, consumption then becomes the means whereby a complex discourse between artefacts, social order, and self is enacted –

> Consumption. . ..is not defined by the nourishment we take in, nor by the clothes we clothe ourselves with, nor the car we use, nor by the oral and visual matter of the images and messages we receive. It is defined, rather, by the organization of all these things into a signifying fabric: Consumption is *the virtual totality of all objects and messages ready-constituted as a more or less coherent discourse*. If it has any meaning at all, consumption means *an activity consisting of the systematic manipulation of signs*.
>
> (Baudrillard 1996 200, emphasis in original)

The difference between fast and classical capitalism is not only economic and political, but cultural also, because whilst classical capitalism fostered an ethic of production, fast capitalism fosters and indeed requires an ethic and also an aesthetic of consumption – the fast culture noted earlier. For Marxists, labour was the source of creativity and fulfilment, but now this is the role assumed by consumption. In the process, 'the circulation of images as true value' (Baudrillard 1988: 11) has become the most significant tendency in fast capitalism.

The mythic code that now structures the social order necessary for the sustaining of fast capitalism can be referred to as *consumativity* (an amalgam of consumption and hyper-reality signifying the impossibility of separating these). This code links together hyper-reality, consumer culture and fast capitalism. Consumerism, the motor of sign values, is the contributing factor in creating hyper-reality. As we have seen, the hyper-real is a world of constantly proliferating images or simulacra that are *consumed* as a desirable and meaningful reality. With the consumption of images, 'human thoughts and feelings mingle with the desire induced by images, which indefinitely postpone fulfilment by sliding to other images, and yet others' (Aycock 1993), 7). For Baudrillard, the code of consumativity marks a ceaseless movement such that the consumption of images is never satisfied – there is always a *lack* – 'am I cool enough?' – 'does my car really make me seem that I've made it or should I exchange it for a model that will?' There is an endless desire 'to confront and possess the real whereas there can only ever be access to an *image* of the real, its pretense of being' (Baudrillard 1988: 45). Furthermore, as capitalism puts people in a competitive position with one another, it is not so much that each desires a specific object, but that each desires what the other desires. To put it another way, people desire the desires of the other. When fulfillment by means of simulation,

there will always be more images to be consumed and more desires to be attended to, with fulfillment indefinitely postponed. Thus the dispersion and fragmentation of meaning as processes of cultural commodification feed an accelerating circulation of meaning in the sphere of culture.

From this, we can highlight three significant features of consumption. First, it is always incomplete, it always precipitates an absence. Second, it neither knows any bounds nor respects existing boundaries with image taking over from modernist grand or metanarratives in generating meaning. Third, meaning or signification, although achieving temporary anchoring points, is ultimately always deferred. Relating this to the economy of fast capitalism, the cultural economy of signs bears a structural resemblance to the conventional economy of commodities which gave birth to it. Goods and services are invested with iconic difference and value to make them stand out, to signify difference. With the vigorous competition of the globalized market, businesses strive to stylistically differentiate the value of their goods and services from those of others. In this competitive image environment, the resort to more and more rapid image turnover is perhaps inevitable.

The consumption of signs in conditions of speed and fluidity must involve a constant yet unstable re-positioning of subjectivity and a re-forming of identity. As a result, human subjectivity becomes a *task*, a performance – always in process. It cannot be a given, so becoming rather than being is the ontological priority. Experience becomes contingent and flow-like rather than coherent and determinate. New forms of experience proliferate. Experience generates further experience. Sensibilities are attuned to the pleasure of constant and new experiencing, where the flow of experiencing becomes its own end rather than a means to an end, part of a constant making and re-making of a life-style. The unified, coherent and sovereign self of modernity, the firm ground for the fixing of identity, becomes a multiple discontinuous self traversed by multiple meanings and whose identity is continually in a process of re-formation. Virtuality becomes a significant mode of personal experience, the play of images experienced in the virtuality of the hyper-real shaping subjectivity.

4. WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR LEARNING?

What indeed does all this mean for learning and how do fast capitalism, hyper-reality and signifying consumption impact on the contemporary significations of lifelong learning? What we want to argue is that Baudrillard points to a loss of finalities, the undermining of the notion that knowledge must have foundations. The consequence of this is a decentring of knowledge and a valorisation of multiple forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. With this, comes a re-signification of learning. With simulation, finalities lose their definitive meaning because they assume the existence of an unmediated real. Baudrillard's argument is precisely that there is no unmediated real. There is a real, but it is a hyper-real and with the hyper-real there can be no finalities.

In a condition of hyper-reality, rather than the search for hidden truth or deep meaning, the pursuit of *a* truth, learning becomes instead a response to desire in the pursuit of the multiplicity of meanings, a range of truths and an involvement in truth-making practices. As we discussed in Chapter One, if representations become images with a meaning detached from what they purportedly represent, the question shifts from – what is true? – and is this a faithful representation of reality? – to how is truth fashioned?—who is to be trusted and what makes reality real? In this situation, experience comes to be seen 'not as an unmediated guide to "truth" but as a practice of making sense, both symbolically and narratively, as a struggle over material conditions and meaning' (Brah 1996: 116). Given the proliferation of signs and meaning-making possibilities, it is little wonder that practices of signification, such as those to do with lifestyle, have enfolded and displaced traditional questions of representation, particularly now that the latter is itself seen as a signifying practice.

None of this need be understood as a *refusal* of knowledge, even though it does not signify learning as conventionally understood. It is perhaps better seen as 'a reformulation of what the desire for knowledge might be about' (Game 1993: 18). These reformulations may include a desire for truth as revelation, truth as advocacy, truth as resonance as well as truth as correspondence and even for truth as the renewed search for foundations. Even though many still claim to do so, increasingly no one of these truths can claim to speak the *whole* and definitive truth. And perhaps most significantly it is recognised that they cannot, even though many would still wish them to be so. This possibility of many truths may for some be disturbing whilst for others it may be a pleasure, as is the multiple possibilities for re-formation of identity that underpins the desire for knowledge.

In his influential characterization of late modernity, Giddens (1990, 1991) argues that matters of identity, of who and what one is, become urgent questions in need of an answer rather than answers that can be drawn from meanings that are already available in a pre-given socio-cultural order. The context is one where the proliferation and volatility of signs results in a volatility of identity and less secure groundings from which to make sense of those signs. This argument largely accords so far with the one we have been making. However, Giddens goes on to argue that the greater the range of decisions that people have to make, there arises an existentially and semiotically troubling situation where the very uncertainty and ambivalence which give rise to the need to make decisions actually makes such decision-making less secure and therefore troubled. The acceleration of the speed of life with its associated proliferation of signs makes choice at one and the same time both necessary and stressful. Here Giddens fashions contemporary times as entailing a troubling 'risk' – a signification which appears to give further urgency to the need for lifelong learning as a means of dealing with it, but which itself is stressful and troubling. We however, find this aspect of Giddens' argument problematic. In relation to lifestyle practices, the signification of risk is different. Here the proliferation and consumption of signs, far from being simply existentially troubling can also be existentially pleasurable, as is the need to continually remake identity. There is risk but it is one of not being able to signify oneself in desirable

ways, of not being able to respond to lack and desire with learning. Lifelong learning here can be about pleasure and creativity and whilst it is needed it is not simply a means of making troubling decisions or trying to maintain some stability of identity in troubled times.

What all this signifies is an openness rather than a closure, the desire to assert a definitive truth, even though many will continue to seek such a truth. This bears significantly on a point made earlier about the aesthetics of the sign value economy and culture. In this social order, lifelong learning is learning energised by desire which can follow many paths, rather than learning governed by the pursuit of universal truth (science), unproblematic democracy (citizenship) or even the more obvious learning demands of the market. It is not so much that these latter disappear, far from it, it is rather that they no longer constitute quite the dominant and exclusive significations of 'worthwhile' and valuable learning. They become just a part of the desire to learn.

Given this, it is perhaps not coincidental that the current scene is marked by the increasing ubiquity of 'learning' and a lessening perhaps of the centrality of institutional education. There is an increasing diversity, multiplicity and de-differentiation characterizing the landscape of learning, and a reconfiguring of learning opportunities away from what educators think is good for learners to what learners themselves consider valuable and value-adding –

> Educational practitioners rather than being the source/producers of knowledge/taste become facilitators helping to interpret everybody's knowledge and helping to open up possibilities for further experience. They become part of the 'culture' industry, vendors in the educational hypermarket. In a reversal of modernist education, the consumer (the learner) rather than the producer (educator) is articulated as having greater significance and power
>
> (Usher et al. 1997: 107–108)

As people become increasingly positioned as consumers, learners also become signified as consumers of learning. We would argue that participation in learning activities or episodes, coupled with the increased significance of non-institutional learning, cannot be understood then without reference to consumption. Clearly, learning is coded by consumption although the extent to which consumption is coded by learning is a moot point. Linked to this is the widespread and continuing impact of electronic media which at one and the same time are becoming increasingly sophisticated and increasingly accessible. In practical terms, one consequence of this is the availability of a range of learning options, catering to all tastes and interests and previously unavailable, now waiting to be consumed. Learning activities have become consumer goods in themselves, purchased as the result of choice within a market-place where learning products compete with those of leisure and entertainment. Indeed, as we have noted these are indistinguishable as the boundaries between leisure, entertainment and learning are increasingly blurred through forms of edutainment. For example, people increasingly learn from games and television programmes whose aim is entertainment (for example Gee 2003, Rowlands 2005),

and educational activities geared to consumer satisfaction produce outcomes previously associated only with leisure and entertainment. What these practices signify to those participating in them, however, remains an important empirical question.

Of course, choice is largely due to long-term changes in affluence that have enabled an increasing number in certain parts of the globe to exercise greater choice in the purchase of goods and services, in how they spend their money and in how they use their time. Furthermore, unlike the mass consumption of modernity, consumption, as have seen, is now signified as choice for difference and difference as choice, the different and distinctive within a signifying culture that stimulates dreams, desires and fantasies in developing the life project of the self. Thus learning can come to be signified in terms of lifestyle practices:

> ...knowledge becomes important: knowledge of new goods, their social and cultural value, and how to use them appropriately. This is particularly the case with aspiring groups who adopt a learning mode towards consumption and the cultivation of a lifestyle. It is for groups such as the new middle class, the new working class and the new rich or upper class, that the consumer culture of magazines, newspapers, books television and radio programmes which stress self-improvement, self-development, personal transformation, how to manage property, relationships and ambitions, how to construct a fulfilling lifestyle, are most relevant.
>
> (Featherstone 1991: 19)

Knowledge (what is learnt) has itself become a sign, a commodity, a product in its own right that can be purchased and consumed for its economic and cultural value – capital which can confer competitive advantage and/or status or at least alleviate the fear of falling behind, either economically or culturally. The implication of this is that knowledge must be made consumable by, for example, pricing, marketing and packaging it attractively. To put this another way, it must have the appropriate signifiers for learners and what constitutes ‘appropriate’ will vary with the practices concerned. Thus, we witness the increased attention given to the packaging and marketing of education, as illustrated through prospectuses and web pages. In relation to the former, gone are the simple texts giving information on the course available printed in black and white. We now have glossy publications in colour with lots of pictures to try and entice people into thinking that educational institutions are places for them.

Learning is integral to lifestyle practices and works connotatively through an expressive mode within these practices. It is individuated with an emphasis on self-expression marked by a stylistic self-consciousness. Aestheticization, the self-referential concern with image, and the constant and pleasurable remaking of identity necessitates a learning stance towards life as a means of self-expression. In the process individuals are themselves positioned as meaning-makers, as ‘designers’ (Cope and Kalantzis 2000, Kress 2003). From this perspective, the semiotic view of people as makers of meaning recodes the cognitive view of people as mentalistic learners. Every aspect of life, like every commodity, is imbued with self-referential meaning; every choice an emblem of identity, each one a message to ourselves and to others of the sort of person we are. A good case in point is the contemporary

emphasis on the body as a focus for identity. The body is itself now a commodity to be consumed, the youthful, fit body an image that signifies (Watson 1998). Here, consumption is a signifier of the need to make oneself different and to identify with those aspired to, where everything consumed signifies an aspect of an aspiration. We witness also the growth of activities related to the fashioning of a new identity – assertiveness training, slimming, bodily well-being, creative writing, interpersonal skills, counselling, rebirthing, makeovers. All of these can now be seen as signs of 'learning'. Lifestyle practices then are practices of signifying consumption and moreover of a consumption which is potentially unending, since, although deniable, desire can never be satisfied. Thus there is always the need for new experiences and new learning. It is the very openness or multiple significations of experience, rather than its potential for classification and hence closure or fixed signification into pre-defined learning, which provides the vehicle for the fuelling of desire. There is an endlessness to learning therefore, lifelong and lifewide.

Lifestyle practices are not confined to any one particular social or age group, nor are they purely a matter of economic determination. Economic capital plays a part in influencing the capacity of individuals to be more or less active in their lifestyle practices but cultural capital is just as significant. Furthermore, these practices are themselves a way of acquiring and enhancing cultural capital. The significant characteristic of lifestyle practices is a self-conscious and reflexive adoption of what, as educators, we might refer to as a learning mode, a disposition or *stance* towards life, a lifelong learning integral to the sensibilities, values and assumptions embedded in these practices that provide the means of expressing identity. From a semiotic perspective, we may want to recode that as a *communicative* stance towards life. Thus, while the focus is often on the economic imperative for lifelong learning, our view is that there are other equally significant aspects of its emergence as a discourse for the governing of life, where the conduct of conduct entails the adoption of a design sensibility to one's life. To a greater or lesser extent, therefore we are all designers and all have designs, grand or otherwise.

To relate consumption and learning means to relate learning to a cultural economy of signs where consumer choices are communicative practices and where learning becomes a marker, an expressive means of self-development. In this sense, learning does not necessarily signify education. With the play of desire and learning as the fulfilment of desire, learning becomes oriented to specific learner-defined ends rather than tied to the educational project's search for enlightenment, truth, deep meanings, or some end pre-defined by the educational system. Equally, education does not necessarily signify learning, unless being signified an 'educated person', usually through credentials, is desirable, an important aspect of identity formation, or if it acts as a means of distinguishing self from others and a means of desirably identifying with other educated/credentialized persons.

So lifelong learning does not simply signify skills for operating new technologies or for knowledge economy type work, as is often articulated in the policy and other texts of fast capitalism and the critiques arising thereof. Lifestyle practices involve different semiotic or meaning-making possibilities and are themselves practices

resulting from, and necessary to, fast capitalism. Making sense, giving meaning and interpreting that which is available, both multiple and changing, becomes ever more necessary even whilst becoming more complex. Furthermore, the globalized engagement with the Other, exotic or otherwise, made possible by forms of communication and flows of information itself signifies a transformation in any fixed and bounded sense of self, space and place. Traditional forms of pedagogy are subverted by for instance, the spread of electronically mediated networks of learning. Who controls learning and indeed what constitutes a curriculum and a learning text become problematic and contested. Bodies of knowledge and culture from around the globe are made available for use in learning settings, providing the possibility not only for new meanings, but also new ways for meaning to emerge. These then are forms of learning which barely feature in dominant contemporary discourses of lifelong learning and which, for many, may not be signs either of learning or of education. The mythic code of lifelong learning has only taken hold in certain spaces and places.

NOTES

[1] See http://profs.lp.findlaw.com/e-commerce/ecommerce1.html Accessed 02.06.05

[2] For a useful discussion on the relationship between speed and capitalism see Robert Goldman, Stephen Papson, Noah Kersey, 'Speed: Through, Across, and In — The Landscapes of Capital', Fast Capitalism, 1, 1, 2005 http://www.fastcapitalism.com Accessed 16.04.05

[3] A copy of a copy which has been so dissipated in its relation to the original that it can no longer be said to be a copy. The *simulacrum*, therefore, stands on its own as a copy without a model.

[4] The 1999 cult classic movie *The Matrix* explores the relationship between people and their *simulacra*. The Matrix of the title is an artificial reality or simulation created by sentient machines to control the human population. In this world all is simulation. The lead character in the movie, Neo, in a self-referential move uses a hollowed out copy of Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* as a secret store – a simulacrum of *Simulacra and Simulation*

[5] George W. Bush, September 2001

[6] An example of this is the SUV driven in urban environments. The vast majority of these are unlikely to ever go anywhere off-road. They are not purchased for this functionality but because it is cool to be part of a simulated safari. The SUV is consumed as a sign.

CHAPTER THREE

LIFELONG LEARNING AS A SEMIOTIC PROCESS

At this point we want to draw upon the conceptual resources outlined in the previous chapter to begin to pose some questions about lifelong learning, questions which will lead us into the substance of our argument: We will argue that lifelong learning has multiple significations and we will ask what are these and how are they achieved? We will ask – how is lifelong learning coded and in what sense can 'lifelong learning' be understood as a 'text'? For example, can it be read and if so what is being read? As well as lifelong learning as a text, there are also the texts of lifelong learning. We can distinguish between the conceptualization and the realization of lifelong learning – between the articulation of lifelong learning in texts of various kinds and the carrying out of policies to actualize lifelong learning. How then are these related?

In making the semiotic assumption that lifelong learning is a 'text', we mean by this that 'lifelong learning' is not something whose meanings or significations are apparent in themselves. Whatever lifelong learning signifies, that signification is only real-ized through interpretive practices, or to put it another way through practices of 'reading'. Lifelong learning is therefore always *articulated* as 'something' within particular practices. It is attributed meanings but those meanings have to be read or taken up by a variety of audiences. Thus interpretive work is always present both for the attributors and the receivers of meaning. Furthermore this interpretive work takes place against a background of semiotic resource systems, codes and myths located in the discourse, social orders and the communication landscape to which they are related. When making-meaning then, we are not alone.

As well as lifelong learning as a text, there are also the texts of lifelong learning. At one level these comprise the multiplicity of policy texts from institutions such as the European Union (EU), the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, the World Bank, and numerous governments around the world, to name but a few. What these policy texts try to do is interpret or signify the contemporary condition with the aim of articulating what needs to be done through lifelong learning to best cope with the exigencies of that condition. At another level, there are academic texts that seek to research, understand and explain lifelong learning. Here the emphasis is on conceptualizing lifelong learning. Some of these seek to discover the 'truth' of lifelong learning. Others interpret interpretations (often with a critical intent), thereby adding even more significations to lifelong learning. Yet another level can be found in the practices of lifelong learning, or what is being done in numerous sites to realize lifelong learning. These too can be read as texts. In these locations there is a reception in terms of action of what lifelong learning means, which in itself involves interpretive

work and thus further re-signification. These levels do not simply sit on top of one another inert, but are a live landscape, with fresh sedimentations, folds, ruptures and occasional volcanic eruptions. There are traces and graftings therefore of each in the other.

Semiotically then lifelong learning can be understood as rhizomatic, although some of these rhizomes are stronger than others. Rather than levels, it might be more illuminative to refer to them as different forms of practice. Our argument is that lifelong learning as a text, and the texts and practices of lifelong learning are intimately interlinked – that is, that lifelong learning as a text needs to be read through the texts and practices (themselves 'texts') of lifelong learning. What gives meaning to lifelong learning is the texts of the policy makers, and of academics—which can themselves be seen as practices – and those actions which endeavour to concretely realize lifelong learning – and of course the interactions of all these various practices.

What then does lifelong learning signify? The critical thing that can be said is that it has many significations – denotative, connotative and mythical – but despite this some common elements can be discerned. Providing an initial view of the many significations that are already available is the focus of this chapter. It is in three parts. The first explores some policy discourses and the framing of meanings in which they engage as part of the conceptualizations and realizations of lifelong learning. In the second part, we explore some of the codes and myths of lifelong learning inscribed in policy discourse. In the third section, we shall examine the exoticization of the everyday that is such a prominent feature of discourses of lifelong learning. The discussions here are illustrative rather than representative, but they themselves involve representational practices. They begin to point to the many signs of learning, the contests surrounding which we shall explore in more depth as we progress.

1. THE POLICY DISCOURSES OF LIFELONG LEARNING

All practices entail conceptualization and realizations of sorts. We have somewhat schematically positioned research as focused on conceptualization and practice on realization. Such attempts to frame the relationships between policy, practice and research are ongoing and irresolvable, as research into the prescribed curriculum, described curriculum and enacted curriculum clearly demonstrate (Bloomer 1997). In some ways, the modelling of such relationships only points to the very complexity of the practices in which people engage. More important perhaps here is the positionings of policy, practice and research in different discourses and their positionings *as* policy, practice and research, each of which codes a multiplicity of practices and meanings. Where, then is policy situated in our discourse? In a sense, it works between and across conceptualization and realization, attempting to do political work through which to make something happen that was not happening before (Edwards et al. 2004). In our case, policy needs to have a conceptualization

of lifelong learning and also some sense of the means of realizing it, both through the political processes of legislation and also through the policy levers put in play.

> The field of lifelong learning is necessarily very broad. This is both its attraction and, simultaneously, a potential source of weakness. Lifelong learning ranges from the most highly formal and structured educational activities to the most informal and tentative explorations of understanding. Lifelong learning also quite properly encompasses many different levels, purposes, contents, outcomes and motives for learning.
>
> (NAGCELL 1999 4)

In this text from an Advisory Group to the UK government in the late 1990's, lifelong learning apparently can mean anything and everything that is remotely educative, at a variety of levels, from formal and informal provision, for many different purposes and with no seeming limitation on outcomes – 'it takes place in a variety of environments in and outside the formal education and training systems'. Similarly, in articulating the 'distinguishing features of the lifelong learning concept', the OECD argues that these are to do with the systemic and universal nature of lifelong learning:

> In choosing the goal of 'lifelong learning for all' in 1996, OECD Education Ministers signaled a major departure by adopting a more comprehensive view that covers all purposeful learning activity, from the cradle to the grave, that aims to improve knowledge and competencies for all individuals *who wish to participate* in learning activities.A *systemic view*... is the most distinguishing feature of lifelong learning – all competing approaches to education policy are sector-specific. The lifelong learning framework views the demand for, and the supply of, learning opportunities, as part of a connected system covering the whole lifecycle and comprising *all forms of formal and informal learning*.
>
> (OECD 2004 1-2)

This signification of lifelong learning's ubiquity and universal spread is doubled by this World Bank text:

> lifelong learning is more than just education and training beyond formal schooling. A lifelong learning framework encompasses learning throughout the life cycle, from birth to grave and in different learning environments, formal, non-formal and informal... the Bank's lifelong leaning (LLL) activities include: Education for All (EFA), secondary education and tertiary education.
>
> (World Bank Group 2001)

In these texts, lifelong learning signifies across the life course, both synchronically and diachronically, something which goes far beyond the attempts to reform post-school education and training through lifelong learning that has occurred in many countries. It is positioned as providing an overarching logic – a system, a framework – for the education system as a whole. In some senses then, the discourse of lifelong learning itself helps to makes sense of an education system that has no unifying logic, but merely sectoral interests. Here it may be less a 'thing' and more a *purpose* through which to articulate and reform the specific sectors that have evolved historically, but which are no longer felt to fit the requirements of the future. It is also, it seems, something for everyone – 'young and old, [are] being

encouraged to engage in learning ... [it] does not stop the day we leave school, it is with us every day of our lives'.[1]

We therefore find the notion of inclusion and widening participation being articulated with that of lifelong learning. Not only is it signified as being for everyone but age itself is no barrier, all having the potential to learn something new. The completion of schooling is signified as the beginning rather than the end of learning. Here however there is a tension as the inclusion is into something that is not the ubiquitous learning of everyday practices, but the more formally structured forms of education and training. Thus, the ubiquity of learning both challenges the traditional purposes and practices of education and training, but also remains at the centre of policy concerns.

As well as ubiquity, lifelong learning also signifies as 'flexibility'. Many policy texts heavily emphasize that there are many different ways to engage in learning, from the formal certificated education routes to informal learning purely for interest or 'fun'[2]. This flexibility is propounded as the basic principle upon which organizations should act in order to meet the diverse requirements of lifelong learning (Edwards 1997, Nicoll 2006). One size fits all and 'you get what we decide' is undermined through the discourses of flexibility. Yet it should be noted that this articulation also flags a danger with this multiplicity and variety. Here is another articulation where this is even more explicit:

> [Lifelong learning] provides scope for a great variety of learning styles and approaches and celebrates diversity. But precisely because of this, there is always an accompanying danger that the field will become so all-inclusive that it inhibits sharpness of focus. Strategy to promote lifelong learning may easily become so multi-stranded that it prevents the development of a clear sense of priority
>
> (NAGCELL, 1999 4)

Variety and diversity then is signified here as a potential source of weakness, leading to a lack of focus and a possible failure to agree priorities, even as flexibility is promoted in support of inclusion. This points to the fractures in the landscape of lifelong learning, with some meanings creating fissures in others.

For some, however, the priority or focus is clear. Lifelong learning is a signifier of personal fulfilment of 'living life to its fullest'[3]. It is all about 'giving things a go, and believing in ourselves'.[4] Here, the emphasis is on the mobilizing of the developmental potential in individuals, organizations and nations. For example, in the *European Lifelong Learning Initiative*, it is claimed that lifelong learning 'provides a focus for people, organizations and nations to meet the new challenges of constant educational and social change by the fostering of a greater development of human potential' (EC 2001). Accompanying this is a signification that stresses a social justice dimension where lifelong learning becomes the means to bring about a greater degree of social inclusion. Related to this is a meaning which fashions lifelong learning as the 'lifeblood' of democracy and the means by which people can become active citizens. Such positions are both aspirational and hyperbolic of course. All these meanings are brought together in one articulation in this example from the Resolution on Lifelong Learning by the Council of Ministers of the European Union:

> Education and training are an indispensable means for promoting social cohesion, active citizenship, personal and professional fulfilment, adaptability and employability. Lifelong learning facilitates free mobility for European citizens and allows the achievement of the goals and aspirations of European Union countries (i.e. to become more prosperous, competitive, tolerant and democratic). It should enable all persons to acquire the necessary knowledge to take part as active citizens in the knowledge society and the labour market
>
> (EU 2002 para.1)

It is noticeable however that the personal development and active citizenship gained through lifelong learning are not signified simply as desirable in their own right but as necessary for the 'knowledge society' and the 'labour market', both of which are nominalized and not in any sense questioned. Or to put it another way, the connotation here is that lifelong learning *services* rather than in any sense provides the basis for critiquing the knowledge society and the contemporary labour market. Certainly for politicians and policy makers, as will be discussed further in Chapter Five, a rhetoric of empowerment, inclusion, widening participation and access for all is brought to the fore. Yet lurking never very far in the background is the 'reality' of up-skilling for employment and the need to maintain a competitive edge – 'increasing competition, the need to keep up-to-date professionally, along with a rising standard of living and more leisure time, have combined to make studying an ongoing process' (Beller & Or 1998). Even leisure it seems is no longer just that! This points to the way in which all social practices become coded as at least having the potential, if not fully realized meaning of learning. Learning therefore becomes a scale against which all social practices may be measured and it is through this scaling process that learning is made both lifelong and lifewide.

Here is another example which articulates this emphasis:

> throughout the industrial era, the system has focused upon serving the educational needs of youth to prepare for a lifetime of work. Today it is clear that the future will involve a lifetime of learning in order to work
>
> (Hanna 1998)[5]

At one level this text seems a benign critique of front-end education and its unsuitability for a future which is also present. This is something that adult educators would no doubt endorse. Yet a closer reading reveals a sting in the tail. We must continue to learn throughout our life because that is what will be required by work, the connotation being 'no learning, no work'. There is an implied threat therefore in many of the policy significations of lifelong learning. It semiotically performs to code both aspiration and threat therefore, which is sometimes condensed within the concept of the risk society. Thus,

> The United Kingdom is currently going through a period of profound, widespread social change. This has been aptly defined as the emergence of a 'risk society'. Its defining characteristics powerfully set the context of both constraint and opportunity within which the development of lifelong learning must occur.
>
> (NAGCELL 1999 7)

Lifelong learning is articulated as required in order to meet the exigencies of unquestioned globalization, economic competition and social exclusion. And with that imperative, all social practices are mobilizable as activities in which learning occurs and can be a resource for individuals, organizations and the social order.

As Griffin (2002) points out, this discourse like many others is replete with arguments from globalization, reflexive modernization and the risk society. All of these arguments highlight change, the rapidity of change and the need to be constantly adapting to change. Change requires adaptation which is positioned as a response to change, when adaptation itself, that is, changes in practices, can be positioned as promoting as well as responding to change. Griffin goes on to point out that the reports from international organizations out of which the European Year of Lifelong Learning emerged in 1996 (EC 1996 ; OECD 1996; UNESCO 1996) all foregrounded these global trends from which lifelong learning derives a key signification. It is one of the powerful myths of lifelong learning. The essence of the case put forward is that conventional institutional education at all levels can no longer adequately provide the learning needed for coping with change in a risky world. How and where learning is acquired is not so important as that the learning is such as to enable the acquiring of competence in a job or career needed in relation to the impact of these global trends. The absent presence in such discourses of change is continuity, and lifelong learning itself becomes a policy tool through which to disrupt continuities in the provision of education and training.

Much policy discussion about lifelong learning does seem to be rooted in almost apocalyptic pronouncements, taking on a mythic coding in the process. Here is an example from a text entitled *Lifelong Learning – Investing for Success*, with this introduction by David Blunkett, the then UK Secretary of State for Education and Employment:

> In a knowledge driven economy the continuous updating of skills and the development of lifelong learning will make the difference between success and failure, and between competitiveness and decline.
>
> (Grover, undated, 2)

As is clear from the above, such pronouncements tend to be couched in a very generalized discourse about the pace and scale of technological, social-cultural and economic change in the contemporary world – ‘the world of the 21st century is fast moving, and the knowledge explosion and rapidly changing work roles and opportunities, demand individuals who are well equipped as lifelong learners’ (Murphy et al 2001, 1). This is also emphasized by the World Bank:

> The concept of learning is facing fundamental changes in the context of the global knowledge economy. One important source of changes is the accelerating speed of scientific and technological advancement; and the resulting changes in the society and economy (or labor market) at any given time.
>
> (World Bank Group 2001)

This signification of the lifeworld as fast moving and rapidly changing foregrounds speed and the centrality of speed in constructions of reality. We shall say more

about this in later chapters. Here we encounter a potent myth, at work in many of the texts of lifelong learning, both in those that promote and those that oppose it. Couched in a constant repetition of truisms, this repetition leads to the achievement of a certain solidity or naturalisation – who after all can any longer doubt this? Semiotic resources are being mobilized in such a way as to code lifelong learning as the *only* response by states and social orders to the effects of globalization and in justifying the need for learning and in particular learning that involves the up-skilling demanded by change. And we had better be quick about it . . . . which only adds to the sense of speed to which it is meant to be a response.

Earlier we highlighted the connotation of lifelong learning as 'flexible'. This flexibility is articulated as only achievable because lifelong learning is not fashioned simply as educational *provision*. The latter is cast as only one aspect of lifelong learning, one amongst many others.

> Lifelong learning implies raising *investment* in people and knowledge; *promoting* the acquisition of basic skills, including digital literacy; and *broadening opportunities* for innovative, more *flexible* forms of learning. The aim is to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning opportunities, and to *a variety of learning experiences*, throughout Europe. Education systems have a key role to play in making this *vision* a reality. Indeed, the Communication stresses the need for Member States to *transform* formal education and training systems in order to *break down barriers* between different forms of learning.
>
> (EU 2001, 1)

The emphases here are ours in the service of re-reading this text. Lifelong learning here is articulated as an *investment* not in an education system but in *people*, in human capital, which, as we will explore in later chapters, is part of wider practices of mobilizing individuals to help themselves in the service of changing forms of governing. It does not provide education but *promotes* learning. For those who question whether lifelong learning is simply another way of talking about education, here the signification is much wider. Lifelong learning *broadens* opportunities with the implication that existing educational systems narrowed them, as we are told that the latter need to be *transformed*. There is more to learning than the educative practices of the pedagogue, the bureaucratic professional of the modern state. This broadening of opportunity entails a change in the meaning of opportunity, as it is no longer signalled simply by more people participating in existing structures – although this is indeed the case. Broadening opportunity instead is signalled also by giving a wider meaning to what constitutes a learning opportunity. There is a slippage apparent here depending upon which meaning of opportunity takes hold most strongly. Lifelong learning is also about *breaking down* barriers, the implication being that educational systems erected these illegit-imately in the first place. There is the implication that educational institutions get in the way of learning rather than being the primary institutional sites to support learning. Thus the need to reform those institutions. Lifelong learning will provide *a variety of learning experiences* where presumably there has hitherto been no variety.

Other texts also couple flexibility with the lifelong aspect of learning:

> there is an increasing demand for a flexible learning framework, one that *does not tie the learner down to a specific time or place*. Differences between individuals also require an adaptable pace and mode of study, suited to personal abilities and distinct learning styles
> (Beller & Or 1998)

Here flexibility signifies not being tied to a specific time and place where the unsaid is 'unlike schooling where time and place are pre-specified and unwavering'. Flexibility also is said to promote learning more suited to individual learning styles and abilities, with again the unsaid being 'unlike schooling where one size has to fit all'. Thus education needs to be tailored in order to fashion subjects suitable for an era of increased risk and change. The meanings of flexibility extend further where instead of an emphasis on traditional teaching, lifelong learning is rather about learning to learn and *managing* learning:

> there has been an important switch from focussing educational debates upon educational provision and teaching styles towards a concern with *how individuals learn how to learn*, how they learn to manage their own learning, and *how they learn to transfer learning from one setting to another*
> (Murphy et al 2001, 1)

What we see in this discussion therefore is an implied set of opposites or binaries through which the meaning of lifelong learning is articulated and inscribed:–

- people rather than structures,
- promotion rather than provision,
- transformation rather than more of the same,
- breaking down rather than erecting barriers,
- variety rather than narrowness,
- managing learning rather than teaching,
- flexibility rather than rigidity.

Here the formal education system, and in particular schooling, functions as an absence which nonetheless is also a *presence* and against which lifelong learning is semiotically fashioned. Lifelong learning therefore means not so much in terms of what it is but more in terms of *what it is not* with the categories on the left being prioritized over those on the right, as both part of a critique of established educational provision but also, and perhaps less certainly in terms of implications, some view of the way forward.

2. CODES AND MYTHS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

It is undoubtedly the case that learning is increasingly signified as becoming more diverse in terms of goals, processes, organizational structures, curricula and pedagogy. This both reflects and is a contributor to a breakdown of clear and settled demarcations between different sectors of formal education and between formal education and everything that could be considered a source of learning. This breakdown is nowhere near complete and absolute and institutional frameworks

remain powerful, but there is leakage. Social views of learning both represent and help to mobilize these processes with their emphasis on participation in social practices as a basis for learning (Chaiklin and Lave 1996). Lifelong learning can therefore be seen as a signifier of this leakiness, with the connotation that formal education can no longer claim a monopoly over learning simply because it is a formally constituted field. Thus lifelong learning has many significations because a multiplicity of activities in many contexts have sprung up which now are potentially if not always actually coded *as* learning rather than something else. There is now a greater propensity to signify all or at least many social practices as signifying learning (Lave 1996). What these significations foreground is lifelong learning's inherent discursivity and socio-cultural polycontextuality.

Discursively, 'students' are re-signified as 'learners', and with this changes follow in what is constituted as 'provision' and 'providers', in the control and content of curricula, and in the position and authority of teachers. When students are coded and thereby positioned as learners, they are positioned also as consumers with demands made on educational providers with which they very often find difficult to cope (Edwards 1994). The connotation of learners ..... is that choice exists and choosing is made on the basis of desire rather than there being no choice because there is only a pre-defined curriculum based on a search for enlightenment and the mastery of a canon of knowledge. That desire should signify in learning no longer evokes something perverse and uneducational therefore. Those who claim that this is not what learning is 'really' about are still enfolded in a myth of an ideal model of education where learning is shaped by a set of transcendental ideals, signified within a code of the Enlightenment project where learning is predefined and delivered by the pedagogue, the professional educator and teacher. Strong arguments have been articulated that this is a dangerously oppressive and totalizing discourse where learning is signified as a 'gift' bestowed by enlightened pedagogues upon the unenlightened. Yet it is also the case that the Enlightenment myth still codes much educational work, not least as a form of resistance to the myth of the knowledge economy and the performativity which is seen to have emerged from it.

It is impossible not to highlight a certain irony in the current situation. At a time when institutionally-based formal education has itself expanded, it is nonetheless both less secure and less clearly defined. We witness a situation where learning is playing an increasingly significant role in re-coding the practices of those institutions. As we have noted earlier, the key to the changes within which education is caught up foregrounds lifelong learning as something that will achieve effects that education has been unable to achieve so far, not the least of which is changes in the provision of education.

The need to understand learning in terms of its enfolding within different social practices means that lifelong learning cannot mean simply a structure of provision or a set of principles about education. As we have seen, learning can only be understood as a signifier that carries many different significations about a diversity of learners and a diversity of learning in a variety of settings and practices. These

multiple significations are enfolded within a variety of contemporary social practices each with different effects of positioning and identity formation.

Given these multiple significations, the forms of lifelong learning to be promoted are far from clear. Often within the generalized calls for lifelong learning there are a range of differing and contested positions as to the assumptions to be made and goals to be sought. Lifelong learning is in effect, a slippery signifier, with all its many meanings having important consequences for those whose lives and life courses are being shaped by it. In the main, lifelong learning is valued positively, connoting an inherent worthwhileness, 'a good thing in itself'. What reasonable person after all could be opposed to it! Often then the sole focus is on implementing changes in the provision of education and training that will support lifelong learning. The underpinning assumptions and the significance of these changes and their consequences for learners and the social order are left largely unexamined, precisely because it is coded as 'a good thing'. We saw this very clearly in the policy texts of lifelong learning examined earlier. Lifelong learning provides a semiotic banner behind which a range of differing groups and interests can happily march.

Yet even whilst all this is undoubtedly the case, it is possible to discern some dominant significations, codes and myths and it is these which we will now briefly explore. Unfolding the semiotic banner we can discern two broad codings, viz. lifelong learning as the necessary means to an *educated society*, and lifelong learning as a *learning market*. In both, lifelong learning has been seen, particularly by adult educators, as a way of diluting the harmful influence of an exclusive emphasis on initial education (Husen 1986, Wain 1987). The educated society is to be achieved through strategies aimed at providing opportunities for adults to learn what, when and how they wish. The means to do this is considered to be a matter of national policies and practices whose aim is to maximize the learning opportunities and potential of the population as a whole, particularly for those adults disadvantaged by lack of success in initial education. Thus, the signifier 'lifelong learning' is coded through a discourse of *provision* that foregrounds what might be termed an 'educated society', 'an education-centred society', 'an educative society' or, as Abrahamsson (1993) refers to it when discussing post-second world war Sweden, a 'lifelong educated society'. Here education signifies provision that would extend opportunities for adults to be educated throughout the life-course, in this way creating a learning society that would provide the conditions both for individual self-realization and for good citizenship within a liberal democracy:

> The 'learning society' is therefore one that is exceedingly self-conscious about education in its total sense; that is conscious of the educational relevance and potential of its own institutions and of the general environment that is its own way of life, and is determined to maximize its resources in these respects, to the utmost.
>
> (Wain 1987: 202-203)

These goals projected the vision of a seamless web of personal and social development within the institutional and value frameworks of liberal democracy. Here the right to be part of the social order, to be included and participate as a citizen within a learning society, implies a corresponding duty to learn to become a responsible

citizen. The economic and the vocational are not considered as primary concerns for those providing learning opportunities for an educated citizenry. The only worthwhile training is seen as a training in rationality and civility, the training of minds for full participation in civil society.

This signification of lifelong learning as the means to an educated society is coded in a modernist discourse and located in the myth of Enlightenment through education. To some extent it has fallen out of fashion, although it is still influentially re-signified as doing something about social exclusion and marginalization. For instance, Ranson (1994) in his critique of trends in education in the UK, in particular the forms of governance associated with the administered market, argues for a renewal of the comprehensive ideal as a foundation for democratic citizenship. What is clearly signified is that an educated society is bounded and ordered, its main concern the transmission of a canon of worthwhile knowledge. A learning society with lifelong learning for all is articulated as something that can be clarified in advance of its making and which can be made to sit comfortably with all. This points to the Enlightenment myth with its universalizing and teleological view of the goals to be achieved.

This coding of lifelong learning is challenged by an alternative economic coding of lifelong learning that foregrounds the need for economic competitiveness. This has always been present in the debates about the purposes of education, but has become more significant as policy has sought to play a more active role in steering educational provision. It is buttressed by a powerful human capital discourse about the role of learning. Here, lifelong learning becomes the signifier of the (l)earning nation/region/city with the emphasis on the economic relevance and productivity of learning. The valuing element is not straightforward since not all possible learning can be coded as good or worthwhile in economic terms. The latter are those kinds of learning fashioned as essential for maintaining and enhancing economic competitiveness in globalized times. Learners are mobilized as those who need to secure their place in a market of vocationally relevant opportunities and to do so throughout their lives so that the country can secure and maintain its place in the highly competitive globalized market. There is thus a slightly more restricted coding of lifelong learning within these discourses, as the key domain is the economic, which does not embrace all one's life (hopefully!). Here we might say that lifelong learning is neither lifelong nor lifewide.

Thus the social order is coded as a *learning market* where people are positioned as autonomous individuals who, under the sign of free choice, have to take responsibility for their own learning. Here the role of government is signified as limited to the realm of the strategic:

> Lifetime learning is not a Government programme, or the property of one institution. It is a shared goal relating to the attitudes and behaviour of many employers, individuals and organizations. Government has a part to play but governments alone cannot achieve the cultural changes involved in making a reality of lifetime learning
>
> (DfEE 1996 : 4)

For some, this signifies liberating possibilities, providing freedom from the dead hand of the collective, the bureaucratic management of state-funded and administered institutions, including educational institutions, and the opportunity to pursue learning tied to job-related qualifications. However, it also connotes an extreme form of individualism where there is a submerging of the signification of the social order as a shared condition with mutual interests and responsibilities. The coding is in terms of market mechanisms, economic relevance and individualism. Ordering arises from the outcomes of market and market-like transactions. This is a learning market that services the market economy and itself acts as a commodities market, where knowledge and skills are the commodities for consumption.

The myth in which this signification is embedded is that of the benevolent market where market-like solutions – coded as flexibility in relation to labour markets, financial markets, etc. – are seen as the only possible response to the challenges of economic, social and cultural change. Inevitably the practices arising from this are bound to undermine many of the structuring processes and forms of sociality that have been a condition for the functioning of social orders bounded by nation states. What can be discerned therefore is an enfolding into, and displacement of, lifelong *education* based on a discourse of provision with a goal of supporting and developing the social order, by lifelong *learning* based on a market discourse where the goals are self-reliance and economic competitiveness. Much of the contemporary policy discourse of lifelong learning, therefore, more readily signifies a learning market, or perhaps given the continuing powerful role of the state in the funding of learning opportunities – itself a resignification of educational opportunity – we should refer to this as a quasi-market. A 1995 United Kingdom government consultation document (DfEE 1995: 10) made this clear; 'the learning market should be driven by customers and their choices, not by providers or other organizations'. As Griffin (2002) points out, perhaps somewhat overstating the case, this market-oriented stance signifies lifelong learning as a form of educational privatization in line with the spreading adoption of neo-liberal policies and practices in the provision of all public services.

The practices of a learning market have deployed initiatives designed to give and extend choice to individuals and to enable consumer power. The individualization produced by the learning market may thereby contribute to increasing opportunities available to some while reinforcing and reproducing inequalities within the social order as a whole, leading to what is now termed social exclusion. These trends both result from, and in, a fragmentation of social relations where society is re-signified simply as the sum of the contractual and consumption relations of individuals –

> within the marketplace all are free and equal, only differentiated by the capacity to calculate their self-interest. Yet of course the market masks its social bias. It elides but also reproduces the inequalities which consumers bring to the market-place. In a market, greater choice and freedom is present for some but not for all.
>
> (Ranson 1992: 72)

Here social exclusion, as a myth to justify lifelong learning, also emerges from the very meanings and therefore policies and practices invested in lifelong learning.

These signifiers of lifelong learning, where the myths are of the educated society or the learning market, are probably the most influential, encompassing as they do concerns both for social exclusion and economic competitiveness, the liberal and the instrumental, general education and the vocational, can be found in many discourses. They inscribe therefore the binary structures which frame much Western thought and to which the discourses of lifelong learning are no exception.

3. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND REALIZATION

We have focused on policy discourses above and explored their representations of lifelong learning. Much of the gaze of research focuses on policy, but the practices of lifelong learning are signified in a whole diverse range of situations. Wherever one turns these days, lifelong learning keeps popping up – on websites, in prospectuses, in speeches. Business and trade union leaders refer to 'lifelong learning'. One has only to look along the shelves of many stores to see its realization in self-help manuals, DVDs and the like. Beyond policy, lifelong learning is pervasive in the institutional and everyday. Or is it?

We mentioned in Chapter One, the struggle to inscribe certain meanings into practices, in particular to inscribe learning into the everyday. Of course, for many people, the everyday remains exactly that, the everyday. It is mundane and routinized and any learning has been erased (Moran 2005). To re-inscribe learning into the meaning of the mundane may therefore be said to involve a process of exoticization. 'Look', we say, 'actually this is not mundane. Your everyday practices involve learning!' Thus in the same way that the everyday rituals of the tribal cultures of Africa became exotic for the explorers of the 19th century and are now re-packaged as tourist spectacles to be consumed, the educator signifies the rituals of the mundane as exotic learning and seeks to make them packagable in for instance, the recognition of prior learning. And indeed, perhaps the more that people attempt to sustain the meanings of the everyday within the mundane, the more exotic the claims become regarding the learning in which they are *actually* engaged. The everyday is inscribed ever more as learning situations, precisely because it makes no, or little, sense to those involved who ascribe learning with meanings other than those associated with mundane practices. Of course, there is a certain irony here, given the mundanity of much educational practice, but perhaps there is scope for turning an eye on the mundane of education even as the exotic of the everyday is ever lauded. Indeed it is a critique of that mundanity that often fuels some of the alternative meanings to those of lifelong learning policies.

For those involved in education, there is the attempt to exoticize the mundane of educational practices in order to attract participation. Take for instance institutional prospectuses. Prospectuses are aimed at potential students and seek to attract them to apply for courses at the institutions concerned. They are produced to entice and seduce as well as to inform. The extent to which they are artefacts in a market depends in part on audience and place. In urban conurbations, there may be a number of institutions and a degree of competition. However, this is not always

the case, as institutions sometimes specialize in certain areas of the curriculum. In other areas, there may be only one institution, so there may be less of a sense of competition. The purposes, roles and functions of the prospectus may therefore be multiple, sitting at the centre of a complex network of interests and desires. Their meanings therefore are multiple. Yet they are clearly designed to attract, to realize lifelong learning through representing it as a situation in which one should want to be. This is often coded in far more low key ways than the myths represented in policy discourses.

The above is a sketch. It is a sketch that points to many of the issues we will explore more fully in the next chapters. As researchers, it would be fair to say that we are ourselves involved in realizing lifelong learning as a semiotic process through the practices of conceptualization and the writing of an academic text. That realization is this text, but it is also the cognitive realization that lifelong learning can be read as a text. We have been realizing things on one count while realizing the text on another. Thus our trajectory from here is beyond what many in the domain of study of semiotics may consider to be legitimate concerns, but this itself depends upon a coding of the boundaries of the semiotic from other concerns, a reflexive challenge no doubt. Some might argue, following Bernstein (1996), that we have failed to recognize the realization rules of semiotics. However, given that both classification and framing are weak in this area, we hope to have realized something through our focus on semiosis.

We stray. This straying takes us into the realms of post-structuralism, enabling us to explore the semiosis of lifelong learning in relation to wider socio-cultural and political conceptualizations. We therefore turn to writers, such as Lyotard, Foucault, and others – who are not semioticians. But their work helps us to understand the ways in which lifelong learning is both conceptualized and realized better. We realize this may not satisfy some readers, but we hope we can realize a readership through the conceptual explorations we now pursue.

NOTES

[1] *A Strategy for Lifelong Learning*, District of Easington, UK

[2] For example, the SPC's Lifelong Learning Program states: 'Learn a new hobby, enrich your knowledge, or just have fun!'

[3] For example, 'lifelong learning is fundamental to living a full and interesting life' (Autodidactic Press)

[4] District of Easington, UK

[5] No page numbers available

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LANGUAGE GAMES OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Having explored some of the ways in which lifelong learning is enfolded within what we have termed a society of signs and some of the significations of lifelong learning within the social order, we now turn to looking at the ways in which lifelong learning is situated in relation to what has become known as the postmodern. Here we are both pointing to the significance of the language games of the postmodern for lifelong learning and also engaging in a semiotic fashioning of such a language game. We are 'performing' in, and through, our analysis.

During the last fifteen years or so there has been much debate about the significance of postmodern framings for the study and practices of lifelong learning. For some, the very notion of lifelong learning signifies a postmodern educational strategy, wherein the postmodern is taken to represent the more consumerist and image conscious social order we referred to in Chapter Two. Here lifelong learning, the postmodern and semiotic practices are welded together into an often hostile perspective signifying the globalization of capitalist economic relations and the growth of post-industrial and consumer-oriented social orders within an information-rich environment enabled by new technologies (Harvey 1989). These developments are viewed as promoting individualism and lifestyle practices, linked to a revitalized neo-liberalism, marketized structures and a consumer society (Featherstone 1991). In this coding, lifelong learning signifies an ideological mystification of material economic relations that function to engender inequality and to perpetuate exploitation and oppression, a signification precisely and ironically reinforced by the postmodern interest in signs, discourses and texts rather than the 'harsh realities' of economic life. In other words, the turn to the semiotic does not open up the postmodern to analysis but instead seems to foreclose an examination of what is really going on ..... Here postmodern framings are cast as encouraging a disinterest in the material conditions of people's lives and are articulated therefore as having the effect of contributing to the continuation of inequality and oppression. That is the charge, and lifelong learning is tied into this insofar as it seems to encourage the very interest in image rather than reality, surface rather than depth, and a culture that ignores material inequality, that critics of postmodernity articulate. Lifelong learning then becomes a sign of the postmodern, even as we have been suggesting, learning becomes entwined with signs.

Of course, not all view either lifelong learning or the postmodern in this way, nor that their possible relationship is necessarily 'bad'. Even though such linkages are rhetorically powerful in certain kinds of educational discourse, our argument is that this position is mistaken and misleading. We agree rather with the position that the postmodern is best understood as a form of analysis associated with post-structuralism and deconstruction that brings to the fore the place of semiosis,

and that challenges foundational certainties in thought and action (Lemert 1997). For us, this precisely allows a critical engagement with that which is the theme of this book, the semiosis of lifelong learning. In other words, a postmodern perspective provides a form of engagement with which to critically confront the issues raised by critics of the postmodern, precisely by taking signs seriously in their own right rather than as merely symbols of some deeper more foundational reality. It opens up signs to view and re-view, including those signs of learning that we are discussing in this text.

1. THE LANDSCAPE OF THE POSTMODERN

Rhetorically, the *post* in the postmodern can be argued to signify the 'new' in a way consistent with some versions of modernity. There is a folding together within a landscape rather than a linear sequence where the 'new' signifies a complete break or rupture. What type of language game is the postmodern then? Does it signify a disruption to the juggernaut of modernity, marking a discontinuity? Or does it merely mark a continuity, a new phase of modernity? In what sort of language game is the incredulity towards grand or meta- narratives, about which Lyotard (1984) wrote, located? And, of course, to pose questions in this way, given that continuity and discontinuity are central to certain discourses of history and time, is already to mark a binary with all the problems associated with this. Here we look for the ways in which the postmodern either does disrupt the modern or is in continuity with it, depending on where it is seated in the linear discourses of historical time. Perhaps the postmodern has ended up being less discontinuous than might have been signified. For, as philosophers know well, the postmodern has a history and geography, not least the controversial intertextual associations with Nietzche and Heidegger. Following Lyotard, we could argue that perhaps performativity is taking hold and the disruptions signified by the postmodern have become part of the continuities through which the social continues to be re-ordered. Indeed, perhaps the discourse of the postmodern has itself become performative of the very condition it identifies, thereby in part signifying the conditions for its own existence.

In discussing the merits or otherwise of the postmodern it is perhaps too easy to begin tilting at windmills. If it is discontinuity we want to emphasize, it is possible to advocate a postmodern framing that sets up a certain view of modernity against which to test the alternative and vice versa. Discontinuity is both assumed and produced through the very discourse of the postmodern. This is perhaps unsurprising, as the rhetorical strategies at play in academic debate can tend towards a polarization of positions rather than a subtle exploration and teasing out of the various issues within a complex, layered and sometimes unfamiliar landscape. The language game of the academy encourages an adversarial stance. Here the postmodern is as much absorbed into certain cultures of academic debate as it may challenge them.

Lyotard himself pointed to the ways in which the postmodern does not sit comfortably with the either/or games of continuity or discontinuity. He (1992: 22) argued that

> a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Thus understood, postmodernism is not modernism at its end, but in a nascent state, and this state is recurrent.

Perhaps the current condition of postmodern debate precisely signifies a sense of the recurrent more than the disruptive. In other words, what's new in incredulity and performativity any more? Indeed was it ever new in the sense of a pure discontinuity? But then we are simply working with a reversal of the postmodern as a disruption to the modern.

This points to two issues. First, it suggests that it is inappropriate to simply label contributors to the debate in a polarized way as either modernists or postmodernists. As Peters (2000: 338) points out:

> 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' are not things it makes sense to celebrate or decry; they are not the kinds of things with which one can identify as one can, say, with a religious denomination or body of theory. Rather, 'the postmodern' should be regarded as a condition – perhaps, a style, and, possibly, an attitude.

Here, Peters offers a literal reading of the postmodern, of its denotative features, but as we have suggested, it has many connotations and it is these which are perhaps more significant and which we will attempt to explore.

Second, there is the question of the forms of engagement in these debates. The quotation from Lyotard above suggests a far more nuanced view of the postmodern condition than is often provided by advocates and detractors alike. Indeed it suggests that the language games of the modern and postmodern might already have lived out their usefulness, but then the question becomes – what lies beyond the postmodern when it is itself a 'beyond' even if not entirely new, an event horizon perhaps? This is not a question we can attempt to answer as it would take us far beyond the scope of this text. Rather this chapter explores the significance and significations of the language games of lifelong learning in relation to the postmodern condition, in particular as articulated by Lyotard.

The location of education within a postmodern landscape has been, and continues to be a troubled one (Usher, et al. 1997, Edwards 1997). For many, the postmodern in all its various manifestations signifies an undermining of education's traditional commitment to social improvement and equality, recently re-coded as inclusion in certain discourses. For others, it undermines the commitment to liberal education, of learning for its own sake, for personal development and for the training of minds. Still others however argue that it provides a space for forms of radical and emancipatory politics associated with 'new' social movements and with issues of gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality, that provide the possibility for practices free from the totalizing discourse of the traditional left (Ellsworth 1997). For us, the important thing is that the postmodern, as a language game about language games, provides a conceptual and practical space for understanding and engaging with

a fuller range of practices within which learning is enmeshed, and doing this without the privileging of certain pre-defined goals and purposes, or the positioning of certain bodies of knowledge as canonical or inherently worthwhile. It is this space that opens up possibilities for signifying, recognizing and re-conceptualizing education as now encompassed by the multiplicity and diversity of practices of lifelong learning that are such a striking characteristic of the social order and, for us, suggestive of a postmodern condition.

Under the sign of lifelong learning institutionalized education at all levels is becoming increasingly more diverse as part of, but also in spite of, the performative thrust of accountability and audit. This both reflects and contributes to the leakage, and re-inscription in different forms, of hitherto clear and settled demarcations between different sectors of education, different kinds of knowledge, and between education and the lifeworld to which we referred in the last chapter. Lifelong learning can be seen as a manifestation of, and contributor to, this de- and re-differentiation, which now increasingly assumes the meaning of a goal to be pursued by education across the board rather than by a specific sector, or through a particular curriculum. In addition, and significantly, everyday practices become re-inscribed as contexts for learning (Chaiklin and Lave 1996), where 'it probably makes more sense to talk about how learning acquires people more than it makes sense to talk about how people acquire learning' (McDermott 1996: 277). Once signs of learning are deployed within a language game of the postmodern, it might be argued that a greater multiplicity of activities can now be deemed 'educational' and therefore worthy of being learnt. However, this appears paradoxical, since signifying such practices as 'educational' may only re-inscribe them with a modernist meaning, when their postmodern significance as learning may enable them to resist the 'pull' of education i.e. where learning is monopolized and signified as such by educational institutions. In other words, a tension is inserted between learning and the educational in certain discourses of lifelong learning.

What this implies is that, although it is often taken as such, lifelong learning does not simply denote a policy or a mode of provision – its connotations are not exhausted by its denotations, or to put it another way, lifelong learning is grafted into more than one language game. Perhaps more importantly, it can be understood semiotically as a metaphor that brings to the fore the *boundlessness* and polycontextuality of learning, i.e. that learning can be re-viewed in a way where it need not be confined by pre-determined outcomes, formal institutions and epistemological control. The sign 'lifelong learning' thus alerts us to a way of seeing learning as polycontextual, situated within manifold everyday practices and open to diverse meanings. Simultaneously, we want to argue that this way of signifying lifelong learning brings out its postmodern significance. The various phenomena connoted and performed by the signs of lifelong learning, located in different language games, and played out through different social practices, signifies learning that could be both inside or outside educational institutions, and not necessarily bounded by what educators would traditionally define as the transmission of 'appropriate' and/or 'worthwhile' knowledge. Here learning itself

is invested with different meanings to those of some generalized and generalizable cognitive capacity, but instead points to the situated practices in which people participate, including those within educational institutions.

Lifelong learning then can be understood as located in the flexible language games identified by Lyotard as a minimum requirement for society to exist, for the social order to be made possible. As such, we want to suggest – echoing Lyotard's (1984) argument regarding a postmodern condition of knowledge – that for us lifelong learning signifies a postmodern condition of education, generating meanings that bring to the fore a diversity of practices *and* simultaneously an enfolding within modernist educational practices. We therefore have sympathy, although we do not entirely agree, with Wain's (2000: 37) assertion that:

> we have moved, or are fast moving into a new postmodern discourse or language game from which the word 'education' is itself being gradually eased out in favour of lifelong learning and performativity.

Whilst Wain sees this as a point of exit from the discourse of the modern, we argue that the modern and postmodern are enfolded and complexly entwined. There is still, and no doubt there will continue to be, a language game of education no matter how intense postmodern language games of learning might become. Indeed, Biesta (2004) has argued about the need specifically for an *educational* discourse to counter those of learning. There are then many games in town…

Our intention in the rest of this chapter is to specifically address and code lifelong learning as a postmodern condition of education. First, we outline Lyotard's use of language games through which to articulate a postmodern condition. Second, we locate lifelong learning within the language game of the postmodern condition and the performative consequences he points to for knowledge and education. Third, we will look at the location of lifelong learning in the contemporary vocational practices of the language games of work. Fourth, drawing on work influenced by Nietzsche, a philosopher whose work is echoed in post-structuralist framings, we locate lifelong learning as a contemporary challenge to the sign of 'mastery' embedded in certain modernist views of education (Rikowski 1999, Leicester 2000). The final section points towards the reflexive challenges of the textual practices in which we ourselves are engaged, subject to the processes outlined in this chapter, even as we attempt to engage in social theory that is 'speculative, without being teleological' (Adam & van Loon 2000: 11), a language game all of its own.

2. POSTMODERN LANGUAGE GAMES

Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge* (1984) is a seminal and powerful work, which has informed and influenced many debates in education, although not always engaged with by those who draw upon it. First published in French in 1979, it provides a critical rather than celebratory perspective on the changing production, legitimation and significations of knowledge under the influence of new technology and twentieth century capitalism, but informed by

a philosophical position that draws upon Kant and Wittgenstein. It is from the latter in particular that the significance of language games is drawn and developed. Through the text of *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard presents a performance where familiar issues are addressed in unfamiliar ways and unfamiliar issues are brought to the fore for discussion.

The Postmodern Condition is a study of the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed post-industrial, computerized societies. For Lyotard (1984: xxiii) the postmodern signifies 'the state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature and the arts'. Postmodernity is signified as a time and place of fragmentation and plurality with the postmodern signifying a different set of game rules for a range of social practices. For Lyotard, game rules are those narratives which provide science, literature and the arts, indeed all social practices, with their legitimacy within the social order and it is the 'crisis of narratives' that marks the postmodern condition, wherein the rules of certain dominant games, in particular, the narrative of emancipation and the narrative of E(e)nlightenment, as they have been played, are contested and greeted with 'incredulity' or an inability to fully believe. Lyotard presents an alternative discourse to these grand or meta- narratives, which foregrounds 'little narratives' as language games where no claim to finality of meaning is made.

In his use of the notion of language games, Lyotard brings to the fore the significance of semiosis. For him, knowledge can only be studied through the study of language as the latter, through the vehicle of narrative, is the means by which knowledge is generated and disseminated in particular contexts. We can see that he himself is engaged in a language game about language games.[1] Whilst he argues that 'the observable social bond is made up of language "moves"' (Lyotard 1984: 11), it is important to emphasize that Lyotard does not consider social relations to be reducible to language games alone, although they are identified as a necessary minimum for the existence of a social order. These semiotic practices are therefore the condition of possibility of any social order. For example, Lyotard (1984: 15) argues that, simply by being named, 'the human child is already positioned as the referent in the story recounted by those around him (sic), in relation to which he will inevitably chart his course'. He claims that the foregrounding of the influence of language is a significant characteristic of the postmodern:

> Phonology and theories of linguistics, problems of communication and cybernetics,.. theories of algebra and informatics, computers and their languages, problems of translation and the search for new areas of compatibility among computer languages.. problems of information storage and data banks. . . .
>
> (Lyotard 1984: xxx)

Lyotard draws upon a philosophy of language to develop his position on language games. He argues that language games are speech acts based on three general rules. First, the rules of the game are not self-legitimating but are based on a kind of contract which all parties to the game tacitly accept but which can be changed by consensus. Second, every game must have rules, because if there are no rules

there is no game. Third, game moves are agonistic, that is, they involve struggle and friction which has to be resolved discursively for the game to proceed. Thus semiosis both works within and *performs* these rules. The rules in every language game define each form of utterance or move, specifying their characteristics and the uses to which they can be put –

> in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words, the proper way to move them
>
> (Lyotard 1984: 10)

Three forms of utterance are identified – denotative, performative and prescriptive. Each of these positions the interlocutors in a language game, the sender, the addressee and the referent (or that which is communicated) in different ways. Denotative utterances concern truth and falsehood (or what is the case). Meaning is literal. Performative utterances are declarative as the utterance itself has the effect of producing the referent (for example, to say 'I promise' is not to state a fact but to *make* a promise). Prescriptive utterances are those in which the sender expects the addressee to carry out that which is referred to – these utterances are about requesting, instructing and commanding. Different forms of utterance and different combinations of utterance are found in different modes of discourse and different language games with something different being signified by each. Lyotard identifies a number of games, including, the denotative game where facts are all that count; the prescriptive game where the focus is on good and bad, just and unjust, implying the use of values; and the technical game where the focus is on performativity or what is efficient. From this we can see that lifelong learning can take the form of all these different games. It can be a denotative language game where it is signified as something that already exists, an unquestionable fact, waiting to be recognized and taken up. It can take the form of a prescriptive game, something that is signified as valuable and which people therefore must engage in. It can also take the form of a technical game where lifelong lifelong is signified as something that is necessary for the efficient working of the so-called knowledge economy.

As we have noted, the rules of language games only exist and can only continue to exist because of an explicit or implicit contract between the participants in a game:

> . . . . their rules do not carry within themselves their own legitimation, but are the object of a contract, explicit or not between players (which is not to say that the players invent the rules).
>
> (Lyotard 1984: xxx)

There is no legitimation of the game outside of the game – in for instance, a 'big story' or 'grand narrative'.[2] The grand narratives of emancipation and E(e)nlightenment signified themselves as self-legitimating and as founding the social contract, but now their signification is that of just other language games, themselves founded on a social contract. Furthermore, since without the rules there would be no game, scientific knowledge, for instance, has to be expressed and indeed fashioned through language in a particular form of narrative, the language game of

science, if it is to signify anything, if it is to be meaningful. As such, it becomes subject to the rules of genre which govern the ways in which language is used in that particular social practice. Thus, although science's own discourse may signify itself as representing knowledge of the real world existing 'out there' independently of its discourse, the very fact that this representation is expressed through science's own discourse means that it is subject to the rules of the language game of science – rules that are tacitly accepted by the players in the game of science. This truth-telling practice is veiled precisely by the assumption that language in use is transparent and referential – an assumption semiotically generated by language use and games themselves.

This notion of language games evokes the provisional, shifting, performative characteristics of meaning-making. The view that a true representation or reflection of the social order can be expressed in language is always already entwined within a language game, the rules of which establish this as being the case. The language game of truth-making is embedded in truth-making practices, such as those of science, whose participants tacitly and perhaps unconsciously accept and maintain the rules of this game.[3] Paradoxically, therefore, in the very articulation of a representation as 'true', we are inevitably already in the midst of a language game that undermines this very notion of unmediated true representation. In other words, truth cannot be established independent of language games. Here we are reminded of Foucault's interest in the wider practices of truth-telling or *parrhesia* – practices that span the ethical, political, aesthetic, ontological, epistemological – rather than the more narrow interest in truth as simply an epistemological question.

The existence of a multiplicity of language games and the variety of social practices which this involves is why, as we noted earlier, Lyotard articulates the postmodern condition as fragmented and plural. Fragmentation connotes the splintering of knowledge into a plethora of incommensurate discourses. Language games are incommensurable, or have no common measure, in the sense that there is no single set of rules for all language games. There is no single scale of measuring meaning. Each is different in the way they communicate and generate meanings. The moves in any one language game cannot be simply translated into moves in another language game, for example, the rules of chess cannot be translated into the rules of chequers. We can understand that there is a game called 'chequers' but we cannot play it if we only know the rules of chess. Similarly, we can understand the language game of report-writing, but cannot play it if we only know the rules of essay-writing. These are questions of genre.

Lyotard is therefore challenging what he takes to be a modernist coding of the social order as a functioning system, where knowledge is indispensable but only certain kinds of knowledge are legitimate, where society is a unified totality and where diversity threatens the social order. For him, the very diversity and plurality of language games fashions the social bond between individuals that makes a social order possible rather than threatening that order. This diversity and plurality is predicated on the proliferation of signs which technology, particularly information technology, has spawned. Thus:

> the society of the future falls less within the province of a Newtonian anthropology (such as structuralism or systems theory) than a pragmatics of language particles. There are many different language games – a heterogeneity of elements.
>
> (Lyotard 1984: xxiv)

In other words, the nature of the social order is changing under the impact of information and communications technologies, which thereby necessitates a changed understanding, a different way of signifying the social order, one framed in terms of language games and within a language game of the postmodern.[4] Society, a particular coding of the social order as a unified totality, is displaced by the 'flexible networks of language games' (Lyotard 1984: 17), *petits recits* or little narratives, in which there are continuing opportunities for fresh moves generating new language games or changing the rules of existing games given that these rules are not eternal. These little narratives, unlike grand or metanarratives, do not pretend to have all the answers. Furthermore, the plurality of language games cannot be totalized into a master narrative anymore, as all language games are self-legitimating, or truth-claiming little narratives, each with their own rules.

Language games are a condition of possibility of the social order because they are not simply exchanges of verbal behaviour but are indissolubly linked to forms of life, such as, work, shopping, politics and so on. To act in the social order is to participate in language games where the social consists of forms of life that are both dynamic *and* ordered. Although institutions constrain moves in a language game by imposing rules of discourse, such as politically correct speech, and context boundaries, participants can introduce counter or agonistic language moves that create sites of contestation and which may end up changing the institutions themselves. Here we need to be clear that, for us, as well as constraining, institutions and rules also make certain things possible, for, as we will discuss later, we are much influenced by Foucault in this respect.

We noted earlier that knowledge is generated and disseminated discursively within particular social contexts. Every language game has its own corpus of knowledge, communicated through narrative, which is both discursively fashioned i.e. signified *as* knowledge, and learnt discursively i.e. it is learnt because it is signified as meaningful, or something that is worth learning, and learnt through the narratives of different language games. A language game may also generate new knowledge, for example, when the rules of the game change or when new participants enter the game or when the focus of interest changes, as in the language game of science.[5] Language games do not exist in isolation but are relationally and intertextually entwined within particular networks where there are institutions that are likely to be influential in controlling what is to signify as knowledge. Furthermore, the status of knowledge is continually challenged by new modes of access to knowledge, for example, knowledge that is freely accessible through the Internet, which is challenged by some on the grounds that it is merely 'information' or 'data' and by implication hardly worth learning.

We conclude this section with the perhaps challenging proposition that to live is to inevitably engage in semiosis. Thus the learning of signs is also a sign of learning. . . . . .

3. THE LANGUAGE GAMES OF LIFELONG LEARNING

The postmodern is at one and the same time an aspect of a changed and changing world and a way of understanding or signifying those changes. Reflexively, there is an attempt to provide a language game for the world it seeks to describe and explain, a language game about language games, a discourse that highlights decentring, ambivalence and contingency, interlinking with the thrust of postmodernity in its socio-cultural and economic senses.

Lyotard (1984) argued that the grand narratives of modernity, the overarching, metaphysical explanations and teleologies of the history of humanity, such as positivistic science as the key to human progress, the hermeneutics of meaning as a key to human self-formation[6], and the emancipation of the human beings through class struggle – the narratives of inevitable emancipation and infinite enlightenment through social progress and scientific truth – all these metanarratives now no longer have the capacity to compel consensus in quite the same way as in earlier times. There is a scepticism about claims that are over-generalized and purport to explain everything. Although still powerful, they are in effect another language game, even though they may not recognize themselves as such. They no longer have the same hold or engender the strong social bonds as once was the case, at least in the most economically developed social orders, even though they are still themselves a form of life.

Thus they are not rejected – an important point that is often overlooked – but the ‘incredulity’ with which these language games are viewed means that they are increasingly understood as *masterful* narratives and narratives of *mastery*. Their relative decline in influence and power has also thrown into doubt the subaltern narratives they have helped to shape, including the narratives that frame the modernist educational project. Modernist master signifiers then are critically signified as no longer quite as masterful – even if they remain powerful – as the effects they produce are seen not to have produced the progress, emancipation and total knowledge promised, or at least have only done so in ambivalent ways. Poverty, disease and ecological degradation continue and in some cases are exacerbated, despite continued attempts, for example, through the human genome project, to achieve such mastery. Science is no longer viewed with quite the same simple faith in its ability to make life better and healthier for all, ironically due in no small part to the ‘disenchantment of the world’ brought about by science itself. This inability to believe so completely has shaped the relative decline in the power of the signifiers ‘science’, ‘progress’, ‘emancipation’, and has itself been a painful learning experience for many.

It is this incredulity towards the modernist language games of mastery that is embedded in the postmodern condition of knowledge. As such, and as we

have indicated above, the postmodern does not represent the passing away or the replacement of the modern, but a particular form of (en)counter with it, an encounter of a largely agonistic kind. The grand narratives are no longer a central and centring authority and thus incredulity and doubt are widespread, encompassing a questioning of any foundation or authorizing centre and thus a scepticism that certain kinds of knowledge have canonical status – that some knowledge is *intrinsically* worthwhile and therefore superior and that some is not, hardly worthy of the signifier 'knowledge'. The authority as producers of legitimate knowledge invested in certain social aggregations – the universities, scientific communities, research councils, professional bodies, government and authors of academic texts such as this one – is now more often treated with suspicion and scepticism. This 'leaves all knowledge-creating practices in a state of permanent instability and all certainties as necessarily contingent, particular and thus temporary' (Adam & van Loon, 2000: 10–11). Some may see the rise of religious fundamentalism as evidence that this is not the case. We would argue that this phenomenon is actually a response to this condition, with meaning sought not through mastery but through *submission* to the (semiotically interpreted) word of God – a kind of inverted mastery.

There is a diversification of modes, centres and sources of knowledge production and of social actor positions too. The result is less certainty as to what constitutes authoritative discourse and who can speak authoritatively *on* a subject and *as* a subject. With the plurality and incommensurability of language games comes a fragmentation of knowledge and a fragmentation or dispersal of the subject. Whilst for Lyotard the subject is still socially constituted, this is not a subject that is a master of language games, that is a unifying power, a generator of meaning. Lyotard signifies the subject as a *node* where different language games intersect.

Fragmentation means that the problem of truth-telling is exacerbated, even as this fragmentation foregrounds a semiosis that opens up such practices to closer investigation. This is the 'crisis of narratives' that Lyotard evokes that we have touched on earlier. Even as some governments look to the research community to provide them with evidence to inform policy and practice, those communities are less capable of giving clear messages or directions, even as some may try. This questioning of foundations and authorizing centres can be seen as a form of *decentring*, a diversification of language games, often conflicting with one another, and a splintering of knowledge. In a situation where knowledge is constantly changing and becoming more rapidly, almost overwhelmingly if unequally, available, the postmodern condition signifies this decentring of knowledge and a diversification of rules through which certain language games can be played. Language, discourse, narratives and forms of life do not stand still and neither consequently does the social order. It follows also that to be able to develop and establish different rules for a language game and therefore a different game signifies a powerful capacity to act. In this situation, lifelong learning assumes the status of a significant technology – of production, power, self and sign system (Foucault 1988) – helping to bring about the very uncertainty to which it is positioned as a response. Whilst there is a struggle

to secure meaning, the struggle is itself symptomatic of the lack of a referent or foundation through which it can be secured.

Postmodern incredulity, the diversification of language games and the decentring of authoritative knowledge positions and sources, has paradoxical educational consequences. On the one hand, there is an erosion of the liberal curriculum and curiosity-driven research. There is an emphasis instead on learning oriented to what Lyotard termed performativity – the learning of knowledge and skills that optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of systems, economic, social and organizational. On the other hand, however, with the decline of the grand narratives that fashioned an authorizing centre for culture, and with the consequent postmodern incredulity and decentring of knowledge, what used to be a hierarchy of learning has now given way to much flatter networks of inquiry.

With performativity, the modernist educational project of progress and emancipation through enlightenment and the training of minds in discursive reasoning is re-coded in terms of education that serves economic modernization, efficiency and effectiveness, and with a different kind of empowerment to that signified by the grand narratives. As we have indicated, lifelong learning is powerfully entwined in these contemporary games. The educational task has come to be signified as the production of knowledge specifically needed by, and those with the skills indispensable to, the dominant globalizing processes – what we have referred to as fast capitalism in Chapter Two. Here, performativity is coded within the wider myth of economic globalization, neo-liberal economics and market competitiveness which we discussed in the previous chapter. Lifelong learning comes to signify the means of attaining and maintaining the flexibility that is considered necessary to successfully respond to the required technological and socio-economic changes. But once education signifies performativity, rather than the shaping of minds, it is no longer something to be engaged in only by young people in a school setting and provided to them as a finite totality in that setting. It signifies rather an ongoing process, for young people and adults alike, a process essential for performativity. The language game has changed.

The meaning of lifelong learning in this new game is that no one can or must stop learning, not only in relation to work but also in relation to life more generally. No one can claim that they are complete and that they have nothing further to learn. This is one reason why lifelong learning becomes integral to the discourses and practices of contemporary business. A sign of a successful business is the extent to which it has become a learning organization explicitly supporting and developing in an ongoing way the learning of all its workers and explicitly managing knowledge with digital systems that capture and disseminate that learning. Engaging in the game of knowledge management signifies success. In fast capitalism the organization that can best harness knowledge as an input and maximize it as an output is the one that is going to be most profitable. At the same time and in response to this development, educational institutions are themselves trying to get into this game by seeking to manage learning performatively and becoming more performative, more business-like, corporatist and consumer-oriented. Managerial discourse and a business logic

of performance, innovation and excellence come to dominate providers of learning opportunities. The commodification of knowledge, which Lyotard argues is an effect of the double impact of performativity and information technologies, is thus further extended.

Increasingly learners are less amenable to being inducted into the truth-making practices of disciplinary language games and more attracted to the signs of use value conveyed by these more performative language games. At the very least, being able to participate in a variety and multiplicity of language games is seen as more important than deep immersion in only one. In this situation, experiential, informal, learning workplace and community-based learning and learning by consuming, are all articulated as legitimate sources, settings and forms of learning. All contexts become potentially signed as contexts for learning. Ironically, therefore, the postmodern condition of knowledge provides a situation where the established arguments of educators that lifelong learning is *lifewide* actually takes hold, if not quite in the same ways as was envisioned by them.

All this however is neither uncontentious nor unproblematic. It is contentious because to draw a sharp distinction between the disciplined and the 'unruly' is over-simplistic. It sets up a binary between the before and the now, which is so common in the language games of the social sciences, but often tends towards historical over-simplification. There are different degrees of participation in language games. As Northedge (2003) suggests, in relation to higher education, there can be central/peripheral, generative/vicarious and convergent/variant forms of participation in any discourse network. This raises many issues about what value we ascribe to, and how we come to value, different language games. Further, it is easy to slip into the view that participating across language games is straightforward and undoubtedly 'a good thing'. Engaging in different genres of reading and writing and becoming a participant in a range of discourse networks can have value, but we might want to question the extent to which it is contingent on the networks of which one is a part and not simply an abstract 'good thing to be able to do'. The investment banker who is also a football hooligan is participating in different language games and debating the value of either is a reasonable thing to do. All this alludes to a wider problem which is that of how to make value judgements when the central authority of the grand narratives is no longer foundational. Making value-based decisions still has to be done but now with no easy reference points. All that is left is to make these decisions on a case by case by case basis and this is itself a significant learning experience, even though not all who espouse all that is Left would view this to be the case.

The paradox, therefore, is that the very demands of performativity have themselves contributed to unruliness by subverting the notion of knowledge as universal and as something that can only be signified as 'knowledge' if it has been validated by a scientific epistemology and an epic or mythic story. Not only is knowledge now signified as potentially being found anywhere, anything potentially can be signified as knowledge. In this sense, performativity has the paradoxical result of simultaneously closing and opening possibilities.

Performativity therefore – like lifelong learning and the postmodern of which it is an aspect – has multiple significations and significances. It contributes to both the strengthening and loosening of boundaries, to both an economy of the same and to an economy of difference.

4. VOCATIONAL PRACTICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

We have argued that there are a multiplicity of language games, each entwined with a form of life. We now turn to one example of a form of life, viz that of work and the vocational practices which are embedded within it. Our purpose is to tease out what lifelong learning signifies in these practices. Our starting point is to refer back to the discussion of fast capitalism in Chapter Two, since it is impossible to understand how lifelong learning semiotically fashions and is fashioned by vocational practices, without first foregrounding the changes in the form of life that is work.

Our earlier discussion of the myth of fast capitalism foregrounded globalizing processes and their effects in terms of flexible and reflexive accumulation, volatile labour markets, niche marketing, business operations dependent on electronic technologies and post-Fordist organization of the workplace. At the same time, as we have mentioned earlier, contemporary education is characterized by its increasing adoption of a form where marketization, privatization and performativity are signified as desirable ways in which it should be organized.

Vocational practices are oriented towards adapting to the demands and needs of the current socio-economic system. The coding, which we have discussed in an earlier chapter, is of the existence and inevitability of change and the need therefore for people to cultivate a pre-disposition to change. There is a privileging of multi-skilling and to not seeing particular skills as something to be owned and defended. Above all, there is a clear emphasis on the significance of personal motivation and the need to cultivate the *right* kind of motivation. Vocationalist language games personalize economic competitiveness where the learner is required to be highly motivated in the direction of a personal change linked to reading the labour and other markets, and to continually be adapting to them through learning. In vocational practices, learning therefore signifies 'application'. Like many other social practices in the postmodern, learning here involves a form of consumption where what is consumed is pre-defined and relevant (i.e. applicable) knowledge and skills, where these are, at the same time, disposable and ephemeral. Educational institutions are expected to produce individuals with the dispositions and competencies, the flexibility and pre-disposition to change, appropriate to the myth of the post-Fordist, post-industrial, knowledge economy. Their assigned role is that of providing that which the learner needs to consume in the way of applicable performative skills.

Vocational practices are about the acquisition of competencies that are flexible and in constant need of updating in response to change. The language game found here is a performative critique of the liberal-humanist academic curriculum. There is much reference to the 'real world'[7], a world coded as not subsumable under academic subject divisions. Hence by changing the rules of the language

game, an academic curriculum is signified as irrelevant and non-applicable, an unfit preparation for this world. Furthermore, the didacticism of the academic curriculum is regarded as not developing the right attitudes and capabilities. Thus a new curriculum is deemed as needed, one which promotes a pre-disposition for continuous or lifelong learning. A curriculum based on experiential/informal learning is generally considered optimal for this purpose. In vocational practices, experiential learning signifies the end of the stranglehold of a selective and elitist institutional education. It also signifies the end of learning as located in institutional education and a challenge to the prerogative of self-selecting and unaccountable academic professionals in controlling and defining what is to count as knowledge and learning.

However, whilst it is certainly the case that experiential learning has played a significant role in broadening access to educational opportunities and to democratizing curricula, there is another side to this narrative. Vocational practices can also signify a much more performative kind of learning that is about the correct answer gained in the most efficient way. Here adaptation and application leave no room for the experimentation, open-endedness or unforeseen circumstances that experiential learning can also signify. Too often, the experience and prior knowledge of learners functions as a mere device for achieving a pre-defined end and standardized outcome, realized precisely in statements of standards. Learners are fashioned to access already existing knowledge, now cast by the rules of behavioural objectives rather than disciplines. Assessment and accreditation procedures ensure that only certain forms of experience are valued. The regulation of experience is re-located in centrally formulated anticipated outcomes. In vocational practices then, experiential learning can function as a technology for *controlling* change. At the same that it unsettles the established order, it also functions to ensure that the unsettling remains within the established parameters or limits of that order. There are still rules to the game, even if it is a different game. Experience is commodified, becoming a commodity to be exchanged for educational credit or a certificate of competency. Here, experience has become pressed into the service of performativity. In this context, experience discursively provides a kind of ‘feel good’ personal motivation and a ‘feet on the ground’ pragmatism that is particularly functional in the post-Fordist workplace. Learning signifies applying knowledge, where knowledge is narrowly defined, a heuristic, factual or denotative knowledge that enables the learner to adapt to a taken for granted pre-defined real world ......

Vocational practices, therefore, can be seen as embedded in language games. The form of life is that of work, specifically the post-Fordist workplace. Learning is signified as adapting to change, acquiring the right kind of skills and making sure these are constantly updated. As we have seen, motivation, attitudes and dispositions are regarded as crucial, and are things to be learnt in an experiential way. Clearly, the kind of learning that is signified has to be of a lifelong character that advantageously positions one in a market and workplace whose demands and requirements are defined as constantly changing. Lifelong learning signifies being motivated, skilled and effectively positioned and communicates being different

from others who are not. But it follows that one can never be prepared enough vocationally and in relation to this positioning. If change is constant and fast, one is always striving to catch up. No matter how strong one's desire to be positioned advantageously, it is a desire that can never be fully satisfied or realized.

5. WITHOUT MASTERY?

The uncertainty of the traditional epistemological markers of knowledge that characterizes a postmodern condition – something pointed to in certain educational contexts by the calls for standards to be reasserted as a means of halting such processes – and the denoting of lifelong learning as a necessity can be argued as signifying an undermining of mastery as a goal of education, even though mastery is itself a master signifier, inscribed in modernist educational discourse. Education is a key modernist practice, developing alongside and as part of the modern – Western, liberal, capitalist – nation state. Modernist education is located in a specific set of language games whose purpose was/is a training in certain forms of rationality, sensibilities, values and subjectivities. In these language games, learners are disembodied, with subjectivities formed through the inscription of a mind/body dualism that privileges the former. Here the more educated you are, the more rational and the more civilized you are positioned as being. The extension of education and educational opportunities was and still is both a signifier of social progress in and as a modern nation state and a significant contributor to progress through the education provided in the formation of the next educated generation. Clearly, as we saw in Chapter Three, there are discourses of lifelong learning that are still located in this educational paradigm.

Mastery of the subject (in both senses) has always been a key educational goal. One becomes an educated person, attending the finishing school, college and university, gains a Masters degree, becomes a master-craftsperson, masters a body of disciplinary knowledge and in so doing, masters oneself by enthroning reason and the mind over the body and the passions. Mastery signifies a form of completion, an end to learning. Embedded in this, the very discourse of education, is a gendered and colonial view of knowledge and the world. And even as modernist education attempted to develop the rational and the intellect, the suppressed emotional and erotic embedded in its discourses always surfaced in various forms (McWilliam 1996).

Since Descartes, the dominant model of rational thought in Western philosophy has been that of the human subject representing an objective world to itself. It is only in this way that complete and certain knowledge was thought to be possible. Lyotard calls this epistemological model into doubt by using Wittgenstein's notion of language games to show that reason and representation cannot be totalizing, their limits being set by the incommensurability of language games. He puts forward two arguments. The first is that events exceed representation and thus any representation, even a masterful narrative, will miss something of the fullness of the event. This is an aspect of his ontology that the world or reality is composed of events which can

never be signified by a single definitive interpretation. There are always multiple interpretations possible and these can never be captured by a single representational narrative. The second argument is that reason works with structured systems of concepts that exclude the sensual and emotional, but that these exclusions can never be entirely maintained, with non-rational forces such as feelings and desires arising to disrupt these rational schemas[8]. Thus it is not possible for reason to understand everything through a representational system.

Whilst there are many dimensions to the signifier of mastery in modernist education, not least mastering the rules of the game, even as a position of finality and closure is articulated, we can thus point to the oppositions and incompleteness to which it is subject. Mastery of the subject and of subjects and self-mastery themselves become subject to incredulity. The language games of mastery no longer rule and the proliferation of language games engender the unruliness that results in, and signifies, a loss of mastery. This plays into the unleashing of desire that as we have seen is associated with the growth of consumerism, or more abstractly, signifies the play of the sublime.

It is precisely the possibilities for mastery then that are thrown into question by the language game of the postmodern. In other words, there is a perfomative aspect to the postmodern discourse itself, if not quite in the same way as Lyotard suggested. In this sense, the 'post' in the postmodern signifies an uncertainty as to the directions of change or perhaps more importantly, the levers through which change can be directed, managed and regulated. It points to an incredulity as to the possibility of mastering and managing the modernist project itself, even as ever greater attempts are made to regulate, discipline and administer. Thus, contemporary attempts at mastery – increasingly inscribed in discourses of standards and targets – paradoxically only point to the inability to master.

What certain postmodern language games do is surface ambivalence in different aspects of the social order – knowledge, signs, signifying practices, hyper-reality, images. These games enable a critique of those over-arching or totalizing schemes that fashion progress as linear and inevitable. At the same time, they also surface and problematize the exclusions and oppressions that these masterful schemes inscribe. Hence the growing importance for learning of significations of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation that challenge masterful narratives and both seek to, and are a manifestation of, a change in the rules of the game. These now take their place alongside class and its impact on learning in educational discourses. There is a recognition of the productiveness of difference rather than its assertion only as a justification for oppression and exclusion. This is a view fundamental to Lyotard's discourse of justice and his notion of *paralogy* – the creative destabilizing of performative language games – as a means of opposing the emergence of a disciplined and disciplinary society. Lyotard's problem with metanarratives was precisely that in stifling difference they constituted a species of 'violence' preventing alternative representations and language games that were valid in their own right. In post-industrial social orders, Lyotard sees the rise of fast capitalism, science and technology, linked and legitimated by performativity[9],

as the basis of a disciplined social order and therefore a similar threat of being excluded from different language games[10].

The more interesting postmodern writing therefore seeks to critically, if sometimes playfully, engage with the messiness and complexity of the social order, part of which is the incredulity towards mastery as an achievable goal. Lyotard argues that a new, postmodern paradigm is coming into being, even in science, one that signifies the unpredictability and uncertainty of knowledge, the chaos of reality, and the need to learn through paralogy or dissensus. It is this messiness and complexity that is also inscribed, if not always very obviously, in the language games of lifelong learning.

6. LIFELONG LEARNING: A POSTMODERN CONDITION OF EDUCATION?

As we have said, lifelong learning has many significations. That lifelong learning signifies a set of transcendental principles, formulated as a set of cognitive processes inherent in all adults, is a highly problematic coding. By focusing only on this coding, there is a failure to locate lifelong learning in wider social developments and, in so doing, a failure to recognize its multiple significations and to come to grips with issues of totalization, of which mastery is perhaps the most significant example. Lifelong learning is better understood in relation to certain contemporary language games and social practices, including that of the postmodern. Undoubtedly, some social practices do involve continuing attempts at mastery, with lifelong learning seen as the technology that will achieve this. Yet this very search for mastery is sourced in a lack of mastery, a desire that can never be achieved. Furthermore, as have seen earlier when looking at vocational practices, lifelong learning, whilst an unavoidable activity, does not remedy this lack, but actually accentuates it further. So the lack of mastery creates the conditions for the endlessness of lifelong learning.

In the light of this, lifelong learning rather than a route to mastery might well be considered a condition of constant apprenticeship (Rikowski 1999) – mobile, flexible, adaptable. Here, the traditional notion of the apprentice working towards mastery with a 'master' in the field is reconfigured, giving way to a different relationship where masters are themselves also subject to lifelong learning and continuing (professional) development. There is no stable centre to the discourse network, but a butter churn of various positions within it at various points of time and place. This is not to deny the continuing arrangements for apprentices/learners to be trained by the suitably proficient. What it points to is that one never masters completely and there can be no end to the search for mastery. Proficiency may never be final or complete. This is as much the case for those who work in education and training as elsewhere. It is unsurprising therefore that as postmodern incredulity has enveloped education as well as other modern institutions and practices, continuing professional development has grown as an area of practice. It also points to the possibilities for a language game of excellence – the ongoing search for improvement – in relation to lifelong learning to counter the vocational practices of competence.

In this chapter, therefore we have examined some of the folds, contours and ravines in the semiotic landscape of the postmodern and attempted to locate lifelong learning in that landscape, both as part of it, and as involved in its making. We have articulated an argument for a set of language games that are performative in signifying that which they help to bring about.

For us, lifelong learning and a postmodern condition are semiotically intertwined in a web of incredulity, performativity, decentring and a mastery/lack of mastery that they manifest and to which they point. Yet there is a many-sidedness to this, not least because we do not see the postmodern and the modern as polar opposites, but as entwined and enfolded in complex ways. In other words, we do not accept the rules of that language game attempted by some critics of the postmodern, especially as these critics do not always recognize that they are themselves involved in a language game.

But then perhaps neither did Lyotard who has provided the conceptual resources for the development of this chapter. Throughout our text we have been aware, often painfully so, of the paradox of our position and the need to reflexively articulate that paradox. We end this chapter by once again reflexively articulating the paradox of the language game performed in our text. We do so however by first foregrounding the paradox inherent in Lyotard's text. Lyotard argues that there are a multiplicity of language games, that all knowledge is located within language games, and that no one kind of knowledge can make a greater claim to legitimacy over another. Or to put it another way, language performs the making of meaning within its own workings. Even science is a language game which performs truth-making practices but, because of performativity, the alliance between capitalism, science and technology, it is no different from other language games and ways of speaking, for example, art and religion. Thus it can now have no overarching claims. What however does this imply for Lyotard's own position? He obviously has a clear vision of what is signified by knowledge and thus does not think of his work as generating more myths[11]. Yet is the knowledge he has generated about knowledge mythical? Is he not engaging in his own language game about the nature of knowledge? If he is, what claim can this possibly make on us as readers? Should we not see his knowledge about knowledge as simply another language game, which Lyotard is entitled to play but which we are under no compulsion to accept?

We would not wish to suggest that the paradox can be totally resolved. Perhaps it cannot be or maybe its resolution is best left to those who are immersed in such a language game. All we can say is that we too are caught in a similar paradox, since in examining the meanings of lifelong learning in the way we have, we are ourselves in danger of generating signs of totality, a universal and totalizing explanation of its significance, thereby apparently mastering its 'true' meaning – and doing all this even as we problematize such explanations. Indeed there might be said to be a tension between the content of this chapter and the rhetoric through which we aim to persuade and influence – and perhaps that is inevitable. Suggesting that lifelong learning is the signifier of a postmodern condition of education is a very definite stance, despite the hedging and qualifying we have also attempted. All we

can point to is that in presenting this text we are constrained by, and make use of, the opportunity to work with(in) certain rules and in the process to participate in certain language games. But then it could be argued, so too is learning.

NOTES

[1] Although he seems to be unaware that he is doing this
[2] The decline in the credibility of metanarratives means that no single overarching theory can pretend to account for everything.
[3] This is similar to the position on science taken by Thomas Kuhn (1980) in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
[4] For Lyotard, the postmodern condition is constituted by fragmented language games attached to incommensurable forms of life.
[5] This implies that science is not so much 'scientific' as linguistic and social. This would be alarming to many but not to those who accept Thomas Kuhn's codification of science. Science also tries to be the only game in town, declaring false anything that does not follow its rules
[6] Encapsulated in the notion of *bildung*
[7] By which is usually meant the world of fast capitalism.
[8] Lyotard refers to that which exceeds the limits of reason and representation as the 'sublime'.
[9] Lyotard claims that performativity dominates the language game of science because doing science requires proof which costs money. Thus science has to 'perform' for capitalism in order to get the funding it needs.
[10] He refers to this threat as 'terrorism':
[11] Myths in the sense of illusions, the point being that because of performativity science is now generating mythical knowledge and is itself based on a myth ie that science is not in the pocket of capitalism.

CHAPTER FIVE

SIGNING POWER IN LIFELONG LEARNING

Signs are powerful and some are more powerful than others. States and governments are powerful. Through political and policy-making processes, they attempt to inscribe certain practices with particular kinds of meaning, thereby shaping the institutional climate within which people work and live. For instance, as we argued earlier, the myth of the knowledge economy provides the exigence for much policy development in education. Through continual repetition, this becomes nominalized as unassailable fact, or a fact to be assaulted. Institutions such as churches/mosques and universities through their signifying practices traditionally author-ized certain signs and signifying practices, thus making them more powerful than others. For example, to gain the signifier 'graduate' did not just denote someone who had spent a number of years studying and had successfully passed certain examinations, but also connoted a status or positioning within a hierarchical social order and thus *signified* something to others.

In exploring the semiosis of lifelong learning, we therefore need to explore the ways in which certain signs of lifelong learning have become more powerful than others and how these are intertwined with wider practices in the social order. In other words, we will attempt to place lifelong learning in an intertextual semiotic chain with a view to establishing certain aspects of the meaning-making that it generates. Since this itself involves power we will also be examining the exercises of power within which it is entangled. The multiplicity of signs of lifelong learning does not come from nowhere, nor is the uptake of such signs arbitrary. For us, therefore it is important that lifelong learning has emerged as a significant policy discourse at a time of rapid economic and social change, with all the consequent insecurities and uncertainties that we discussed earlier, and that it is invariably signified as an aspect of the impact of globalizing processes. What does lifelong learning signify in this context, where the context is crucial to its signification? This is what we want to explore in this chapter, but with, as always,a caveat. While we will provide our own (authoritative?) reading of lifelong learning policy discourses in relation to a certain understanding of the exercise of power in the social order, we recognize that there are other meanings that could be articulated, and that each reading inevitably must entail some 'flattening out' of meaning. Any analysis inevitably inscribes a landscape with certain meanings rather than others, even whilst there is no complete map of the territory. As Deleuze and Guattari (1988) might put it, rather than maps there are only tracings.

As we have noted in earlier chapters, there have been many tracings of the significance of lifelong learning with a multiplicity of meanings generated from these analyses. Like the postmodern, lifelong learning with its current slavish

concern for developing human capital signifies for some an abandonment, even perhaps a betrayal, of the traditional significance for education of the struggle for justice and social equality. However, for us, the complexity of practices that constitute the social order suggests the need for caution in trying to explain the significations of lifelong learning simply in terms of the mythic codes of the 'knowledge economy', 'capitalism', or 'the new work order'. This is not to say that these myths are unimportant. They clearly are. At the very least, as we suggested in Chapter Two, they themselves need to be recognized as signifiers that do meaningful (and powerful) work. Thus their importance rests more in their semiotic positioning of certain social practices within particular discursive domains than in their description and explanation of what is 'truly' going on. They are not merely commentaries on politics and policy but integral to the semiotic struggle to inscribe certain meanings rather than others. We ourselves are then very aware of our own engagement in these discursive struggles and that, as in a chess game, we have already made some moves within the language games of lifelong learning. How powerful they are remains an open question.

In addressing the meanings of lifelong learning then we need to be cautious. Let us briefly give a specific example. Despite their many differences, people of very different political persuasions are increasingly naming the workplace as a key site of learning, in the process making the workplace a key signifier of learning. For some, social inclusion/integration is itself identified as a social 'good' to be supported through employment. This connotes an ethic of self-improvement, the disciplining and self-disciplining capacities that some hold to be developed through work. For others, the workplace is and remains the key site for organizing the struggle not only in and around the conditions of work, but also as a basis for mobilizing the workforce for wider political purposes. Of course, in many of the discourses of work the workplaces of people's everyday experience are semiotically loaded to the point of hyperbole. Often very specific workplaces are generalized as workplaces per se. The small and medium sized workplace and self-employed trades people might well wonder what this workplace is that adorns the pages of so many books and articles. The agricultural labourer might not be able to locate themselves in such discourses, nor many of those around the world for whom notions of work may be inscribed with very different meanings to those of the OECD countries. However, despite this the workplace remains a central if semiotically contested site in the social order.

Our performance in this chapter will mainly draw on Foucault's performances. In these writings, and it is for this reason that we draw particularly on these ideas as powerfully explanatory, signifying practices are articulated both as material and as co-implicated in exercises of power. Foucault's account of power and the historical changes in its mode of deployment in ordering the social open up possibilities for exploring the significance of the politics of lifelong learning in changing conditions. In so doing it provides the possibilities for analysis without at the same time reducing lifelong learning to a mere epiphenomenon of some deeper underlying structure(s) of meaning. In this chapter then, we are particularly interested in Foucauldian

conceptions of power – sovereignty, discipline and governmentality – their semiotic (material) power and their possible relationship to those practices within which lifelong learning is embedded.

1. POWER-KNOWLEDGE AND DISCOURSES

Foucault's work challenges certain general assumptions of the separation of knowledge from power. For him,

> power and knowledge directly imply one another . . . there is no power relation without the relative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.
>
> (Foucault 1977: 27)

Power and knowledge, power-knowledge formations, are always found embedded together in discursive regimes of truth.

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctified; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.
>
> (Foucault 1980: 131)

At this point, some explanation of what Foucault understands by discourse and the discursive is in order given its connotation with the signifying practices of semiosis. According to Foucault, a discourse is a structure of meaning-making whose major characteristic is its disciplinary and hence regulatory power. Foucault's argument is that in every social order the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to certain rules and structures whose role is to domesticate its power and to cope with destabilizing chance. Any social order requires that people are not free to say or do anything, whenever and wherever they like. The alternative would be unending semiosis and the undermining of social order. It is the risk of this that requires discourse, in its everyday sense, to be corralled, controlled and channeled, and it is 'discourse' in Foucault's sense that does this. A Foucaldian discourse therefore defines what can be included and what is prohibited. It covers objects that can be known and spoken about, rituals that must be carried out, the right to speak of a particular subject, who can speak, from what institutional base and about what. These prohibitions interrelate, reinforce and complement each other, forming a complex web, continually subject to modification. Discourse constitutes subjects in terms of social positioning and identity (who we are), and voice (who can speak), in the process putting a halt to the dangers of unending semiosis. This is both productive, enabling certain things to be said and to happen, and constraining in authorizing only certain practices.

There is also a clear difference between a Foucauldian understanding of discourse and some of the more interactionist understandings of semiosis, as he focuses on larger units of analysis linked to an explicit understanding of the ordering of the

social. A discourse is a unit of human action, interaction, communication, and cognition, and not just a unit of language. It is not simply a way of expressing a pre-existing reality, nor a reference to things that pre-exist statements about them. Discourse is *constitutive* of knowledge, rather than simply the neutral expression or representation of something outside language or representation. It fashions *representations* and shapes *actions*, making possible different ways of knowing the world and of acting within it. In Foucault's understanding, discourses are:

> ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the . . . . unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern.
>
> (Weedon 1987: 108)

Foucault points to an inter-relational process at work whereby, through discourse, reality is fashioned into a domain of thought (representation) and thought is fashioned into a domain of reality (action). Any discourse then functions as a signifying system. According to Foucault, it is a way of representing knowledge about a particular domain at a particular historical moment, for example, madness at the beginning of the nineteenth century or sexuality at its end, lifelong learning at the cusp of the twenty-first century. Discourse defines the domain and produces the objects of knowledge within that domain. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate conduct. This means that meaning is fashioned *through* discourse. Here meaning performs with discourse merging into *praxis*, in the process subverting the common-sense distinction between talking and doing. Foucault traces the emergence of discourses that have shaped modern institutions such as the prison, the asylum and the hospital. It is from these institutional sites, these sites of power[1], that discourse is authorized, and from and through which individuals are regulated. It is thus in the realization of institutionalized practices that discourse in a Foucauldian sense gets played out.

Discursive practices, or the double process of talking and doing, render particular aspects of existence meaningful in particular ways, which then become thinkable and calculable and thus amenable to intervention and regulation, with documentation, computation and evaluation the main instruments or 'technologies' for achieving this. It is through these practices that power is exercised and where it takes particular forms. In relation to the institutions emerging with the modern nation state, the dominant form of power is *discipline*, a form of power that displaces the coercive power of sovereign monarchies.

Foucault's focus is on how some discourses have shaped and created meaning systems that have gained the status and currency of truth, and as a consequence have come to regulate how we define and organize both ourselves and our social world. Pedagogic practices have always been associated with the incorporation of individuals into such discursive regimes of truth. People are governed through these regimes but also, through their actions support their reproduction. Most important, knowledge links to power, not only assuming the authority of the truth but also

with the power to *make itself* true. All knowledge, once applied, or to put it another way, once co-implicated with action, has real *effects* and, in that sense, *becomes* true, or more accurately *counts* or signifies as ‘true’. Thus a truth, whatever the period or context, is always a discursive formation sustaining a regime of truth.

Given this analysis, for lifelong learning to be mobilized as meaningful, it is necessary that disciplinary practices emerge in correlative power-knowledge formations embedded in discourse(s) that define truth – or to put it another way, truth-making practices. Such practices operate through technologies that signify a mind/body dualism, inscribing the ‘educated’/‘uneducated’, the ‘trained’/‘untrained’, the ‘skilled’/‘unskilled’, the ‘competent’/‘incompetent’, and through these inscriptions allowing the fashioning of standards and the deployment of normalizing judgement. Here we see the means that realize the performance of what Foucault referred to as the disciplinary practices in training and re-shaping (or re-presenting) ‘docile bodies’.

However, these docile bodies must also become *active subjects*, because discipline does not turn people simply into passive objects. Indeed, discipline as a form through which power is exercised cannot work unless subjects are *capable of action*, even if this capacity is not the same as that signified by those who insist on human free will. It is through mobilization into discursive regimes of truth that people become active subjects inscribed with certain capacities to act . Here the meaning of human agency does not entail an escape from power, as liberal humanism would have it, but consists rather of a specific exercise of power – one is empowered in particular ways through becoming the subject of, and subjected to, power[2]. Capacities are brought forth and evaluated through the disciplinary technologies of observation, normalization, judgment and examination, the extent, criteria and methods for which are provided by the discourses in play.

As knowledge changes, so do the practices that frame behaviour and likewise, as practices change, so too does knowledge. Here ‘the chief function of the disciplinary power is to “train”, rather than to select and to levy; or, no doubt, to train in order to levy and select all the more’ (Foucault 1977: 170). While the relationship between discipline, subjectivity and docile bodies is not a stable one in Foucault’s work – there is no single correct Foucauldian position – it is this sense that we wish to take forward here in considering the meanings of lifelong learning in the matrix and exercises of power.

Discourses allow subjects to speak the truth about themselves, a truth that fashions subjectivity and identity, with subjects positioned within and by discourses. They cannot be outside discourse; they are *subjected* to discourse, existing within the knowledge produced by discourses. Thus the latter are not therefore just passive media for conveying the pre-given but rather also active *producers* of both meaning and self. Here we note that Foucault, through his discourse, is giving a different meaning to power, a difference which is itself based upon his understanding of discourse. Meaning and subjectivity co-emerge through discourse, an idea we also saw developed in the more conventional semiotic studies of Kress in Chapter One. We are simultaneously speaking (active) subjects but also subjects subjected to

meaning generated through discourses. Foucault was always critical of the Enlightenment conception of the subject as the independent, authentic source of action and meaning. For him, it is discourse, not the subject that produces knowledge and discourse is enmeshed with power[3]. Individuals regardless of their class, gender or racial background will not be able to up-take meaning until they have identified with those positions fashioned by the discourse(s), *subjected* themselves to its rules, and hence become the subjects of its power-knowledge. The subject becomes the object, positioned within the discourse through which power is relayed.

The relationship between education as a discursive regime of truth, with an associated set of disciplinary practices, and other discursive regimes is of interest here. The latter themselves entail a range of pedagogical practices and therefore require signs of learning in order to effectively do the work they do. For instance, the academic discipline of accountancy provides a regime of truth for induction into the practice of accountancy and in defining what it means to be an accountant. Implicit within this is a range of pedagogical practices that in part are explicitly educational. The discursive regime of accountancy thereby has an implicit pedagogy which traditionally is either not itself an explicit part of the discourse of that (academic) subject or sits at the margins of disciplinary discourses. Here, accountants have to account for themselves in their accounts of accountancy. What this means is that for Foucault, the modern disciplined, normalized social order is underpinned by a set of pedagogical practices which at one and the same time are explicitly the concern of educational discourse, but which are practiced in *all* social organizations and institutions. However, educational discourse usually signifies the practices of education as an institution. This wider understanding of pedagogy across the social order and within other disciplines is denoted through the emergence of the discourse of lifelong learning. In this sense, discourses of lifelong learning can fashion and mobilize a range of embodied subjectivities within and through the wider disciplines. These subjectivities are not a natural given, but are themselves effects of discursive practices. It is partly the extent to which these come to be mobilized that lifelong learning becomes a site for explicit pedagogic debate and practice. We therefore see once again how the semiosis is not merely about meaning but also about subjectivity through signification, where certain subject positions rather than others are brought forth and supported in the play of power.

It is for this reason that although Foucault never examined educational practices as such, Hoskin (1990) refers to him as a 'crypto-educationalist'. In extending Foucault's analysis, Hoskin (1993) argues that it is education, and particularly the emergence of the pedagogical practices of examination, numerical grading and continuous writing in the latter part of the eighteenth century, that provided the basis for the emergence of disciplinarity (in both senses of this term). Significantly, this would position education as superordinate rather than subordinate to the other disciplines, as such becoming the condition of possibility for disciplinarity, thereby conferring upon it its particular significatory power. Or to put it another way, it is pedagogic practices that make discipline (again in both senses of this term) possible. Here 'the hyphen in the power-knowledge relation is the historically

changing structure of educational practice through which humans learn to learn' (Hoskin 1993: 296). Shifts within education, such as shifts towards and within the framing of lifelong learning, therefore provide the possibility for disturbing the pedagogical practices that form and maintain other discursive regimes and, with that, the subjectivities of individuals and in the case of lifelong learning, their subjectivity precisely as *learners*. The signifier 'autonomous lifelong learner' therefore in part displaces the docile body of disciplinary practices, as both a response to wider changes and a contributor to them. Lifelong learning itself is positioned as the hyphen in power-knowledge.

Undoubtedly, the significance of Foucault's work poses a paradox for many educators. Modernist understandings tend to view education as the slow unfolding of knowledge and truth, a humanizing and developmental process, one which results in individual and social progress, enlightenment and emancipation. However, what are we to make of the ever more extensive knowledge generated in and about learning, signifying further dimensions of the learner to be framed for pedagogical intervention?[4] Wherever there are social practices, so increasingly learning seems to be named. At the same time, disciplinary practices seem to be ever more intrusive, the technologies for 'governing the soul' provocatively referred to by Rose (1991). Could this be part of the powerful significance of contemporary discourses of lifelong learning?

In Foucault's terms, wherever and when learning takes place, those learning are required to bring forth their subjectivities for disciplining so that they can become a particular type of person. As we have commented earlier, in becoming subject to particular disciplinary regimes people also become active 'subjects'. Despite its negative connotations, discipline is productive. People *speak* as well as being *spoken of*. Yet discipline was not the only form of power explored by Foucault and as well as discipline, the discourses of lifelong learning can also be positioned in relation to contemporary forms of governmentality. It is to an examination of this that we now turn.

2. GOVERNMENTALITY

While we have focused so far on Foucault's understanding of the disciplinary power of discourses as a way of reading the power of contemporary discourses of lifelong learning, some of the attempts to understand the significance of changes in the social order draw heavily upon his later work, in particular his notion of governmentality[5]. There are two main senses in which he can be interpreted as using this notion. One is as a framing within which to analyze the practices through which governing in general takes place alongside other forms of power. Here, in particular, there is a focus on the different forms of power in the social order to which we have referred. In addition to disciplinary power invested in nation states, which has as its object the regulation of individuals within a territory, there is also sovereign power invested in the monarch, and *biopower* which involves a governmentality that regulates populations as resources to be used and optimized. The legitimacy of

governmentality derives from its capacity to nurture individual life by integrating bodies, capacities, and pleasures into a productive force. Discourse comprises an ensemble of practices indispensable to governmentality, in the sense of governing that is not confined to the state and its institutions but is spread throughout the social order. Here, governmentality, the combining of a certain rationality with associated forms of action, is about the maximization of the productive forces, activities and relations of each and all[6]. What is signified here is that governing is more about increasing productivity or capacities rather than simply training bodies to be docile. To achieve this, subjects again, need to be known, a knowledge that forms the basis of efficient management and the maximization of productive capacity in all parts and levels of the social order. Without this knowledge the risks that are inevitably involved in the process of maximizing productivity would just be too great for this project to be successfully realized. Thus with governmentality, it is essential that subjects become empowered in the sense of their capacities being maximized. This is most likely to happen when governing is distributed and at a distance from the state.

On this reading, the policy discourses of lifelong learning are not only exercises signifying power but also signal a change in the ways in which power is being exercised and the social form thus ordered. For Foucault, discipline and regulation signify the ways in which the exercise of power in life has become a matter of self care[7]. Discipline and regulation cover 'the whole surface that lies between the organic and the biological, between body and populations' (Foucault 2003: 253). Here, since power is enmeshed with regulation, there is a process at work of self-regulation where subjects accept a regulation which is self-imposed though the interiorization of the regulating gaze. With governmentality, subjects are still fashioned within power-knowledge relations but this is now brought about by inciting people to talk about their desire and to signify themselves as subjects of desire, a desire, which in the context of our discussion, includes a *desire for learning* – a desire however which, as we noted earlier, is discursively channeled continually. Reflecting on oneself signifies the uncovering of a hidden truth about self. Subjectivity is fashioned around this uncovering which reveals, and enables, the fulfillment of desires and the maximizing of capacities. Stern self-improvement through discipline is supplemented and displaced by the play of desire as signs of learning.

It is possible to argue that governmentality is specific to the practices within advanced liberal democratic states where governing is concerned less with disciplining the individual than in enabling individuals to develop those capacities essential to caring for themselves. In this sense, governmentality can be seen simply as one form of power historically replacing another, with a movement away from people having power exercised over them to a situation in which they ever more actively regulate their own conduct and where they do this in part by adopting a learning disposition to life – or to put it another way fulfilling their desire to learn. This sits comfortably with our earlier argument about the significance of lifestyle practices and consumption for contemporary capitalism and the latter's concern for

human capital in the so-called knowledge economy. However, we follow Foucault's own position on the *co-existence* of different forms of power and the focus they have and thus we would argue that all forms of power continue to be exercised within and across different social orders, with associated pedagogic practices. Thus, the regulation of populations may enable more spaces in which subjects can be active than when disciplined as individuals alone. However, this should not be construed as a generalized or generalizable trend. In our view, it is to the tendencies of these forms of power to intersect, to become patterned in their relationships across a whole network or matrix of power, and to the forms, locations and detail of their intersections that we must look if we are to illuminate the significance and significatory power of lifelong learning.

We need to begin therefore by focusing on what goes on within the capillaries of networked power and only begin to deduce regularities in the operation of power from such micro-analyses. If we focus only on the significance of either disciplinary or governmental power, we fall into the trap of deducing how power is exercised by adopting what Foucault termed a view from the centre:

> What I mean is this: it seems to me ... it is important not to, so to speak, deduce power by beginning at the centre and trying to see how far down it goes, or to what extent it is reproduced or renewed in the most atomistic elements of society. I think that, on the contrary ... we should make an ascending analysis of power, or in other words begin with its infinitesimal mechanisms, which have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then look at how these mechanisms of power, which have their solidity and, in a sense, their own technology, have been and are invested, colonized, used, inflected, transformed, displaced, extended, and so on by increasingly general mechanisms and forms of overall domination.
>
> (Foucault 2003: 30)

By avoiding a view from the centre, we also avoid applying explanatory and totalizing concepts to lifelong learning, as instead we are better equipped to follow the actors in these contexts. This is theoretically and methodologically significant for empirical research and it may be unsurprising that life history and life course approaches have developed within and as part of the discourse of lifelong learning.

For Foucault then, governmentality is concerned with the conduct of conduct and this involves regarding 'the forces and capacities of living individuals, as members of a population, as resources to be fostered, to be used, to be optimized' (Dean 1999: 20). Thus, as Dean suggests, 'to analyze government is to analyze those practices that try and shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups' (Dean 1999: 12). Government then is the disciplining into a form of life *freely accepted* that works by shaping subjectivity through the 'educating' of subjects who would otherwise remain 'undisciplined' and therefore unproductive. This mode of shaping becomes increasingly important within those cultures where disciplining through force, coercion or intrusive regulation meets with increasing disapproval and resistance. In these culture therefore, governmentality involves a non-coercive *pastoral power* that works through infiltrating regulation into the very interior of the experience

of subjects (Rose 1989). Subjects 'educate' or fashion themselves (the care of the self mentioned earlier), a process where subjective experiences are simultaneously shaped and yet paradoxically remain uniquely one's own (Ransom 1997).

Governing therefore does not so much *determine* people's subjectivities, but rather elicits, fosters, promotes and attributes. It is not oppressive in any obvious sense, instead it works on, through, and with, *active* subjects by promoting working on oneself through, among other things, processes of reflection and reflexivity –

> One of the first effects of power is that it allows bodies, gestures, discourses, and desires to be identified and constituted as something individual. The individual is not, in other words, power's opposite number; the individual is one of power's first effects. The individual is in fact a power-effect, and at the same time, and to the extent that he [sic] is a power-effect, the individual is a relay: power passes through the individuals it has constituted.
>
> (Foucault 2003: 30)

Thus, the changing exercises of power are coded by changing discourses of learning, with greater emphasis placed on the fashioning of reflective spaces through which to do the work required in the care of the self. What this suggests is that the regulation of populations combines with the disciplining of individuals to mobilize subjects who may combine differing aspects and combinations of docile bodies and active subjectivities, and where notions of reflection become more the order of the day. We therefore begin to see once more how shifts in pedagogy co-emerge with shifts in the exercise of power through discourses of lifelong learning. This is the discursive space of the hyphen of power-knowledge. Here reflection is not simply a more humane or empowering form of pedagogic practice. It is still a form of regulation but one that is more subtle and apparently less intrusive, enabling individuals to have more space so that they can act upon themselves and express their desires.

This is a view explored by Barry (2001) who uses changes in the pedagogical practices of museums as analogies for the changing exercises of power in governing more generally. He posits what he rightly indicates is a too simplistic dichotomy between, on the one hand, discipline that aims to produce docile bodies with the imperative to learn. Here museum visitors are positioned to engage in passive contemplation of static displays. We might want to position this dimension as embedded in behaviourist notions of competence. On the other hand, Barry posits interactivity, which encourages flexibility and offers the possibility of discovery. Here museum visitors are positioned to participate interactively with dynamic displays and simulations. This position is embedded in certain pedagogic discourses of reflection and experiential learning. It is not hard to see how these ideas about changing forms of governing relate to the policy discourses of lifelong learning more widely, where elements of docility and the imperative to be active by learning (or else!) are to be found alongside the encouragement and incitement to become flexible, adaptable, enterprising and invited to discover. Both signify exercises of power, but the practices associated with them and the possibilities for a multiplicity

of positions and shaping of subjectivity, differ as they ebb and flow. This therefore provides possibilities for multiple significations of lifelong learning.

Through the elaboration of the interstices between these forms of power and their differing practices, we may thus illuminate the complexities of contemporary mobilizations of lifelong learning in ways which go beyond some of the over-generalized discourses that currently fashion its meaning(s).

3. ACTIVELY SEEKING SUBJECTS

One influential argument that has been put forward then is that the shifts in governing aim to fashion active subjects through the norms and values associated with 'responsible' consuming and enterprise. Thus the relationship to which we have referred between lifelong learning, lifestyle practices and power. Here, subjectivities are themselves re-fashioned to elicit a particular image of human beings:

> The self is to be a subjective being, it is to aspire to autonomy, it is to strive for personal fulfillment in its earthly life, it is to interpret its reality and destiny as a matter of individual responsibility, it is to find meaning in existence by shaping its life through acts of choice.
>
> (Rose 1998: 151)

It is the ethos of enterprise that helps to re-shape subjectivity through self-fashioning. This enterprise, usually coded in discourses of flexibility, adaptability and innovation, can be found in many policies and practices concerning employment and competitiveness. For Foucault, ethics are not formalized moral codes, abstract senses of right and wrong. They are construed as the practices through which one evaluates and acts upon oneself, what he refers to as *technologies of the self* (Foucault 1988)[8].

> Ethics are thus understood as means by which individuals come to construe, decipher, act upon themselves in relation to the true and false, the permitted and the forbidden, the desirable and the undesirable.
>
> (Rose 1998: 153)

Technologies, including those of the self, are the means whereby subjects come to accept, value, desire and strive to achieve a congruence between their personal objectives and those objectives external to themselves – an internalization of external objectives.

Insofar as enterprise, flexibility and innovation are positioned as essential to the 'good life', a range of technologies, or pedagogic practices, are deployed through which human beings are positioned as enterprising, innovative and flexible (l)earners. Organizational technologies (involving the exercise of power) and technologies of the self (the fashioning of subjectivity) become aligned with technologies of success (motivation and enterprise). The organizationally desirable (more productivity, flexible working, increased efficiency, maximization of outputs) is semiotically coded with, or counts as, the personally desirable (greater self-fulfillment through performing excellently and being recognized as such). In this

way, subjects are brought forth who are (self-)fashioned and signified as active learners *and* as self-regulating subjects, where the subjectivity stimulated is one that regards the maximization of capacities and dispositions appropriate to maximizing their own productivity as both necessary and desirable. At the same time, new structures and sites of production are put into place to ensure success in the globalized world of fast capitalism. Most important for our purposes, subjects with an enterprising relationship to *self* are framed in certain semiotic codes of learning, a reflective self that exhibits qualities of autonomy, self-management and personal responsibility.

This work of acting upon oneself is supported by 'experts of organizational life, engineering human relations through architecture, timetabling, supervisory systems, payment schemes, curricula, and the like' (Rose 1998: 154). The social order is itself positioned as a learning order and different actors are mobilized to be worked upon to enhance their desire for learning to choose, and choosing to learn, in order that they become enterprising and flexible. At the same time, however, it is important to emphasize that these technologies can only *shape* rather than determine because, once people become active subjects, there is also brought forth the capability to fashion different meanings and to code their practices differently through various forms of reversal and resistance.

To understand this more fully we need to return to discourse. We pointed out earlier that some discourses have created meaning systems that powerfully influence how subjects define and organize themselves and their social world. Now we need to foreground that there are other discourses which do not have this status because they are marginalized and often subjugated. Foucault argued that there is no fixed and definitive structuring of social practices and subjectivity. The subject is never completely socialized. Rather, both the formation of subjectivities and practices are related to, or are a function of, historically specific discourses and there are discourses that provide sites for contesting or resisting the hegemonic practices of dominant discourses. These are similar to but different from the notion of *petit recits* we met in the discussion of Lyotard's work in Chapter Four. Even a dominant discourse is never able to entirely corral and control unending semiosis. Something always escapes as an alternative or oppositional discourse. An example therefore of a marginalized yet resistant discourse, deployed to counter the discourses of flexibility in relation to workplaces, would be one that articulated the undesirability of work intensification and its associated costs in terms of ill-health and emotional stress (Burchell, *et al.* 1999).

Du Gay (1996) argues that the ethos of enterprise is crucial to the development of discourses of flexibility among nations, organizations and individuals in support of economic competitiveness. Here the discourses ascribe particular meanings to practices which actually perform that flexibility. Thus in workplaces, workers are subject to practices of management, appraisal and development that attempt to position them as enterprising subjects, engaged in an 'enterprise of the self'. In this position,

> no matter what hand circumstances may have dealt a person, he or she remains always continuously engaged ... in that one enterprise ... In this sense the character of the entrepreneur can no longer be seen as just one among a plurality of ethical personalities *but must rather be seen as assuming an ontological priority*.
>
> (Du Gay 1996: 181, emphasis in original)

Exposure to the risks and costs of these activities are constructed as enabling workers to take responsibility for their actions, signifying a form of empowerment and success within the organization. Nor is this restricted to careers alone, as the whole of life is inscribed with this ethos of enterprise. Here –

> certain enterprising qualities – such as self-reliance, personal responsibility, boldness and a willingness to take risks in the pursuit of goals – are regarded as human virtues and promoted as such.
>
> (Du Gay 1996: 56)

Fashioning people's values, norms, desires and dispositions therefore becomes semiotically a key dimension of organizational change through the recoding of the meaning of work and its significance in people's lives. We might then want to position change agents in organizational and political life as *discourse technologists* whose task is to re-code the meaning of practices. This suggests an entirely legitimate role for that much over-used insult of 'spin'. In relation to both governing by states and in organizational life, there can be an increased emphasis on change through semiotic transformation. Here the directions and processes of change are formed through the attempted production of a shared ethic, in effect a set of shared meanings, that both exposes all to the risks of failure and failing to change (the 'or else' we mentioned earlier), but also inscribes shared desires, goals and aspirations. Thus national and international competitiveness have been –

> recoded, at least in part, in terms of the psychological, dispositional and aspirational capacities of those that make up the labour force ... Personal employment and macro-economic health is to be ensured by encouraging individuals to 'capitalize' themselves, to invest in the management, presentation, promotion and enhancement of their own economic capital as a capacity of their selves and as a lifelong project.
>
> (Rose 1999: 162)

This recoding entails the mobilizing of myths[9] of globalization, with its connotations of competitiveness and flexibility, to signify those threats through which pedagogical practices that attempt to create an internal commonality of purpose can be embedded as a response.

The ethos of enterprise is both prescriptive and powerful and the practices through which it is fashioned are many and varied. As Rose indicates, one of the calculations in which an enterprising self engages is that to do with its own learning. There is a felt need to adopt an active learning approach to life and to calculate the learning needed to enhance one's freedom and self-reliance. Learning therefore becomes a more explicit actor, a signifier of a positioning congruent with attempts at different forms of social order:

> The new citizen is required to engage in a ceaseless work of training and retraining, skilling and reskilling, enhancement of credentials and preparation for a life of ceaseless job seeking: life is to become a continuous economic capitalization of the self.
>
> (Rose 1999: 161)

This mobilization of active, enterprising and flexible subjects of learning can be thought of as part of the wider mobilizations in the social order, in which the range of interactivities and actors involved will vary but where the desire to learn will be forthcoming.

In relation to workplaces then, there is an attempt at a refashioning of actor-networks that involves a re-ordering of discipline and governmentality as exercises of power and as regimes of truth. Signifying as strategies of governmentality, workers as learners and work as learning does not simply overlay or replace existing practices but rhizome-like seeks to re-fashion current actor-networks, including the desire for docile bodies, or at least ones that are not ‘revolting’. Thus, governmentality and disciplinary power are both exercised within contemporary workplaces. Indeed disciplinary practices remain part of the repertoire of practices through which actor-networks are mobilized and individuals normalized. Thus, for instance, the increasing use of computer-mediated communication within workplaces offers the opportunity for an extension of observation and examination of performance, an example of this being the monitoring of workers in call centres, ostensibly for training purposes. Here, discipline may be exerted hierarchically, but also by peers, as it becomes possible to spread the practices of observation throughout the networked body with the use of team-working, open plan offices and the like. In addition to hierarchical observation therefore, workers also become subject to *horizontal* observation. Indeed in certain workplaces this is formalized into 360 degree evaluations, wherein the conduct of one’s own conduct in all its aspects is signified and inscribed through a range of documents and reports made upon oneself by a range of others. These then become a subject for reflection by the worker who must then produce a confessional text drawing upon the reports, and from which a plan of action for self-change is then derived. Such texts represent the coding of lifelong learning in practices which ostensibly are not to do with learning but with job performance as evaluated by peers.

Where workplace learning is formalized through a relationship with a provider of education and training, normalizing judgements may be spread to include, for instance, worker, trainer, manager, work supervisor and mentors, as well as teacher or assessor. This may introduce complexity and conflict into examination, as there may be different norms among the different parties involved in making judgements. Workplace socialization may be as, or more important than, formal competence. While these norms may be part of the same actor-network in support of learning, they will also be mobilized in different ways with potentially different priorities and meanings of what is to be learnt and achieved. This provides the basis for an explicit politics about the norms inscribed in practices of examination, but also points to the potential for looser disciplinary frames when the workplace is mobilized as the learning setting.

4. CONFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

We have outlined the ways in which Foucault signals the exercise of power, in particular, pointing to the co-implication of discourses of lifelong learning and specific pedagogic practices, such as those of reflection. As we have suggested, central to Foucault's position is the emergence of the self to be worked upon as part of those processes. Pivotal to this work are confessional practices. These are a form of discursive practice that elicit one's self as an object of knowledge, with one's inner life the terrain to be explored. The assumption is that there is deep hidden meaning buried 'inside', which once discovered, opens the door to happiness, psychic stability and personal empowerment. To confess is to discover the truth about oneself. The emphasis then is on talking about oneself, being open, in effect, being prepared to share with total strangers the most intimate details of one's 'private' life. At the same time, a key signification is accorded 'inner power', connoting the release of one's inner or hidden creative potential. This notion of inner power has evolved from the nineteenth-century emphasis upon the romantic, associated with mysterious inner passions and upwelling creativity, to where this was supplemented in the twentieth century by modernist signifiers of advancement through reason, study, and planning (Gergen, 1991).

Telling all then is the thing to do, making ourselves the plastic object of self-work a species of moral obligation. This signifying of the individual's obligation or responsibility is an aspect of a wider rationality of government in fast capitalism and the decline of the social democratic welfare state –

> The strategy of rendering individuals 'responsible' (and also collectivities such as families) entails shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment and poverty and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of 'self-care'
>
> (Lemke, 1997, 9)[10]

The burgeoning and very popular literature of a self-help kind, as well as a plethora of courses, seminars and workshops are signs of the widespread incidence of confessional practices. They are also to be found in the use of portfolios and student-centred learning and the requirement in education to reflect upon one's self and one's performances – a clear example of the more contemporary form of confessional practice noted above. The characteristic of confessional practices is that they are never-ending – there is always more to know, one can never finally realize all one's potential. Personal change becomes signified as something that is constantly needed. We are going to argue therefore that confession involves practices that generate meanings about the need for lifelong learning and for particular kinds of learning on an ongoing basis.

Foucault (1981) refers to confession as the process of fashioning one's subjectivity as an object of learning. In relation to sexuality, for example, he argues that the confessional practices of the Christian church were about the discursive transformation of desire, in order that sex could be policed rather than suppressed/repressed.

This process now encompasses not only sexuality but also health, lifestyle, well-being and career development, becoming central in the ordering of the social[11], where as we have noted earlier, externally imposed discipline has given way to the self-discipline of an autonomous and desiring subjectivity. Confession is now less to do with salvation and much more to do with self-regulation, self-improvement and self-development. In other words, confession actively codes a subject as productive and autonomous but a subject who is *already* governed through participating in confessional practices. The practice of telling all, or telling one's own story, has become a means of identifying individuals and establishing and enforcing their location within power-knowledge networks. Confessional practices involve self-interventions into those aspects of the self that have hitherto remained unspoken and therefore unregulated (Besley 2002).

Confessional practices work on the basis that there is something to be confessed. This 'something' is a deep truth or meaning that is hidden, submerged or repressed within subjects. Whilst it remains covered, this hidden truth is fashioned as dysfunctional – it can include sin, guilt, unhappiness, stress, bad choices, unhealthy lifestyles, lack of self-esteem, to name but a few. However, once uncovered the door to redemption is opened. In a largely secular Western world, redemption has become signified as personal development, physical and psychic health, self-confidence, affirmation, autonomy and emancipation. In other words, confessional practices, the work of uncovering, are positioned as the royal road to empowerment and self change.

> The confession has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites ... One confesses in public and in private, to one's parents, one's educators, one's doctors, to those one loves ...
>
> (Foucault 1981: 59)

As well as something to confess, in order to confess there must be someone to whom one confesses. Foucault argues that confession is:

> a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession.
>
> (Foucault 1981: 61)

It is in the very process of confessing that people become signified as speaking and desiring subjects, even as they are enfolded in power where they become subject to the authority and authoritative discourse of the confessor – priest, therapist, counselor, adviser or guru – within the transaction. These confessors stimulate material spoken or performed by the confessing subject, which is constituted into a body of knowledge that inscribes subjects in particular ways, for example, as a 'case' (Foucault 1977), and by this means subjects are signified as a legitimate site of intervention by the expert-as-confessor. Through the expertise of this guide, subjects become enfolded within a discursive matrix of practices that bring forth their 'learning needs' and define their desires and paths of self-development.

In guiding subjects to recognize themselves as learners in need of further development through learning, they have to accept that they are indeed *learners*, and have to position themselves as a particular kind of learner – a learner whose learning is never complete. In career counselling for example, subjectivity is aligned with the various educational and psychological discourses, available to help subjects reach a 'realistic' decision about who they are as learners and what they need to do to further their learning for self-development (Metcalfe 1992).

Yet even as confession has become a sign of forms of governing, its status as a regime of truth, a particular power-knowledge formation, is precisely one *not* signified as powerful. There is a cloaking in apparently objective expertise and an internalization of the humanistic discourse of helping and personal empowerment. This mode of exercising power works relationally and rhizomatically by spreading and entwining throughout the capillaries of the social order. The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as an effect of power. On the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, demands only to surface. If it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and if it can finally be articulated it appears as a kind of liberation.

Confessional practices therefore involve regulation through self-regulation, discipline through self-discipline, a process which can be pleasurable and even empowering. Who after all doesn't want to feel empowered? Who doesn't want to maximize their potential? Yet all this works within a matrix from which power is never absent. For Foucault, power does not function as a centre but has a net-like organization. We may all be caught up in this circulation but power, as we noted earlier, is also a *productive* network entwined through the whole social body, producing not only knowledge and regulation but also inducing pleasure and answering desire – up to a point.

The processes of governmentality, the contemporary forms of rational governing, are both inscribed *and* contested in the subjectivities of subjects. Through confessional practices and techniques of confession people's inner lives are brought into the domain of power. It is in the very process of confessing that people are constituted as active subjects, yet at the same time are enfolded in power as they become subject to confessional discourses and therefore sites for intervention. Here, to realize oneself, to find the truth about oneself becomes both personally and economically desirable[12] – 'individuals, themselves . . . can be mobilized in alliance with political objectives, in order to deliver economic growth, successful enterprise and optimum personal happiness' (Miller and Rose 1993: 102). Confessional practices, both within and outside education, and where desire and economics interact, are central to this form of governing. In earlier chapters we noted the significance accorded to the myths of the knowledge economy and the need for some kind of learning society to function as a cultural complement. Here, lifelong learning is signified as a *moral* obligation. Confessional practices function to incite people to recognize their moral obligations by accepting their responsibility *as*

individuals in all domains of life. Here the self becomes objectified or commodified, it is targeted as a self that is lacking, one that has a duty to affirm and re-affirm its worth by perpetual learning – in many cases through training and retraining since to stand still, to fail to update oneself, is to move backwards, and therefore fail to fulfill one's obligations or responsibilities.

This pastoral power is embodied in a wide range of practices in education in many parts of the world. For example, those practices to do with guidance such as action-planning, the accreditation of prior learning, portfolio-based assessment, learning contracts, records of achievement, continuous assessment, self-evaluation. Nor is this pastoral power restricted to students but extends also to staff in educational institutions where increased importance is now accorded to staff appraisal and human resource development (Ball 1990). In other words, pastoral power becomes self-replicating, a self-sustaining dynamic creating the conditions for its own proliferation and endless iteration.

In confessional practices it is an image of the self, as we have mentioned earlier, a commodified self, that is consumed. There is a never-ending fascination with the self, a never-ending desire to figure out its deepest secrets and its hidden potential. Difference is signified in terms of an open, well-adjusted, fulfilled and empowered person, in touch with self as against those who are out of touch, repressed, incapacitated and dysfunctional. Confessional practices clearly demonstrate a situation where work, leisure and learning overlap and where the distinctions make no sense to those engaged in these practices. In the sense that confessional practices are implicated with the achievement of an empowered and capable self, these practices signify in both work and leisure contexts. They signify that which is achievable through learning activities within or outside educational institutions, and they very often involve knowledge that would not traditionally be considered canonical or worthwhile. But for all those involved in confessional practices it is an efficacious and empowering knowledge. As a website on self-improvement puts it, what we all want now is to have 'financial abundance, live our dream, be happy, develop our skills, feel competent and obtain increased health'[13]. Maybe, but then again may be not . . .

5. FASHIONING LIFELONG LEARNING

At the beginning of this chapter, we pointed to some of the significations generated, as ways of explaining what is happening and also in consideration of what should be done with regard to lifelong learning. What we have indicated is that the beliefs, values and discursive regimes that have come to be accepted as dominant meanings and therefore rationalities for what needs to be done may not have the effects that are commonly understood as flowing from them. There is thus the requirement to look at lifelong learning anew, as co-emerging with changing forms of governing and signifying different forms of the exercise of power.

We have drawn mainly upon Foucault to explore certain discourses and practices of lifelong learning as exercises of particular forms of power and to examine

how those discourses may be positioned as contributing to powerful practices, in particular those shaping workplaces and those bringing forth the confessing subject. In both cases lifelong learning is ascribed particular meanings and with that come certain practices of learning and subjectivities amenable to learning on a lifelong basis. Of course none of this is monolithic, but what is signified is the way in which certain pedagogies are coded as forms of power-knowledge playing a significant part in ordering the social. As lifelong learning is fostered outside as well as inside specific educational institutions the practices through which specific networks are formed become more complex, often involving hybrid mobilizations of disciplinary and governmental power. The resulting networks through which the exercise of power is dispersed and deployed are fluid and rely on the practices of mediation between different objects/subjects within the network. Thus, even as there are attempts to mobilize lifelong learning in specific ways, these will be subject to diverse and unexpected shifts and changes, as the spaces for reflection precisely provide possibilities for critique and alternative significations. This might involve a challenge to the very notion of lifelong learning, if we take learning to be a cognitive category, and the assertion of the semiotic as a way to challenge both that idea and the coding of, for instance, the workplace as one of enterprising selves. Totalizing the diversity of social practices under a single sign of 'lifelong learning' does not in and of itself do justice to the variety of meanings translated and ordered in specific contexts. Following Foucault, as a regime of truth, lifelong learning may need to be decentred in order that we can look again at the meanings it has, and the work it does. Our hope is that this chapter has made some contribution to that process.

NOTES

[1] To these sites of power can also be added the classroom.

[2] Thus, for instance, social movements entail exercises of power even as they might oppose the power of governments.

[3] Foucault's conception of disciplinary power does not require a king, a ruling class or even a state to be operative.

[4] The contemporary growth in knowledge about learning has certain disturbing similarities to the growth of knowledge that Foucault documents, in madness, penal incarceration and sexuality that is characteristic of the nineteenth century.

[5] Foucault (1979b: 20) defines governmentality as 'an ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power'.

[6] For Foucault, governmentality signifies *thinking power differently*. He refers to it is a *mentality*, where rationalities are linked with action and particular procedures or *technologies* of governing.

[7] Foucault's term for this is *souci de soi* best translated as self-fashioning. The term exemplifies the ambivalent connotation since fashions may both be imposed and freely chosen.

[8] Technologies of the self are 'devices' that enable the social construction of personal identity, or a means by which people construct themselves as subjects

[9] In the sense of 'myth' as articulated in Chapter One

[10] http://www.thomaslemkeweb.de/publikationen/Comment%20on%20Nancy%20Fraser.pdf Accessed 31.07.05

[11] It is significant that the emphasis on 'lean' and 'healthy' institutions both public and private is mirrored in the emphasis on lean and healthy bodies.
[12] As an example, the *Selfhelp Magazine* offers both, with topics such as 'Careers & Work' and 'Personal Growth' http://www.selfhelpmagazine.com/ (accessed 19.07.05)
[13] From the website http://www.icreatereality.com Accessed 31/07/05

CHAPTER SIX

FASHIONING POLITICAL SPACES

It may seem strange to write about political spaces in a text on the semiosis of lifelong learning. Up till now we have mostly focussed on meaning-making and the engendering of subjectivities through semiotic practices. In the process, we have linked discourses of lifelong learning to changing forms of governing as one of those actions at a distance through which consent is mobilized and the capacities of populations enhanced. There is no doubting the importance of the policy-led discourse of lifelong learning to the processes and practices we have been analysing. At national sub-national and supra-national levels the uptake of lifelong learning has played out and continues to play out in diverse ways. We have explored some aspects of that in a previous book (Edwards, et al. 2004).

Here however we want to take a different tack, as we wish to explore two things in this chapter. One is what we might refer to as the semiotic spaces of lifelong learning. This has been implied in earlier chapters where we argued that signs of learning are not confined to the spaces of education and training alone, but can become positioned as part of lifestyle, vocational and confessional practices. There is thus a re-signifying of spaces and places in the discourse of lifelong learning. What we will argue in this chapter is that specifically the policy discourses of lifelong learning have been mobilized within certain political spaces and places, equally attempting to shape those spaces into particular kinds of place. Certain spaces become places for the authorizing of discourses which help to frame lifelong learning as a policy object and to promote that space as a certain type of space, to and within which lifelong learning is central. In other words, policy discourses of lifelong learning emerge from certain spaces, but also seek to fashion certain types of space into lifelong learning places, in particular under the sign of the 'learning society'. Space is ordered through lifelong learning, the resulting space then being signified as a learning society.

Whilst this is the case in many places, in this chapter we will focus on a particular interesting illustration, viz. the European Union (EU). We focus on the EU as, in a sense, it is a place in the making, a social imaginary, within which lifelong learning and a learning society have become central strands of policy discourse. Within the EU, a body originally encompassing six countries but recently and problematically expanded to twenty-five, there have been, and continue to be, massive struggles over the meaning of 'Europe'. This struggle is in terms of what geographical spaces are embraced by the notion of Europe. We can witness this in the discussions over whether or not Turkey, a secular state, but with an overwhelming Islamic population geographically straddling Europe and the Middle East can apply for entry to the EU. This already points to the significant non-geographical struggles over the meaning

of Europe, in other words, what type of space will the EU be, to what do those within the EU aspire, what will it mean and how will meaning-making processes fashion what it will become? These are political but also semiotic struggles. To shape the EU as a place of lifelong learning necessitates the inscription within it of certain meanings and practices. Lifelong learning is not simply deposited into an existing space. Discourses of lifelong learning inscribe particular meanings into certain spaces, in order that particular types of place are mobilized.

What we are arguing therefore is that the relationship between meaning-making, space and place is therefore a significant one. This is not a new insight – it is for example, captured to a certain extent in the notion of geo-semiotics that has been developing in recent years (Scollon and Scollon 2003). Here there are four elements identified as contributing to an understanding of human action - the social actor, the interaction order, visual semiotics and place semiotics. For Scollon and Scollon (2003: 17) the 'semiotic systems which we find "in place" are part of the sign equipment we can and do use to produce our actions in the world'. Such approaches however are less familiar in the study of lifelong learning. Exploring the signs of places helps us to understand their meaning, but also mobilizes space into particular forms of meaningful place. It is the emplacement practices in the discourses of lifelong learning that informs our exploration of EU policy in this chapter.

The second strand to the chapter is about the relationship between policy and research in the EU. Here we are less concerned with the wider debates about the nature of that relationship, of how it is and how it should be (Rist 2000, Hammersley 2002), than with the work that research might be said to do in relation to the question of Europe. We will focus on lifelong learning research funded by the EU and suggest how it provides an intellectual technology through which to both support and problematize the putting in place of Europe as a learning society. We will point to the different types of learning society and subjects at play in mobilising Europe. Inevitably, this will be somewhat sketchy, as detailed genealogies of lifelong learning await to be done. It is to an examination of the role of research as intellectual technologies that we will turn to first, before examining more specifically research within the EU that can be argued to act as such a technology in relation to Europe as a place.

1. RESEARCH – AN INTELLECTUAL TECHNOLOGY

> Today... the different nations of Europe are much less independent of one another, because in certain respects, they are all part of the same society, it is true, but becoming more and more self-conscious.
>
> (Durkheim 1960: 121)[1]

Durkheim's comment at the end of the nineteenth century seems prescient given the interdependencies being forged by European states, particularly through the European Union. It also reminds us to be cautious of discourses of historical novelty, as there are continuities as well as discontinuities at play. And in the EU, that

self-consciousness is expressed through a range of policy and research practices. However, the sense of Europe as a 'social space' (European Commission 1997), ordered in particular ways, does not come without controversy. In this chapter we explore these issues by looking at current policy debates on lifelong learning and a learning society and consider their meaning and significance.

There are a number of issues here. First there is the question of why lifelong learning is identified so centrally as a focus for policy within the space of the EU. Education and training have always been important aspects of policy in the post-Second World War period, but their significance is now even greater. Many of the responses to social and economic conditions become the responsibility of education and training as a first port of call. Myths such as the knowledge economy and information society have, as we have seen, an embedded logic of continuous change but, despite this, there is in our view an overemphasis on the role of education generally and on qualifications specifically in addressing contemporary social, economic and civic challenges.

Second and perhaps more significantly, it is not simply education and training that are part of the policy embrace, but learning itself, as illustrated by the specific discourses of lifelong learning, learning organizations, learning regions and learning societies. Learning and learners become the focus of policy discourse as much as, if not sometimes more than, structures of provision. Here, as we suggested earlier, the individual is often represented as responsible for their own condition, with less concern for the wider practices of inequality built into the labour marker and the social order in general. The message at times seems to be one of consuming one's way out of exclusion through learning and qualifications, even though we would argue opportunities are patterned by practices other than individual choice. We are encouraged to consume signs of learning, those qualifications and bits of qualifications that identify us to one and all as lifelong learners. Here, despite or because of the specific discourses of lifelong learning in play, opportunity may be circumscribed. This is something to which research, embedded as it is in the semiotic struggle rather than simply commenting from on high, actively contributes to as much as challenges. To make meaning of this is contested and certain discourses are, or become, more powerful than others, in part because of the places and actors from which they emanate. The 2005 rejection by the French and Dutch populations of the proposed European constitution and the uncertainty this has engendered illustrate just how contested 'Europe' is when contrasted with the nation as a signifier of place. There is an investment of certain affinities with certain senses of place which can counter those views of Europe, which precisely invest it as a single social space.

For some, policies of lifelong learning are part of a discourse of a revised welfare statism (e.g. Field 2000) where there is an attempt to mobilize civil society, with a greater emphasis on individualized responses to social and economic conditions and active citizenship. As we have indicated, the argument here is that the practices of governing are now less concerned with providing services for populations than in mobilizing those concerned to help themselves. This is a view also shared in part

by Griffin (2000) who argues that welfare state *policies* to provide education are being displaced by consumerist *strategies*, with the state in an enabling rather than a providing role –

> The policy discourse of lifelong learning usually projects it as an expansion of learning opportunities but not always as the expansion of public provision. It is for example possible to construe lifelong learning as a form of educational privatisation, as nation states adopt a neo-liberal and market oriented stance towards the provision of all kinds of public services.
>
> (Griffin 2000: 5)

In other words, there is a different type of policy discourse in play associated with the changing exercises of power we discussed in the previous chapter. However, unlike Field, Griffin positions these reconfigurations in governing as part of the neo-liberal assault on the welfare state. For Griffin, the policy discourse of lifelong learning precisely signifies this shift, displacing, as it does, welfare state concerns for the provision of adult education. A different type of state is being mobilized both in terms of governance and conditions for social action. Despite their differences, however, both Field and Griffin are reflecting on the changing *forms* as well as contents of policy and policy-making. They are exploring the meaning of lifelong learning policy in terms of the type of approaches to governing being adopted by certain states. They are also pointing implicitly to the spatio-temporal re-orderings of the social, wherein there is a certain re-ordering of the ties that bind. In other words, political re-orderings both shape and respond to spatio-temporal re-orderings. This is signified in the struggles over what we can term the 'social' Europe and the 'flexible' Europe. Broadly the former is articulated around social partnership and a more traditional welfare state view of how Europe should be. The latter can be positioned as either a revised welfare statism in Field's terms or a neo-liberal approach in Griffin's terms and is articulated around a bigger role for market mechanisms and a flexible labour market. These signify two imaginaries of the type of place Europe could or should be and indicate the ways in which the EU is being re-positioned as a changing, different and even unsettled type of space (Lawn 2003).

The changing forms of governing are an area that is being explored more widely in the social sciences. As we have seen, the shift in forms of governing – emphasizing the mobilizing of civil society and the significance attributed to active citizenship – has also been a central issue for those scholars who draw upon Foucault's work to examine changing forms of governance in advanced neo-liberal democratic states. In these writings, there is a focus on the specific strategies and techniques of governing, what are often referred to as 'actions at a distance' through which social practices are ordered (Miller and Rose 1993). For us, research has such a role. Certain forms of research in relation to lifelong learning policy act as aspects of the strategies and techniques of contemporary governing, where research is positioned as an intellectual technology and a semiotic practice in the service of governing. As we said above, research is not above the semiotic fray, merely commenting upon what is occurring, but is very much part of it, sometimes more powerful in its

significations, sometimes more critical, sometimes less. In saying this, we highlight the spatial features and impact of research practices. We argue that the disciplinary knowledge deployed in the representations of lifelong learning and learning societies perform as 'an "intellectual technology", a way of making visible and intelligible certain features of persons, their conducts, and their relations with one another' (Rose 1998: 10–11). There are a range of these technologies, themselves attempting to inscribe spaces as particular forms of place populated by particular kinds of subjects. Our role in relation to EU funded lifelong learning research is to begin to identify what those intellectual technologies are, their spatial orderings and the populations they identify as significant in the social order.

In particular then, we want to explore the subject/discipline that is both drawn upon in the doing of research and the subject who is positioned to be worked upon, and through, by policy discourses. What we suggest is that the research/policy discourses position subjects in specific ways and attempt to provide tools and techniques through which populations are identified and by which those subjects within these populations can be fashioned. Europe as a place therefore is positioned as having certain types of population whose capacities need development and subjects who need governing. Here we suggest that there are traces of different subjects within both the discourses of research and policy of lifelong learning. While we will do some disentangling here and present these in some ways as types, meaning-making is more rhizomatic. Here lifelong learning becomes one of the intellectual technologies through which social, economic and political practices are re-ordered and mobilized into reconfigured spatio-temporal relationships. In this process, we suggest there is the attempt to fashion certain understandings of *Europe* as a place of learning by and through lifelong learning to be populated by particular kinds of subjects.

Within this type of analysis, policy and research are explored for the mobilizations of certain discourses and texts to both represent what is occurring and to project directions for policy. It is precisely this semiotic work that is of interest to us in this text. Certain populations are mobilized as objects to be researched and acted upon. For example, research projects often focus on 'youth', 'women', 'the unemployed', 'small and medium enterprises'. These then become actors in shaping practices. They are part of the circulation of reference (Latour 1999) through which living, embodied people are categorized, taken up, translated and mobilized by others as actors in the policy process of lifelong learning. This is part of the regulating of life that Foucault (2003) identified as entwined in contemporary exercises of power alongside the disciplining of individual bodies. These populations are usually taken to be pre-existing in a social reality to be explored rather than mobilized through semiotic practices. However, as Miller and Rose (1993: 80) point out in relation to the economy –

> before one can seek to manage a domain such as an economy it is first necessary to conceptualize a set of processes and relations as an economy which is amenable to management.

Thus without a meaningful concept of an economy, there is literally nothing to be managed. Similarly, without meaningful categories within the population and without a meaningful concept of Europe, there is nothing to work on. We can also say that without a meaningful concept of education, there can be no educational policy. What then are the meaningful notions of lifelong learning and a learning society that need to be managed? We will come on to this later in the chapter.

While we take the view that objects of research and policy are 'an effect of stable arrays or networks of relations' (Law 2002: 91), they are more often treated as naturalistic objects, pre-existing in the social world. This view might well be seen as social constructionist with all the hot air that is expended around philosophical idealism and relativism. Hacking (1999) has rightly in our view argued that social constructionism is an incoherent and unhelpful position as the natural and social cannot be divorced from each other. We are more inclined to position our argument in relation to Latour that there is hybridity in the world wherein there are neither social subjects nor natural objects, but merely actants, both human and non-human. People exist, but they are neither subjects nor objects, but actants, their actancy in part based upon the meanings ascribed to them and that they ascribe to themselves. We follow Pels, et al. (2002: 11) in the view that –

> objects need symbolic framings, storylines and human spokespersons in order to acquire social lives; social relationships and practices in turn need to be materially grounded in order to gain spatial and temporal endurance.

They need an ordering and a mobilizing provided through the semiotic circulation of policy and research discourses which categorize and classify (Bowker and Star 2000). Here 'different modes of ordering produce certain forms of organization. They produce certain material arrangements. They produce certain subject positions. And they produce certain forms of knowledge' (Law 2001: 3). Ordering populations into 'youth', 'women', 'the 'unemployed', etc, always already assumes and makes possible only certain forms of knowledge rather than others and certain subject positions for those so named. This is also the case, even when the object is Europe. Here 'Europe is a project, a space of meaning and a state in process, and education is the core technology in which governance, ordering and meaning can be constructed' (Lawn 2003: 325–6). It is because of this that it is possible for the European Commission to publish a report entitled, *Accomplishing Europe Through Education and Training* (Study Group on Education and Training 1997), although significantly, the argument therein precisely emphasizes learning over education and training. What we are suggesting therefore is that geo-semiotic ordering is largely not being addressed in lifelong learning policy research, in part because of the unreflexive uptake of certain policy identified categories in need of ordering and about which knowledge needs to be generated in order to establish the techniques through which to order. The performative aspects of research and policy discourses are thereby left reflexively unproblematized.

Our argument then is that research projects can provide a range of intellectual technologies through which the representation and ordering of phenomena

is signified in particular ways, some of which may be more closely linked to the actions at a distance of contemporary governing in certain states:

> The government of a population, a national economy, an enterprise... or even oneself becomes possible only through discursive mechanisms that represent the domain to be governed as an intelligible field with its limits, characteristics whose component parts are linked together in some more or less systematic manner.
>
> (Miller and Rose 1993: 80)

More widely, the attention given to education, training and learning can be viewed as part of the strategies for the 'administration of life' (Munro 2000), where more explicit calculations are attempted in order to establish the efficiency and effectiveness of certain practices over others. Subjects such as economics, psychology, sociology and politics are to the fore as the semiotic resources to be drawn upon in representing a learning society through research. In the process, certain types of subjectivity are mobilized. It is through examining some of the practices of research funded by the EU that we seek to open up the ways in which Europe is being fashioned as a place of lifelong learning, populated by particular kinds of subjects.

Our concerns then are first, with the assumptions and effects that are built into research and policy discourses of lifelong learning and a learning society and second, the lack of reflexivity in the policy focused research in this area. Underpinning this is a further concern with the forms of lifelong learning being developed through research that apparently takes for granted Europe as a space, certain populations as objects of thought and action and certain processes e.g. flexibility or social partnership, as desirable and desired outcomes. Part of the reason for these concerns is the location of research in particular fields of study/intellectual technologies e.g. economics, psychology, sociology, politics, within which an unreflexive stance is either assumed through choice and disciplinary gate-keeping or through contractual compliance with funding bodies. The outcome can be a research base for policy in this area that contributes to the spread of technologies of lifelong learning, but the social, economic and political practices being ordered – organized and commanded – in the process and the form and type of place being fashioned, may leave much to be desired. The signification 'lifelong' can mean both the extension of the range of governing at a distance through education, but it can also mean the dispersal of learning to multiple sites and settings, which, in a sense, are beyond the reach of policy. It is our contention that the types of semiotic analysis being explored in this text and the geo-semiotic approaches of this chapter open up these processes in helpful ways to critical endeavour, but also point to the increased significance of signs as semiosis rather than as the *representation* of a pre-existing reality. It is therefore to engage in discursive struggle rather than to critique the real as such that we suggest is critical, a view that lies at the heart of much post-structurally informed analysis (Dean 1994).

Such an analysis then is not simply conceptual. While the above sketches a theoretical position, it is one that is concerned with understanding concrete practices, including those of research and policy and the spatio-temporal orderings to which they aspire either implicitly or explicitly. In a sense, such analyses focus on how the

concrete is made concrete rather than the more conventional critical discourse of how reality does not match an imagined ideal, when it is because it is precisely an ideal that there are no techniques through which it can become concrete. Philosophically this has more in common with pragmatism than other ethical positions and we would stress it is philosophical pragmatism to which we are referring. Indeed we would argue that this text is itself a concrete practice of theorizing, since to position it as 'theoretical' often has derogatory connotations, also positioning those who engage in theory as somehow 'unwordly' and therefore open to dismissal. When discussing policy this is not a helpful positioning.

To adopt certain technologies of lifelong learning therefore is to *always already* be an actor in the world, to be part of some network or other, to have one's interests translated and to participate in the translation of other interests. It therefore pays to reflexively examine the research discourses of lifelong learning and a learning society as a form of social action in the world that make both a symbolic and substantive contribution to policy and the ordering of spatio-temporal relations. Discourses do arise in certain places and attempt to order particular spaces as particular types of place. What then are the research discourses of lifelong learning and a learning society? To explore the signs of Europe as a place we have chosen the European Union Framework Projects as our site.

2. ORDERING A EUROPEAN LEARNING SOCIETY?

EU Framework projects bring together researchers from across Europe in networks to examine topics of significance for the development of the EU as a European space or 'house' (Chiltern and Ilyin 1993). The aim is to develop a community of shared membership resources as the way in which this space can be formed through actually bringing together multi-national groups. Who is included and who excluded from these networks is itself significant, as those from aspiring candidate countries who seek membership of the EU are brought within the fold of such projects with those from established EU countries to provide apprenticeship in the discourses of Europe, but also to signify that the EU is growing. Where then does Europe stop? What type of place is it?

One view is that the European space is to be built upon practices of harmonization rather than standardization in order to reflect the sensitivities of those for whom allegiance to the nation state or region is the primary spatial signifier. Here there is a recognition of difference. Others view Europe as more standardizing, with *Brussels* (itself a powerful signifier), the home of the European Commission, and highly influential in guiding what is often referred to as the 'European project', signifying the agent of that process. Here Europe signifies a more uniform place. In Brussels, globalization and in particular economic competition from the USA and increasingly China are mobilized as threats to which Europe as an economic and political space must respond. As with nation states therefore, globalization and economic competition both function as signifiers of external threat through which to fashion internally a European space. However, they also threaten this space

because of the flows goods, services, people and capital envisioned. Lawn (2003) provides an interesting analysis of the ways the discourses of the EU have shifted in the attempt to fashion a particular space from an expanded form of nationalism based upon a shared identity and culture to one of openness and dynamism. There is a tension here therefore between Europe as a space of *identity* and Europe as a space of *difference*. Lawn suggests that Europe, as an expanded national place, is being displaced by Europe as a more open space wherein lifelong learning is central. In the process, 'a European collaboration based on cultural transfer and exchange (circa 1970s) has been replaced by "European co-operation networks", pooling excellence and creating expertise' (Lawn 2003: 332–3). However, this is a view from the centre and its significatory power resides in how far this is taken up both within research projects, but also more widely among those populations both inside and outside this particular understanding of place. We only have to witness those who fear a centralized European super-state to see that these attempts to re-signify the European space are not yet altogether successful in this respect.

Within this situation, the policy discourses, with abundant uses of 'we', position the European population semiotically and spatially as all in the same boat – policy-makers and citizens alike (Straehle, et al. 1999). Once again, flexibility as a trait of individuals and organizations is framed as a key to the threat posed by globalization. Europe is to become a competitive space, to compete in the era of the 'new economy', even though its internal spatial divisions will continue due to the different labour and capital market conditions (Watson 2001), and indeed cultures, language, affiliations and identities that exist across Europe. Here the knowledge-based or new economy is –

> best approached not as a good or bad account of actual transformations, but rather as a way of framing economic processes. In this light, the 'new economy' is not a (falsifiable) description of an increasingly dematerialised economy. On the contrary, it is an attempt to establish new material economic arrangements.
>
> (Barry and Slater 2002: 189)

Once again, we enter the semiotically powerful space of the 'new', its identification acting as a progressive imperative to act in opposition to the 'old'. In with the new, out with the old. New is good, old is bad. The 'new economy' once again functions as a myth and is mobilized within intellectual technologies through which to concretize its very fashionings. Linked to this new economy are the 'new' practices of lifelong learning. Thus the Study Group on Education and Training (1997: 114) identified five potential changes necessary for the accomplishment of Europe –

- The transition from objective to constructed knowledge
- The transition from an industrial to a learning society
- The change in educational mission for instruction to the provision of methods for personal learning
- The increasing (and perhaps, in the future, dominant) role of technology in the communication process and in knowledge acquisition

- The shift away from formal educational institutions such as schools and universities towards organizational structures for learning which have to be determined.

The research practices supported by the European Commission are part of the semiotic chain through which Europe is fashioned as an economically competitive place, a learning society, supported through lifelong learning and enacted through the geo-semiotic practices of *Europe*.

Let us turn to a brief outline of some of the work of EU funded research in these processes. Up to 2005 there have been six sets of Framework projects across a range of areas. We are only interested in a selection of projects focused on lifelong learning in Frameworks Four and Five. Arguably, these projects provide a way of mobilizing research and researchers to create a networked European space for educational research, an imagined community, the participants in which might be far less open than one might imagine – as we have indicated, every space, however dispersed, already has its insiders. There is neither the time nor space to engage in a detailed analysis of each of the projects that has been conducted. Here we are more interested in the performances that attempt to fill the semiotic spaces of research and policy in the EU.

Lifelong learning and a learning society have been considered key policy goals since the early 1990's in the EU. In the context of increased economic competition, concerns over social cohesion, technological change and more general risk, one crucial response in this situation has been adaptability and lifelong learning as both a means and an end. EU funded educational research projects therefore seek to support lifelong learning. Six 'tools' or 'areas of action' are identified to support the EU lifelong learning initiative. These are:

- building partnerships
- learning requirements in the knowledge-based society
- investment in learning
- making learning more accessible
- developing a culture of learning
- quality assurance for learning.

If we doubt the role of research as an intellectual technology, we are reminded by the policy discourse of 'tools' and 'areas of actions', which already signify the domains and imperatives of research in particular ways, embedding a logic of technical rationality in relation to teleologically defined goals. These areas of action are domains to be acted upon in support of lifelong learning and which are themselves tools for lifelong learning that research is there to support. Particular places for action are carved from the social space so that they become amenable to action.

Implicit in these discourses are value and political assumptions about for instance:

- EU citizens either being already in, or having to anticipate, a knowledge-based society
- partnership as something inherently worthwhile
- learning being something that one can be made more accessible
- people are not learning unless there is a culture of learning

- the possibility and desirability of learning being quality assured.

We can question each of the above from a variety of positions. For instance, as we have suggested, the myth of a knowledge-based society is itself an intellectual technology that helps to re-order EU social spaces from manufacturing to service economies, and where information rather than knowledge as traditionally understood plays a crucial role. For Thrift (2001: 413–14) the discourse of the new economy –

> was invented by a series of stakeholders as a means of providing new behaviours which confirmed its existence… an attempt at mass motivation, which, if successful, could result in a new kind of market culture – or a spiritual renewal of an old one.

This is success in signifying a different form for the European space. As we have already indicated, here it is the EU as a space that will compete with other regional blocs, which of course raises many contestations around the place of nation states and regions in relation to this emerging and growing spatial signifier. In relation to partnerships, benefits may accrue in some areas but not in others, for instance where there is concern for keeping alive the diverse languages and cultures within the EU. Partnership brings people in relation to each other in various ways across time and space, the patterns of which are re-ordered as a specifically European place. Learning is an individual and collective endeavour in which people engage either explicitly or implicitly throughout their lives. It is therefore not learning that is made more accessible but education and training opportunities. Similarly, it cannot be a case of either having a culture of learning or not having one, so much as one of what *kind* of culture and what learning is valued, that is, given weight within the formal structures of education and training. What and how these are signified are the sites of struggle in which we as lifelong learning researchers are, or should be, interested. Or perhaps even, as educational researchers, for how we signify our own interests and engagements is itself significant in this process.

What we are pointing to here is a conceptual ambiguity in the policy tools of the EU, in which learning is brought to the fore in the discourse of policy, thereby spreading the net beyond traditional policy concerns with institutionalized provision. There is an attempt to signify something different, to embrace a different concept of the spatial in relation to learning. However, the substantive issues remain embedded in the areas of educational and training policy action. The spaces embraced as lifelong learning therefore signify ambiguously. This is even before they become subject to re-contextualization when specific policies become situated in particular locations where particular meanings are made and taken of what this place should be (Edwards and Boreham 2003).

What is reflected in the research projects themselves is an overwhelming focus on the formal contexts of education and training and to a lesser extent non-formal provision in the workplace. Other contexts of learning are largely overlooked. As Field argues, in lifelong learning there is an attempt to 'govern the ungovernable' in the attempt to formulate policy in relation to learning rather than the provision of learning. Therefore, and this is understandable, there is a slippage back to the governable, the provision of learning opportunities.. This then suggests that

perhaps we should drop the discourse of lifelong learning and revert to the older concerns for lifelong education and training, as each has the possibility of mobilizing different contexts as specifically learning spaces and ordering different spatio-temporal relations. Whether because they have lost their semiotic potency, these older framings any longer have the power to mobilize the constituent parts of the EU as a European place must be open to question. It may in part be because educational systems are nationally significant, given their role in nation-building that makes a *European* discourse of education unsustainable. It is certainly the case that the European Commission does not have competence in relation to initial education, as this rests in nation states, although that has not stopped it from influencing, in particular through initiatives in vocational education and training. This might be in part why training and learning have been far more significant as part of the EU's discourses, as economies are not as nationally bounded as political states. *Europe* therefore becomes possible within a discourse of lifelong learning, which would be more problematic through a discourse of education.

If we now move on to some of the individual projects, we can explore who is being (re-)ordered and how. Looking at the list of projects, it should be said that they signify snapshots of particular areas and issues rather than being informed by any broad strategic sense of either policy imperatives or research. There are cherries to be picked rather than orchards to tend. This may not be so surprising given the size and diversity of Europe as a geo-semiotic space.

In different ways and often for different purposes, research and policy mobilize objects that become the subjects of investigation. They attempt to mobilize certain actors. These actors are mobilized through research and policy as the key to lifelong learning and a learning society. They are both framed through the intellectual technologies of research and worked on and through by policy. Individual Framework projects identify organizations, issues and populations as the foci for their research. Unsurprisingly, the organizations identified include 'school', 'public sector education', 'universities', and 'small and medium businesses'. This indicates the policy concern with the provision of education and training that we mentioned earlier, the tangible bricks and mortar that have always been the primary signifiers of education and sites of policy and research. Issues include 'active citizenship', 'computer-supported collaborative learning', 'organizational learning', 'early literacy' and 'low skills'. These are areas where policy levers are sought to either address identified problems, for example, low skills, or to promote particular practices, for example, organizational learning. All these serve to mobilize Europe as a particular place of lifelong learning.

More importantly for this chapter, the populations identified in the projects include 'unemployed youths', 'the long term unemployed', 'the low skilled', 'adults', 'non-traditional adults'. Generalized categories are thereby fashioned as the populations to be mobilized and acted upon in the development of a learning society. Whether they live in Scotland, Italy, Estonia or Germany, they are forged as common populations within the European space. They are symbolically networked through equivalence, their interests are translated into a shared context and subjec-

tivity that is made the concern of policy. What then are the subjects drawn upon and the subjectivities constituted in the process? Here we sketch four possibilities. These are types and do not exhaust that which is drawn upon in Framework projects. However, aspects of these discursive types can be found in many research texts of lifelong learning.

There can be little doubting the economic imperative underpinning much of the policy discourse of lifelong learning. Europe then is an economic space. This is signified through a foregrounding of unemployed youths and the low skilled and the somewhat patronizing assumption of the need to 'cope' with an ageing workforce in the Framework projects. The latter in particular seems semiotically in tension with a lifelong learning policy approach. What then are the technologies in play in this economic mobilization of the subject? In this discourse, the subject is the individual learner who accumulates, then forgets and abandons skills throughout their lives as a way of entering into, sustaining their position within, and progressing through the labour market. By the accumulation of skills, the subject becomes more productive and individually competitive within the labour market as well as contributing to the competitiveness of the *European* economy as a whole. Even though individuals are reliant on being mobilized within a certain network to govern their conduct in this way, they are represented as individualized, severed from any relations, as part of the dispositional autonomy, enterprise and flexibility that is sought from them and signified as necessary for them to be 'good' *Europeans*. The subject is therefore signified as an enterprising individual accumulation of skills, and/or an accumulator of skills, disembodied and disembedded from specific economic, social and cultural contexts. To become European therefore in some ways involves individuals relinquishing the existing places in which they live. We/they are required to re-identify, to code our/them-selves differently. Rose (1998: 154) summarizes this well:

> Enterprise here designates an array of rules for the conduct of one's everyday existence: energy, initiative ambition, calculation and personal responsibility. The enterprising self will make an enterprise of its life, seek to maximize its own human capital, project itself a future, and seek to shape itself in order to become that which it wishes to be. The enterprising self is thus both an active self and a calculating self, a self that calculates about itself and that acts upon itself in order to better itself.

Thus subjects are individualized and thereby re-fashioned as responsible for their own position in the social order. Economically, individuals are detached from their social places even though there is also a concern for social cohesion. Economics and, in particular, human capital theory, is the intellectual technology embedded in this discourse, wherein competitiveness is precisely tied to the development of productivity through increased knowledge and skills, usually measured through the proxy variable of qualifications. This is what is signified as the requirements for a population to be a specifically European population.

Other intellectual technologies that contest this signifier of Europe are also in play. The intellectual technology derived from psychology aims 'to promote individual self-fulfilment through greater participation in all forms of learning'

(Coffield 2000:10). This is a discourse which is mobilized strongly among liberal educators and those who tend to support the notion of learning for its own sake and learning as linked to intrinsic motivation. Here the subject is fashioned as one who is capable of growth and whose potential can be developed through learning. There is a sense in which the subject of development is one that embraces knowledge, skills and emotions, but as well there is a clear decontextualisation of subjects from their particular places in such discourses. There is a universalizing of the subject within which their own spatio-temporal entwinements are somehow transcended in order to become European. Class, gender and ethnicity are fashioned as personal characteristics or traits rather than orderings of identity.

At the heart of these discourses is a paradox, as self-fulfilment can itself be argued to be extrinsic to motivation and therefore instrumental rather than intrinsic to learning. The discourse tends to position the subject as someone whose development can only result in the good at both individual and societal levels. The possibility that self-fulfilment and learning can result in negative outcomes – however defined – or that learning cannot overcome negative behaviour and emotions is marginalized. Here the intellectual technology is that of humanistic psychology, with its concern for the development and growth of the whole person, and associated therapies of client-centredness and pedagogies of student-centredness. Europe is signified as a liberal place, a place of individuals inscribed with traits of liberal humanism with the associated dispositions and values.

A third discourse mobilizes a social rather than individualized view of learning and emphasizes collaboration rather than competition. Here lifelong learning is ordered around a moral purpose, as a response to the social exclusion experienced by those who gained least from initial education (Ranson 1998). It is notable that social *cohesion* and *inclusion* are signified as aspects of the European 'home' by contrast with earlier and alternative discourses of *equality*. This suggests horizontal pathways rather than hierarchical mountains to climb to become part of Europe. In these discourses, the subject is contextualized within certain social relations and networks that, for some, structure and, for others pattern, their learning opportunities. But whilst contextualized, they are not always embodied. The subject is fashioned as a social subject; one whose social position affects their learning, their learning opportunities and the opportunity patterns available to them.

The intellectual technologies for this strand of discourse are those arising out of certain branches of sociology, embracing social anthropology as method and social capital as a theoretical framework. Yet it is not necessary that the social capital argument results in a moral purpose in addressing social inclusion, as to generate social capital in specific contexts may well inevitably entail excluding some whilst including others. While social capital might be used to explain social exclusion, where capital and exclusion are themselves attempts to represent and order social life in particular ways, it does not automatically lead to a value position that exclusion should be addressed and overcome. In relation to the spatial, however, we have to ask what space does the social embrace? What constitutes a social order? Who are the included and excluded in the social? Historically, sociology has

tended to align society with the nation state, but alternative social imaginaries are ever more prevalent. Who is to be included in the semiotic social space of Europe? This is particularly significant for those who are to be positioned outside Europe, something which is given expression in the notion of 'Fortress Europe'.

Related to the intellectual technology of sociology is that of politics and the concern to mobilize a population of 'active citizens', where the 'active' and the 'good' citizen are often elided, fashioning a European space as a political as well as economic, social and psychological challenge for EU policy. It is a deeply problematic one, given levels of polling in European elections that suggest a low level of positive identification with Europe as a political imaginary in many countries and sections of the population. One might assume a citizen is simply a matter of domicile and nationality. This is formalistic rather than substantial. It takes citizenship to be a transcendental category rather than a lived experience, embodied and embedded. It also does not reflect the complex relationships between domicile and identity that exist, especially given the degree of migration within, and to, the EU. Delanty (2000) argues that citizenship entails rights, responsibilities, participation and identity. To achieve these involves crucial semiotic work.

One problem for the EU is that it is a legal entity with which populations do not identify and in whose processes they rarely participate. There is a semiotic gap, often expressed as a democratic deficit, between the EU and the populations it embraces. Yet to mobilize active citizens might imply consensus where there may be dissensus and it is significant in such discourses that notions of social cohesion are to the fore, because and maybe despite, the European space not yet being a place, where difference outweighs identity. Even within the recognition of diversity, there is a sense in which something has to provide the glue to hold things together. There is a semiotic attempt to bound and bind the European space as a place, even as there are many oppositional spaces within and across the EU that challenge varying aspects of the European project, whether at the economic, social, environmental or political levels. It is also notable that the technologies through which to engage active citizenship spread beyond the realm of the formal to the non-formal and informal, as questions of political identity and participation are not mobilized through education and training alone, if at all (Holford and Edirisingha 2000).

However, once again, we are faced with the question as to whether such spaces are signed as places of learning by those within them. In his analysis of new social movements as neo-tribal performative expressions of identity, Hetherington (1998) places great emphasis on them as forms of 'identity politics', but there are no signs of learning identified. For the many radical and popular educators working with such movements, of course, it is precisely through participation in these movements that one learns some of the many forms that active citizenship can take. What type of place participation in such movements entails is also of interest, with both mass movements such as trade unionism and smaller more flexible neo-tribes that coalesce around perhaps particular glocal issues and situations engaging, in Gramscian terms, in wars of manoeuvre rather wars of position. Whether the spaces

of protest are best signed as learning contexts rather than political contexts raises interesting questions. And whether the role of education is to support the learning within those contexts and/or support learning that enables political aspirations to be more fully realized.

The above are schematic and over-generalized, but they are intended as acts through which to open a space in which to consider the subjects mobilized in policy-related research in the EU. Intertextual traces of these subject narratives and narratives of subjects can be found in much policy and research discourse. There are different spatial imaginaries at play in EU funded research, ones that are often implicit in the intellectual technologies which are drawn upon. They order subjects in different ways, signifying different possibilities for the European space as a European place of lifelong learning and as a learning society.

Populations are mobilized through practices that promote innovation, flexibility, inclusion and mobility. Yet these have to be practices that engender, in different ways, forms of identification. Metaphors of networks rather than structures come to the fore where the malleability of space-time is assumed as something both desirable and possible. Order and flexibility are kept in dynamic tension. These are applied as much in relation to organizations as they are to populations. Innovation, flexibility, inclusion and mobility are mobilized as the norms through which to signify the development of a European learning society and the characteristic features of such a society. Governing therefore becomes less to do with a rational process of social reform and more to do with fashioning conduct based on certain norms and values, wherein, as we suggested in the previous chapter, populations are signified as certain types of active subjects rather than passive objects. To talk of governing at a distance therefore is not to view the exercise of power as simply extending domination, although that certainly can be the case, but to bring to the fore multiple forms of power, each with their own geographies (Allan 2003).

Characteristics such as flexibility, autonomy, self-direction and learning become ontological conditions for successful participation in *Europe*. The European order is signified as a learning order and different populations are targeted to be worked upon and through, so that they become mobile and flexible by enhancing their capacity to learn to choose and choose to learn.

3. MEANING-MAKING AS A TECHNOLOGY OF GOVERNING

> The new citizen is required to engage in a ceaseless work of training and retraining, skilling and re-skilling, enhancement of credentials and preparation for a life of ceaseless job seeking: life is to become a continuous economic capitalization of the self.
>
> (Rose 1999: 161)

This is an over-generalization. However, to understand research as an intellectual technology and the intellectual technologies for policy that are deployed through research, we need to engage in reflexive questions about our own signifying practices in discourses of lifelong learning, their assumptions and effects in the processes of governing and the spatial orderings they assume and engender. In other

words, we need to engage in an ecological reflexivity to evaluate the various ways in which research is and can be mobilized in support and opposition to governing, and, even when oppositional, may seek to govern the alternative spaces over which it makes claims. It is important to remember that oppositional practices have to be ordered too, whether that be through the mass meeting, the Internet or the mobile phone.

Every intellectual technology in lifelong learning struggles to signify and to order particular subjects as a population, as a learning society, mobilizing concepts, positioning them as nouns and verbs, networking them in different ways and emphasizing different characteristics. Whether we approach this from human resource management, competency development, or radical politics, there is a semiotic struggle to inscribe certain practices with particular meanings. Inscribing Europe as a particular place, as a learning society, is not a single or simple discourse therefore. Different intellectual technologies are at play, some of which are oppositional. When engaging in conversations about lifelong learning, the mobilizing of subjects is crucial, as are the who and the what in the naming of populations. Who is authorized to converse? Who converses authoritatively? How is the conversation governed? Upon what exclusions and inclusions is it based? What spaces are embraced? From what places do they emerge? All these are important questions in the challenge posed by the reflexive issues arising from the embedded and embodied nature of social science. In the above, we have attempted to generate some meaning out of, and the meaning generated through, the current interest in some of the discourses of lifelong learning and a learning society in the EU, the intellectual technologies through which they are mobilized, the subjects thus mobilized, and some of the spatial imaginaries and issues engendered. It is their significance in relation to the wider issue of the fashioning of a European space and debates about the meaning of that space that is of interest here (Lawn 2003).

Lifelong learning can be seen in certain positions to be powerful in contemporary orderings and the forms of governing at a distance outlined above. Whether the populations thus ordered e.g. the excluded, the long terms unemployed, non-traditional adults, active citizens, feel their interests to be translated in such orderings is open to question, as is the assertion and development of alternative intellectual technologies. Whether a learning society is semiotically a European place is problematic, as indeed is the very size of Europe and the meaning(s) of the spaces imagined for it, not least because of the many languages and cultures in which Europe is coded, as well as the many meanings that can be made through those languages.

NOTE

[1] First published in 1893

CHAPTER SEVEN

MOBILIZING THE LIFELONG LEARNER

For signs of learning to be meaningful, practices themselves have to be signed semiotically *as* learning and actors *as* learners. Traditionally, learning has been defined through the 'spaces of enclosure' (Lankshear *et al.* 1996) of the school, the book, the classroom, the fixed curriculum. The school and classroom signify the location of learning, the book signifies the content of learning, and the curriculum signifies how and when learning is to take place. The practices within these spaces of enclosure signified learning whilst anything located outside these spaces was denied that status. Learning took place away from the everyday, transcending it in some ways through the production and reproduction of generalized decontextualized knowledge. To be a learner one was abstracted from the everyday and what was valued was abstract knowledge and abstraction as a set of practices.

However, as we have seen, the contemporary situation is one where the very discourses of lifelong learning are themselves signing a wider range of social practices as learning, where abstraction is positioned as problematic, and the everyday accorded greater value. This is lifelong learning under the sign of 'relevance' and 'authenticity'. Thus learning is no longer so closely confined by and within these spaces of enclosure. Indeed, at times it seems as though the whole of social life can be coded as learning, although the ways in which the vast majority of people make sense of these practices is usually in terms other than learning, most often in terms of work and leisure. In opening a space for itself potentially as extensive as social life, lifelong learning, although mostly projected as a progressive discourse, can also be thought of as colonizing in attempting to translate the diversity of social practices into learning as a single scale of meaning.

What types of practice are signs of lifelong learning and what practices are mobilized under the sign of lifelong learning remains a contested question, to which too little attention has been given, largely because of attempts to hegemonize it as a capitalist conspiracy or more ironically as empty rhetoric[1] (Edwards and Nicoll 2001). As we discussed in Chapter Five, personal traits such as enterprise and flexibility have been brought forth as signs of lifelong learning but this does not provide much insight into what or how specific practices of lifelong learning are developed. Clearly this is an empirical question requiring detailed field work, little to none of which has been done in relation to lifelong learning from a semiotic perspective. Although Kress (2003) and others have provided highly insightful research and commentary in relation to schooling and the increasingly multimodal pedagogic environments that combine screen and page, this work has had limited impact upon mainstream educational research and certainly upon those branches which focus on lifelong learning as a phenomenon to be researched. Thus, this text of course.

One area where such work has begun is with those researchers who draw upon actor-network theory (ANT) which, at first glance, might appear to be unlikely to be fruitful given that little or nothing has been written by leading ANT scholars on learning and education. This is now beginning to change as ANT is increasingly being seen as providing the resources to examine empirically what forms of learning, knowledge production and identity are mobilized, for example, through the particular ways specific disciplinary subjects are learnt. It is becoming particularly influential in the study of online and distributed learning. This is not surprising given the importance of network metaphors in understanding online learning. ANT provides useful resources to explore how specific practices assume a pedagogical form in concrete actants, who themselves engage in certain forms of identity work that we want to suggest is indicative of the lifelong learner. It can help us explore the specific practices through which learners take up the practices of lifelong learning in inscribing particular meanings into their practices.

1. ARTICULATING LEARNING THROUGH ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY

Although referred to as actor-network *theory*, ANT is not a single homogeneous theory as such. In fact, some of the significant protagonists of ANT rigorously argue that to think of it as a single static body of theory goes against the very principles of ANT itself. So, to try and define ANT is to do injustice to what it is about, a position which is shared with many who write post-structuralist and postmodernist influenced texts, and which infuriates those who label in order to name and shame. ANT has been influential in the sociology of science, in society-technology studies and increasingly in the social sciences more generally, in particular among sociologists pursuing a 'sociology beyond societies' (Urry 2000). In the sociology of science, studies have highlighted the difference between scientific method as signified in the textual practices of written research articles and conference papers and the semiotic practices of the laboratory and examined the mediations through which the world becomes word. In the process, it has sought a different ontology to the correspondence view of truth that has been traditionally adopted in the West, exploring rather the notion of the circulation of meaning (Latour 1999).

The early studies of laboratory work in ANT proved to be very significant for they foregrounded the importance of naming, or to put it another way, *signifying*, as a critical aspect of doing science. This notion of naming and the consequent highlighting of the performative character of the work done through naming was carried forward into later studies where all social practices and endeavors became potentially amenable to ANT treatment. This means that from an ANT perspective, whatever is the focus, for example lifelong learning, it should not be understood simply as inhering in a practice or set of practices, but rather as something that is both performed into being and at the same time itself 'performs'. In this sense, lifelong learning does not signify in terms of a set of traits or characteristics, but rather in terms of action and performance. Another legacy of the early studies was that ANT was seen as providing accounts of projects or things in the process of being

made that were designed to resolve problems. The process involved performances which were recursive, creating certain effects that would change the thing being made, which in turn, would have further effects and so on. It is possible therefore in a provisional way to think of lifelong learning as a *project* or social endeavour where the aim is to tackle and resolve a set of perceived problems – we will consider later what these might be and how they are articulated.

Not being a theory in any definitive sense, ANT has an elusive quality. There is no attempt to provide generalized explanations, no pretension to a grand theory of the social order or anything else. Nor is it a theory that is meant to be applied, although as we shall see it can provide illuminative conceptual resources. ANT is perhaps best seen as being about a way to study and understand things, events and processes in the making. In a strong sense it is more a method for thick (ethnographic) description[2] – a way of learning from actors without imposing a priori definitions on them. ANT is most fruitfully deployed in understanding situations subject to rapid change and where boundaries are unclear. In this sense, it is useful for studying innovations in education such as lifelong learning, particularly if these innovations have a project-like quality, where lifelong learning is formulated as a response to rapid changes in the social order[3].

The understanding gained is sourced in the complex negotiations and trade-offs that are performed by actors. Apart from assuming that actors have the capacity to negotiate with and enroll other actors, ANT argues that it is not legitimate to make any other assumptions about the object of study. People need to be seen as 'sociologists' in their own right in the sense that they are capable of doing their own work of interpretation and understanding – or to put it another way, the work of meaning-making and meaning-taking – and therefore do not require academic sociologists to come along and explain to them what they are *really* doing and how they could do it better. Latour (2002), for instance, asks the question: 'What makes you think that a study is always supposed to teach things to the people being studied?'[4]

ANT[5] might be described in the following way:

> Actor-network theory is concerned with studying the mechanics of power as this occurs through the construction and maintenance of networks made up of both human and non-human actors. It is concerned with tracing the transformation of these heterogeneous networks ... that are made up of people, organizations, agents, machines and many other objects. It explores the ways that the networks of relations are composed, how they emerge and come into being, how they are constructed and maintained, how they compete with other networks, and how they are made more durable over time. It examines how actors enlist other actors into their world and how they bestow qualities, desires, visions and motivations on these actors.
>
> (Tatnall and Gilding 1999: 959)

ANT speaks to us of such things as power, its use and distribution, transformative processes, motivations, relations, and social order and stability. Most important for our purpose is that ANT points to the place and significance of semiotic processes, since the order created by actor-networks is in part a semiotic achievement – a process of naming, signifying and performing.

ANT is clearly influenced by post-structuralism in eschewing explanations of phenomena that appeal to underlying structures, instead examining the practices through which they emerge, or are performed into being. Actor-network theory therefore signifies a shift from individualized, psychological approaches to learning, amongst other phenomena, to more social and cultural interpretations, particularly those that foreground the semiotic dimension. While we do not want to overstress this point, there is a certain affinity then between ANT, Vygotskian influenced activity theory and situated learning theory informed by symbolic interactionism.

Practices are theorized as both material and discursive, within a network that is spread across space and time and includes the non-human – e.g. books, journals, pens, computers – as well as the human. The non-human positioned equally as actors alongside the human is a unique feature of ANT. They are treated symmetrically, as –

> human powers increasingly derive from the complex *interconnections* of humans with material objects . . . This means that the human and physical worlds are elaborately intertwined and cannot be analyzed separate from each other.
>
> (Urry 2000: 14)

Networks are held to be fashioned by the interactions of actors, where the actors are 'actors' because they are networked. It is not the individual per se that is an actor. Individuals only become actors through their interactions with others – human and non-human. Thus the recursiveness of actor and network. A network is defined as 'a group of unspecified relations among entities of which the nature itself is undetermined' (Callon 1993: 263). Thus actors and network are mutually constitutive, defining and redefining each other, because 'action is simply not a property of humans *but of an association of actants*' (Latour 1999: 182, emphasis in original). Here 'actants' refers to the human and non-human symmetrically aligned in the fashioning of a network. ANT therefore highlights practices as performances of recursive or continuous relational interplay. Here the *performative* and therefore semiotic character of actor-networks is highlighted, where actants are *performed* or brought forth in and by their relations. An actant then is an entity that acts or to which activity is granted by others. It implies no special motivation of human individuals or of humans in general. As Law (1999: 4) puts it, 'entities take their form and acquire their attributes as a result of their relations with other entities, the actor is generated *in* and *by* these relationships'. Here there is an ontology of relational materiality where actors achieve their form, attributes and therefore meaning(s) as a consequence of their relations or *interactions* with other actors. In the same way, the social order, institutions, systems, organizations and artefacts can be understood as effects generated in patterned networks of diverse heterogeneous materials (Law 1992).

In ANT an actant is articulated as itself an association of heterogeneous elements rather than simply a 'point object'. Thus, for example, a learner as an actant interacts with other actants in a network of other learners and artefacts of learning both human and non-human. One consequence of this is that ANT moves learning away

from its conventional psychologistic significations as something that goes in the mind. Learning ceases to mean a static structure residing in the individual's head. It is *actions* rather than beliefs, intentions or cognitive processes that are highlighted. Learning does not take place outside of a learning context. Indeed one could say that an actor-network spells out the relations and *content* of a context[6]. With ANT we can signify learning as a dynamic activity distributed across the learner, the means of learning, the place of learning, and knowledge or skills, or that which is learnt. Moreover learning is understood as spread out across extended time frames and multiple resources.

As networks consist of actants, who have different and unequal possibilities for influencing other members of the network, the specific power (influence) of an actant will to some extent depend on their positioning, or their relationship with other actants in the network. Attributes such as power or agency are seen as properties of networks not as qualities that are intrinsic to particular actants. To be signed as a learner, an actant needs to be able to mobilize, and be mobilized by, the signs of learning that value certain actions *as* learning. To be part of the actor-network of work and or workplace learning therefore signifies different mobilizations of actants in the performance of meaning. As the actant grows, becomes part of an extensive and stabilized network, power is an effect of this growth. In ANT then power is articulated as consequential to actions, rather than their cause (Latour 1986). This also points to an understanding of power as a *practice*. Insofar as individuals possess power they do so through the relationships which constitute them[7].

We argue therefore that through the interactions which fashion the actor-networks of lifelong learning, people are performed or signed *as* a learner. To be signified in this way therefore, is not simply due to the ascribing of a label by for example, a teacher or because one has certain intrinsic qualities or attributes. Rather it is because one is positioned in a particular network of ordered interactions, where *work* (intellectual and emotional labour) is performed through those interactions, and with that positioning, is accordingly identified as a learner. In ANT-speak one becomes a 'knowing location' – 'a learner knows because he [sic] is at the right place in a network of materially heterogeneous elements' (Law and Hetherington 2001: 4). Clearly, there are also significant issues of identity involved here, not least because the knowing location may be non-human. We can illuminate this more through the following[8]:

> . . . .all these materials and endless others *together* perform Andrew Goldthorpe as Director of Daresbury. But this isn't quite right either, for the Directorship is not reducible to whatever lies *outside* the skin either: It's obvious to those who watch him that Andrew is very smart. And very skilled. Like the rest of us, he *embodies* a set of relations, a set of memories, a set of preferences. The myth of high office is embodied in a set of performances, a set of materials, and a series of spatial arrangements, corporeal and otherwise. None is necessarily crucial, but *if we take them together then they generate the effect*.
>
> (Law 1994: 143, emphasis in original)

Whilst Andrew Goldthorpe is not articulated as a learner, what is significantly exemplified for our purpose is the notion of *relational* embodiment – that his identity as Director is embodied in his memories and preferences and in his relations. So too, we could say the same of the identity of a learner. A learner to be identified as a 'learner' is a matter of relational embodiment and thus learning is not is a matter of motivation or cognition. Similarly, 'Andrew Goldthorpe' is fashioned as Director not simply because of his intrinsic qualities i.e. that he is smart and skilled, but because of his *location* within a context and all which that signifies. Once again, this is the case for learners; they need to be knowing locations if they are to learn, where learning involves artefacts as well as humans. Thus to be a learner can be thought of as being engaged in a project where knowledge is being produced through practices of learning that may or may not involve an explicit pedagogy. In other words, it is the doing or performing of learning-like things that makes one a learner. Thus, that one has learnt is something signified retrospectively.

There are two aspects we want to highlight here. First, learners will be located in more than one network, so we can say that learning is distributed through all the networks within which they are interconnected. Networks 'expand, contract and shift configuration over time, and even the most stable and predictable of them are constantly being re-appropriated and re-defined by the nature of the flows that animate them' (Nespor 1994: 12). Thus learning becomes the potential to act in a certain way when located within an appropriate network of relationships. Second, the following now assume an increased significance:

- the process of learning as well as the outcomes,
- relationality where things have significance and meaning not because of what they are essentially but in terms of how they are positioned in relation to each other,
- the materiality and heterogeneity, the diverse material of the world of learning – objects, bodies, information and media,
- the infrastructure of learning.

Practices that signify as learning, including educational practices, can be seen therefore as actor-networks where participants and participation are ordered in time and space. ANT articulates the educational environment as comprising complex intertwined pedagogical and learning network(s). For the network to function successfully, all actants must play their part – that is they must be effectively mobilized and in place.

2. STABILIZING THE ACTOR-NETWORK

A network of ordered interactions or practices is a sign that all the actants have forged common definitions and meanings, that representations have been defined and accepted, and that all have been co-opted in the pursuit of common objectives. This is referred to as *translation*. Translation is the recursive process of interpretation, or as Callon (1991) puts it, the definition that every actant makes of other actants in the actor-network. Thus stability and social order are continually and recursively negotiated as a social process where interests are aligned and re-aligned.

Actants have a diverse and often conflicting set of interests and values, so stability will depend on their ability to *translate*, on translation or ordering strategies where the multiplicity of interests are re-interpreted and re-presented. This process can however never be complete, nor entirely stable –

> Translation is the creation of an actor network. It refers to all the negotiations, intrigues, calculations, acts of persuasion thanks to which an actor (or force) takes, or causes to be conferred upon itself, authority to speak or act on behalf of another actor (or force). Translation always has a direction
>
> (Stalder 1997)

ANT speaks of the four *moments* of translation – the negotiations or ordering practices out of which a network is fashioned – as *problematisation; interessement, enrolment* and *mobilization* (Callon 1986). Translation is neither linear nor sequential. Problematisation is, as is implied, the framing of the question – what is the problem(s) that need(s) to be solved by this project? Through this framing the interests allowable in forming a specific network - or what is to be included and what excluded – begin to be defined. Defining a problem or exigence functions to signify inclusions and exclusions and this in turn constitutes a powerful form of gate-keeping. Of course, interestingly in lifelong learning, everyone seems to be included given that the problem is defined as one of successfully adapting to change where everyone is positioned as subject, albeit in different ways. It may therefore be significant that a discourse of inclusion has developed alongside that of lifelong learning, with everyone articulated as having to share the same boat of insecurity and uncertainty consequent on change. As we have suggested, this is often marked semiotically by the oft-repeated use of 'we' in the discourses of lifelong learning.

The second moment is *interessement* which is a series of processes that attempt to impose the identities and roles defined in the problematisation on all actants. Interessement is about getting the actants 'interested' or involved and negotiating the terms of their involvement to secure an acceptance of roles as defined, thereby locking all actants into proposed roles. Through this process existing networks are gradually dissolved and replaced by a new actor-network. Interessement identifies the practices through which barriers are built between those who are part of the network and those who are not – 'these can be material barriers…, material organizations of space and time that restrict contact with outsiders…,discursive barriers…, or barriers constituted through differences of taste, style and language' (Nespor 1994: 14). They are the concrete ways in which inclusions and exclusions are brought about or performed. Here we are reminded that meaning is more a function of absence than presence – what something *is not* rather than what it is. For example, in discourses of lifelong learning, to be 'low skilled', 'badly qualified', 'unemployed' all act as signifiers of the currently or potentially excluded and as those upon whom, as we argued in the last chapter, particular actions and instrumentalities must be utilized to signify at least the possibility of inclusion.

While interessement sets the barriers to participation, enrolment fashions the alliances within the network. In relation to lifelong learning, these are the shared practices and signs of learning, not least for example, the gaining of more and

higher qualifications, the certification of learning being the surest sign attested to by rankings in international league table that lifelong learning is taking place. These qualifications can be understood as *intermediaries* in the actor-network(s) of lifelong learning. Mobilizations are the practices through which enrolled networks are stabilized, however temporarily, and made manageable and mobile. Or as Latour puts it, the techniques that create 'immutable mobiles' – networks which move across space and time without losing their form:

> Techniques can range from mobilization in the flesh – assembling strikers for a mass rally, for example, or translating students into mobile practitioners of a discipline – to the representation of previously dispersed entities in stable, mobile, and combinable forms (textual or electronic).
>
> (Nespor 1994: 14)

The performances are the translations through which networks are both stabilized or given a form and, in this way, project particular meanings. But they can become destabilized and subject to re-form where meanings are fought over and become unclear. Sometimes they dissolve and return to a state of meaningless entropy –

> According to the latter [the model of translation], the spread in time and space of anything – claims, orders, artefacts, goods – is in the hands of people; each of these people may act in many different ways, letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it, or adding to it, or appropriating it . . . When no one is there to take up the statement or token then it simply drops.
>
> (Latour 1986: 267)

And it is the case that lifelong learning is not a token taken up everywhere or by everyone. Translation therefore is a set of practices through which actor-networks are formed and stabilized, how these practices are spread through time and space, and how these comprise the negotiations and battles involved in the fashioning of the actor-network. Without these practices of translation there is no network, no actants and no meanings.

An actor-network is configured or translated by the enrolment of both animate and inanimate entities, through the deployment of the four moments which we can now understand as being re-alignments whose purpose is to arrive at, and have accepted, a set of common meanings. These alignments and re-alignments are rarely reached through consensus, but will involve some actants seeking to impose their definitions and representations onto others – and succeeding in their quest. To put it another way, it is about meaning generation in the cause of stability and social order where some are more influential or powerful than others. These latter actants are referred to as 'obligatory points of passage'. Translation can therefore be regarded as a means of 'obliging', usually through persuasion, all the actants to go along a path whose direction is determined only by some of these actants. This can take many diverse forms.

Earlier we mentioned inscription. It has an important role to play in any actor-network as the medium of translation, or the medium into which it is inscribed. The translation of the multiple and conflicting interests of the various actants

are inscribed into the technical and social arrangements that circulate across the actor-network. Inscription is the mechanism by which translations are 'embodied in texts, machines, skills, which become their support, their more or less faithful executive' (Callon 1991: 143). Inscriptions can take the form of, among other things, documents, reports, academic papers, models, books, technical artifacts, computer programs and formal discussions[9]. Scientists for example use a multitude of instruments, from seismographs to atom smashers that make nature accessible through the inscription of measurements as graphs or illustrations. All these can serve as the means whereby meanings are inscribed or 'written in' to the network such that they 'stand in' or speak for actants (Holmstrom and Robey 2002). Through inscription, actants embed their agendas into artefacts of different kinds, which then themselves become actants. Thus the notion of inscription refers to the way artefacts embody patterns of use. Whilst the term inscription might seem to be implying that action is 'hard-wired' into an artefact, it is perhaps best thought of as signifying the concrete anticipations and restrictions of future patterns of use that are present in the development and use of any technology[10]. Inscriptions can become stable and routinized, assuming a taken for granted existence and resisting assaults from competing translations. They become solidified signifiers, an aspect of 'frozen discourse', resisting and resistant to change and thus seemingly irreversible.

Through the processes of translation and inscription, multiple and conflicting interests become aligned with each other and embedded into technologies that stabilize the actor-network, at least temporarily (Callon 1991). As Walsham (1997: 469) notes, successful networks of aligned interests are created:

> through the enrolment of a sufficient body of allies, and the translation of their interests so that they are willing to participate in particular ways of thinking and acting which maintain the network'.

It is important to note here that the success of translation refers to the completeness with which actant interests are aligned and stabilized and not to some objective criterion of whether the network is valuable. Translation is about social order, not social value.

Once stabilized, an actor-network becomes resistant, although not immune, to further translation. The point about stabilization is that if successful the actor-network takes on the characteristics of a 'black box', defined as 'that which no longer needs to be considered, those things whose contents have become a matter of indifference' (Callon and Latour 1981: 285) – anything that is now so stable that only inputs and outputs matter. This is referred to as *irreversibility* and it signifies the extent to which it is impossible to go back to a situation where the actor-network's current translation was only one amongst others and the extent to which it shapes and determines subsequent translations[11]. When actants just accept network practices as given, the actor-network can be said to have become durable and seemingly irreversible. It becomes the taken-for-granted. As Rowan and Bigum (2003) point out when all of the negotiation and maintenance is forgotten, the network has become routinized or seemingly irreversible, a fact of life. This is

often realized through the establishment of institutionalized practices. Black-boxing occurs because of the inherent dynamic in an actor-network to strive for stabilization since without that network in that form none of the entities comprising it would exist (Stalder 1997). Thus the attempts to which we have referred to mobilize the myth of the knowledge economy and to black box it as taken for granted or unquestionable. Similarly, the discourse of lifelong learning is mobilized to open up and reform the black box of education and training.

ANT also speaks of the role of *intermediaries* in positioning or ordering actants by providing a language that enables actants to communicate with each other, thus connecting them more closely in the network. Intermediaries provide the link connecting actants into a network, thus defining the network itself. An intermediary is 'anything that passes between actors in the course of relatively stable transactions....It can be, among other things, a text, a product, a service or money' (Biejke and Law 1992: 25). Through intermediaries actants communicate with one another and translate their intentions onto other actants[12] – 'actors define one another by means of the intermediaries that they put into circulation (Callon 1991: 140). Actants form networks by circulating intermediaries among themselves, thus defining the respective position of the actants within the networks and in doing so fashioning the actants and the networks themselves. We have seen an example of this in the case of 'Europe' in the previous chapter.

Yet, despite all the work that goes into stabilization, networks can become unstable. As Callon points out: 'all translations, however apparently secure, are in principle reversible' (1991: 150). There are a number of possible factors that can bring this about; for example, the entry of new actants, the departure of existing actants, perturbations in translation, or a shift in the alignment of interest and values. All this can cause the black-box that is the actor-network to be opened and the contents reconsidered. Thus, the introduction of 3G technology in relation to mobile phones disrupts the actor-network of online learning, by providing new affordances for the organization of such learning. Rather than occupying the spaces of enclosure to which we referred earlier, learning becomes mobile. One possibility is, as Callon (1986a) points out, that a network relies for its stability and its continued existence on the maintenance of its 'simplifications'. These are always under constant challenge from increasing complexity. There is a trade off here. On the one hand, an actor-network can be strengthened as it becomes more extensive. However, on the other hand, the more extensive it becomes the greater the potential for destabilization – as we saw in Chapter Six, the actor-network that is Europe is a good example of this.

3. MOBILIZING LIFELONG LEARNING

It is one of the characteristics of ANT that it can be deployed as a conceptual resource to illuminate both macro-level and micro-level assemblages. We will say more about the latter in the next section. Turning now to considering the macro-level, it could be argued that in ANT terms lifelong learning is a project that

endeavours to produce the conditions that make the continuing production and re-production of economic, cultural and human capital possible through a network of practices signed as 'lifelong learning'. We might then ask, if lifelong learning can be theorized in terms of actor-networks, what then are its signs? If it is a project, to what problem is it directed as a solution? What forms of spatio-temporal orderings and what range of actors are mobilized to engage in lifelong learning and for those particular practices to be themselves engaging as lifelong learning?

One way of understanding lifelong learning is as a translation strategy which brings targeted parts of a population together in actor-networks to address the problem of creating the conditions for success in a time of fast capitalism. This is in effect a problematisation with governments acting nationally and supra-nationally to do two things. First, they seek to get their targeted populations to recognize it is in their interest to become actants who identify themselves as lifelong learners. Second, they seek to get the various human and non-human actants, infrastructure, resources, in different contexts all interacting and inter-relating together in an optimal way. The role of policy at both national and supra-national level is important here. If this is achieved, or in other words if enrolment succeeds, then mobilization for lifelong learning succeeds. As we have seen in previous chapters, lifelong learning has been problematized to focus specifically on up-skilling and re-skilling, on social inclusion, and on personal development. As these become framed and support for them mobilized, various technologies become deployed for the delivery or enabling of lifelong learning, not least the technology of information and communications technology.

It is possible also to understand what functions as intermediaries and inscriptions in lifelong learning. In the case of the former, it is the proposition that learning is endless and necessary. This becomes the 'language' of the actor-network, enabling the various actants to communicate with each other, in the process connecting them into the network and solidifying and defining it by fashioning a shared space and a common scale. Earlier we noted that qualifications could also be intermediaries within specific actor-networks. We also saw earlier in our account of ANT that money could function as an intermediary. Thus in relation to the European Union Framework Programmes that we referred to in Chapter Six, finance was a key intermediary with 13.75 billion euros allocated for projects between 1998 and 2002, and 19 billion euros allocated for 2002 to 2006[13].

The inscriptions of lifelong learning could refer to the multitude of texts that have been produced by both national and supra-national agencies. In recent years the flow of policy documents on lifelong learning has increased. In the UK we have had *The Learning Age, Learning to Succeed* and *Skills for Life*. In Scotland, we have had *Opportunity Scotland* and *Life Through Learning, Learning Through Life: the Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland*. In Wales, the notion of becoming *a learning country* is to the fore. In the European Commission we have had a *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* and *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*. 1996 was an EU International Year of Lifelong Learning. The OECD produces reports on lifelong learning country by country, including Korea,

Japan, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and on and on and on in a veritable Everest of paper. The circulating discourses of lifelong learning align it to the globalizing discourses of the myth of the knowledge economy and of course globalization itself. Through repetition, these texts have strengthened the interactions of the actor-network by attributing an objective, black box-like character to lifelong learning, suggesting that it is both a fact and something to which 'there is no alternative'. Resistance *is* futile.

Actor-networks are ordered in specific ways and the moments of translation that perform this ordering will differ and be specific to different actor-networks. However, as we have suggested in examining the discursive practices of lifelong learning, a pattern can be discerned that suggests an attempt to mobilize subjects in specific ways, in particular, towards a more active engagement with their life courses and life chances. Many practices of lifelong learning can be seen as part of that pattern, even if, since networks can be stable or unstable, this pattern as we have noted is never complete or inevitable. In ANT terms then, lifelong learning as a social endeavour will succeed or fail in relation to the problems which it is deemed to constitute the solution, as a result of the stability or lack of stability of the actor-networks which comprise it.

4. MOBILIZING LIFELONG LEARNERS

The discussion in this text so far has brought us to the point of locating lifelong learning as part of a range of techniques for governing and for ordering the social in fast capitalism, as part of the way in which conduct is conducted or shaped, and subjectivity mobilized and re-fashioned. In the development of lifelong learning practices, a key aim discernible has been the thrust to fashion more flexible learners and workers who themselves are more enterprising. Lifelong learning has become an influential technology in catering for and fashioning these active, enterprising selves through educational and training practices that signify flexibility and enterprise as desirable and desired ways of being. In instilling a certain ethos in individuals, governing takes on a different signification with audit and regulation displacing provision. Semiotic displays of achievement and effectiveness come to the fore. Certain cultural norms and values are promoted over others.

In an earlier work, one of us (Edwards 1997) argued for the significance of the emerging shift in policy discourses from the foregrounding of adult education to one of lifelong learning. The argument was in part that less emphasis is being placed on the *provision* of learning opportunities for adults and more on establishing *targets* and *standards* that providers of learning opportunities have to meet. This is a continuing trend. It was also suggested that through the discourses of lifelong learning there has been a significant shift in significations from 'students' to 'learners'. 'Student' connotes a clear location, role and identity; a student belongs within the bounded spaces of enclosure that characterize an educational institution. This belonging is important in establishing boundaries and identity in both an objective and subjective sense. There are certain signs that go with being a student,

even though these have themselves changed over time and do depend upon institutional place. By contrast, 'learners' connotes consumers of learning opportunities who are deterritorialized, individualized and flexible; active subjects who identify themselves as in need of learning and who recognize that in conditions of fast capitalism this is likely to be an endless process.

Of course, this argument is pitched at a highly abstract and generalized level, problematically framed in terms of binary oppositions representing ideal types. While it partially captures a trend within the contemporary practices of lifelong learning, it does not provide a detailed analysis of the specific technologies through which the shift from student to learner occurs, the sorts of thick description provided in ANT studies. Such analysis would undoubtedly demonstrate the diversity of mobilizations and significations in play in the practices of lifelong learning. From the account we have given earlier, we believe that actor-network theory offers important conceptual resources to undertake this work.

The discussion in this chapter has so far focused on lifelong learning as a general process and operating at the macro-level. However, as we indicated earlier, ANT also provides for focusing on the micro-level, for looking at specific lifelong learning practices. We turn now to an example of this type of analysis. In his exploration of curricula in undergraduate studies in Physics and Management in a US university, Nespor (1994) draws upon actor-network theory to examine the ways in which students are organized in space and time and the implications this has both for subjectivity and for knowledge- and meaning-producing practices. In particular, he argues that the different practices associated with the two subject areas result in different subjectivities, networks and representational practices. For Physics students who spend all their time together working in groups long into the night there is a compression of space and time. On the other hand, Management students have a more disaggregated experience because of their modular program. While space-time compression results in students within the Physics community developing a very firm disciplinary identity and tightly knit networks, the Management students belong to a far more diverse set of networks. These networks stretch across Management, both inside and outside the discipline and the university, as the Business School, of which they are part, has strong links with employers for both teaching and employment purposes.

For the Physics students, the curriculum is a site for forming ongoing friendships with academic and social life merging. Nespor argues that this is because they have to take required courses in a specified sequence, while in their curriculum the Management students have far more electives from which they can choose. Thus, the fact that there is more student choice in the organization of the curriculum results in a re-ordering of space-time and, with that, the range of networks to which each student is inter-connected. Student choice is itself mediated through student organized advice networks, even though the Business School provides a formal advice service. Thus, instead of having their spatial and temporal trajectories shaped by program requirements, students organized the space-time relations among their courses. Schedules were composed for reasons unconnected with

the substance of the courses. This diversified the range of actants with which the Management students came into contact. This enrols and mobilizes specific knowledge-producing networks and forms of subjectivity. Student choice rather than disciplinary requirement becomes the intermediary. This impacts upon the forms of meaning-making in which these students engage and hence the mobilizations which stabilize the networks. In Management, they are different kinds of actor than in Physics and far more active in shaping their learning.

While there are limitations to Nespor's study given its focus is only on institutionalized forms of learning, the two contrasting examples in some ways signify aspects of the contrast between students and learners we outlined above. The Physics students, with their compressed spatio-temporal relationships and dense networks, are associated with one of the more traditional and tightly bounded disciplines. The Management students project more the characteristics of lifelong learners. It may not be accidental therefore that their looser and wider networking is fashioned in a newer and less bounded subject area where course structure is mediated by student choice. Because the actor-network of academic Physics is more tightly bound and less extensive than that of Management, the mobilizations of time and space are more restricted. A strong disciplinary identity is mobilized, but it would seem to be somewhat insular with students here definitely signified as 'students'. By contrast, the looser organization of space and time associated with the modular Management program and the networks that extend beyond the university signifies students as 'learners'. Thus what it *means* to be a learner is different. The Management students are ordered as more active, flexible and enterprising; precisely the type of subject that signifies lifelong learning in conditions of governmentality. Indeed, for Nespor this represents a problem, as in the Management program there is a lack of enrolment into the academic side with students more concerned with management practice than with academic theorizations of management. And indeed, this resonates with a wider discourse that seeks to critique lifelong learning as a species of 'dumbing down' rather than an extension of opportunities, a discourse with which in certain respects we have some sympathy.

However, we also feel the situation may be somewhat more complex than Nespor outlines. The overall organization of space and time places an emphasis on the public performance of the Management students, their presentational skills and dress, precisely the capabilities they require to signify themselves, and be recognized, as managers in the employment market. The Management curriculum therefore might be said to also mobilize signs of employability or to put it another way, an enterprising rather than a disciplinary subjectivity. The Management students signify that they have learnt to be managers, not only through the knowledge they can display, but also in the dispositions and self-presentational practices they perform. However, a certain caution is also necessary in suggesting too neat a categorization, as both sets of students are subject to aspects of traditional disciplinary practices. In this sense, there is a need to follow the actor-network view that all objects, including those signified as lifelong learners, are hybrids, neither exclusively one thing nor the other (Latour 1993).

Nespor (1994), by the students he studied, provides a detailed analysis of the use of space and time, which suggests that there is a need for more extensive studies of the *architecture* of learning in the service of a better understanding of pedagogy. The configuration of the built environment is itself an actor in an actor-network and is integral to the geo-semiotic practices of the actor-network. It generates signs, constructs meanings and meanings are taken from it. Whilst the built environment provides spatio-temporal possibilities for learning, it may also have the opposite effect. Some researchers have argued for the importance of design as a set of practices that need to be engendered in learners (Kress 2003, Cope and Kalantzis 2000). However, this has largely been constrained within the discussion of pedagogy and not examined in terms of the built environment itself. Here some of the work on learning cities and learning regions is of interest, as architects and educationalists discuss the design principles to inscribe into the environment, meanings that enhance the possibilities for lifelong learning. Whether these possibilities will be taken up is another matter.

In his study, Nespor contrasts the isolated, almost bunker-like spaces of the Physics building with the newer, lighter, more open spaces of the Business School. This indicates the ways in which subjectivities are formed through the spaces utilized as well as the utilization of that space, a point much explored in recent writings in cultural geography (Pile and Thrift 1995). The mobilizations possible in a new, open plan building by contrast with older laboratories are very different and presumably also, with that, the learners and learning that are made possible:

> Unlike the austere physics building, the Business School wasn't geared solely to academic or scholarly activity . . . [The] public interior space was organized in large part to simulate corporate spaces and function as a stage for the display of sociability.
>
> (Nespor 1994: 111)

This opens up the possibility for students to develop network capital, the employability and self-marketing skills and acquaintance networks necessary for success in the business world. The presence of network capital positions individuals and sends signals to potential employers. For Nespor, while the Physics students learn to mobilize the physical world, Management students learn to mobilize themselves. It is these mobilizations fashioned in the varied organization of the curriculum in formal settings and specific spaces that we are suggesting are central to lifelong learning strategies.

Thus, the concern to develop more open, flexible and distributed forms of learning and to loosen their spatial-temporal organization in support of lifelong learning represents the attempt to fashion different actor-networks. In the process, different subjects are mobilized – active, enterprising – and mobilized in different ways – through a different organization of the curriculum. All this, might be said to contribute to the contemporary 'unruliness' of knowledge (Stronach and MacLure 1997) and its accompanying lack of discipline/deference. Here, learning itself is signified as diverse with different actor-networks formed through, for instance, the use of information and communications technologies or the development of work-based and workplace learning (Edwards and Usher 2000). Despite,

or may be because of, their spatio-temporal distance from educational institutions, these practices are signed legitimately as, lifelong learning, even though they are contested. This diversity is further enhanced by the learning practices mediated by, for instance, community involvement, the consumer market, or the family. The spatial-temporal ordering of learning may be more complex than that taking place within conventional classrooms, laboratories and lecture theatres, and indeed much could be gained from examining the many mobilizations entailed. The networks may not be as intense as those for Nespor's Physics students but they may be denser, weaving together the academic, social, work and personal worlds in a range of ways that foster lifelong learning other than those associated with more traditional disciplinary subjects, and resulting in many different forms of hybrid knowledge. This entails challenges, not least in the boundary zones of pedagogy working between the abstract and the contextualized, and in the identification of boundary objects that can sit in the middle of networks of interests across different contexts. To mobilize the learner is precisely to position individuals as learning whether or not they are attending a formal institution and whether or not they position *themselves* as learning. It is to enroll individuals as lifelong learners, to fashion learning as central to the capabilities considered to be necessary in the contemporary social order and to inscribe the actants necessary for the of knowing locations as meaningful.

5. DISCIPLINING TECHNOLOGIES

The refashioning of actor-networks through the practices of lifelong learning themselves involve a re-ordering of disciplinary techniques. As we have argued, individuals as lifelong learners is an enabling technology in a strategy of governmentality that does not overlay existing practices but, rhizome-like, seeks to re-fashion existing actor-networks. Thus, governmentality and disciplinary power are both exercised within the mobilities of contemporary social orderings. Indeed disciplinary techniques remain part of the repertoire of practices through which actor-networks are mobilized and ordered. If hierarchical observation, normalization and examination lie at the heart of the exercise of modern disciplinary power (Foucault 1979), these practices are present in a wide range of institutions of the contemporary social order.

As we have already noted in Chapter Five, the practices of observation and recording are not neutral, working as they do through the fashioning and application of a norm. For Foucault, normalizing judgement creates a distinction between 'good-bad', 'normal-abnormal', operating through reward as well as punishment. The distribution of rewards and punishments enables individuals to be distributed according to ranks or grades, in the process creating a hierarchy of qualities, skills and aptitudes. The norms provide the basis for sorting and classifying, creating boundaries and exclusions, and specific orderings of space-time. They are not simply descriptive, but also embody the exercise of a disciplinary power that both enables and constrains possibilities for the fashioning of actor-networks –

> The power of normalization imposes homogeneity but it [also] individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another.
>
> (Foucault 1979: 184)

In formal providers of learning opportunities, normalizing judgment is embedded within the decisions of teachers over statements of truth made by learners. They have to talk the talk! These serve to normalize, through the rejection as abnormal/false, discourses which do not comply with the rules for truth-telling within that particular subject, and conversely to accept those which do comply as normal/true. They involve the policing of semiotic practices in the conduct of conduct, something which is explored in the research on academic literacies and genre.

Subject discourse is self-legitimizing through such practices as tutorial discussion, comment on learners' work, assessment of assignments/examinations/portfolios/competence, and the defence of theses. Through normalizing judgement learners are enrolled into the subject - made subjects of a discursive regime of truth, brought into a realm of legitimate knowing and behaviour appropriate to that state. Normalizing judgement functions to formulate true, knowing practices, to mobilize and signify those to be afforded status, privilege and affiliation, to indicate membership of a network and to classify and distribute individuals within hierarchies and across ranks. Subject boundaries are sustained through these norms that seek to mobilize specific actor-networks and the formation of disciplinary subjectivities based on degrees of classification, as we saw specifically with the Physics students in Nespor's study. Such practices are part of what translates conflicting interests into a (relatively) stable actor-network.

However, that study also points to the ways in which disciplinary techniques are only part of that which is mobilized. We want to suggest that the practices associated with lifelong learning, in particular, the signifiers of learner choice, involve spatio-temporal orderings that change subjects in line with the strategies and technologies of governmentality. Thus, for instance, the increasing use of computer-mediated communication offers the opportunity for an extension of observation and examination as well as an extension of actor-networks. Here learners may choose to log on at times that are convenient to them – at least in asynchronous formats – but once online, their presence is available for all to see through their *writalk*, that form of writing that attempts to emulate talk in online environments. Yet they may be sitting in their homes, workplaces or even airports whilst this is happening.

As we shall argue in a later chapter, the interconnections are more widespread than face-to-face settings, and the possibilities for forming a student identity, let alone a disciplinary identity, seem less likely. In this sense, computer-mediated communication represents an obvious boundary zone, given that ICT is polycontextual, those communicating may be seated in diverse sites and the mediation of the abstract and contextual is constantly to be performed in the practices of screen-based reading and writing. Here, it might be argued that discipline may be exerted hierarchically, but also by peers, as the practices of observation spread throughout the networked body of learners. In this way, learners may be mobilized, the sign of their learning

being long hours in front of a computer, taking and making meaning. In addition to hierarchical observation therefore, as we have noted earlier learners are also subject to *horizontal* observation, even when learning autonomously and individually. There are complex identity issues here, given that, unlike in a classroom, where students are often asked to metaphorically leave the rest of themselves at the door, ICT enables different aspects of identity to be displayed, thereby offering more opportunities for reversal as well as discipline. Thus while people have to identify themselves as learners, this is not a 'pure' position, but one within which the traces of their everyday contexts are also at play. To be a learner is not to belong to a generalized categorization, but to engage in the diverse embodied and embedded practices of learning. In educational terms, it is to mess things up!

Similarly, teachers become subject to wider forms of surveillance, no longer cocooned within the walls of the classroom. Here, the nature of the belonging and forms of sociality point to emerging subjectivities where the enterprise of the self moves from an expression of authentic identity to more playful and less formal (en)counters, where role and identity are not clearly bounded and where learning style encompasses styles of textual production and even dress sense. Here learning styles are embodied in the signifying practice of dress and comportment. This suggests that while aspects of discipline remain, other actors are enrolled through such practices. Semiotically therefore, as well as in other ways, lifelong learning does not signify more of the same, but more and different.

As we suggested earlier, similar considerations arise in the development of workplace learning as a strategy of lifelong learning. Here it is the lifelong (l)earner who is mobilized, the threat of job loss being translated into a disposition to learn for enhancing ongoing employability. Whatever learning emerges from this mobilization is however no longer sufficient in itself, no longer its own justification but has to be signed in an appropriate way *as* learning. Hence all the attempts to uncover or make visible informal learning and tacit knowledge so that these can be made available for assessment and accreditation. In the process, of course, translating them into something other than they once were (Colley, *et al.* 2003) – from tacit to explicit knowledge that can be corralled, databased and managed – a process now referred to as 'knowledge management', one of whose effects is to make all learning in an organization available for use by management.

The above suggests the possibility for far more complex and ambivalent processes at work in lifelong learning than can be encompassed by Foucault's metaphor of the panopticon. However, we believe these can be elaborated through analyses drawing upon actor-network theory. In some of the new subjects and ways of learning, we witness changing actor-networks in the arena of education. Within formal institutions, the mobilizations may differ from subject area to subject area and from setting to setting. As learning is fostered outside such institutions, so the translation or practices through which specific networks are formed - the problematisations, interessement and enrolments – become more complex, often involving hybrid mobilizations that enfold both disciplinary and pastoral power. In curriculum terms, one can argue that lifelong learning signifies the mobilizing of self and the

deploying of the appropriate techniques for its achievement, even whilst to position oneself as an active learner is to interconnect with a far more diverse and denser set of networks than if one is mobilized as a disciplined student. Lifelong learning signifies that diversity, even as it functions as a technology through which the many forms of active subject are mobilized. In saying this, we render problematic notions of learning and knowledge-production that simply rest on either psychological models of the individual or the increasingly popular notion of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). Actor-networks are fluid and dynamic, reliant on the practices of translation and circulation of intermediaries between different entities within a network. Even as there are attempts to mobilize lifelong learning and lifelong learners in specific ways, these will be subject to diverse and unexpected shifts and changes. Thus there are no definitive and final signs of lifelong learning, no black boxes in which we can hide.

NOTES

[1] Can any communication be rhetorically empty?

[2] ANT can seen as an ethnomethodology – the assumption is that actors know what they're doing and the researcher's task is to learn from them not only about what they do, but how and why they do it.

[3] Lifelong learning could also be seen in ANT terms as a *quasi-object* to be studied in the same way as for example social norms.

[4] http://www.ensmp.fr/~latour/articles/article/090.html

[5] For more on ANT, see John Law (1992) 'Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity', Centre for Science Studies, Lancaster University. Available at http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology

[6] This is actually more significant than might appear at first sight. Our observation is that studies foregrounding the importance of the context or situatedness of learning never specify what that context actually consists of.

[7] ANT's conceptualisation of power is similar to that of Foucault – that it is diffused and present in all social interactions.

[8] Law is referring to a study involving senior managers in a public research institute.

[9] Even hotel keys! Latour (1991) provides an illuminating illustration of this aspect of actor network theory in his account where through a succession of translations, the hotels' interest in ensuring that guests leave their key at the front desk when leaving were after many failures finally inscribed, in a key with a heavy metal knob, into a network strong enough to impose the desired behaviour on the guests.

[10] This demonstrates the balance kept in ANT of on the one hand, an objectivistic stance where artefacts determine use and, on the other hand, a subjectivistic stance where an artefact is always interpreted and appropriated flexibly.

[11] The car is a good example of a black box actor-network that is seemingly irreversible. When it is working the driver, simply deals with the car as a single object. But when it breaks down, it's a different story.

[12] An actor is defined as any element "which makes other elements dependent upon itself and translates their will into a language of its own" (Callon, 1981, p.286)

[13] Only a small fraction of these funds were for lifelong learning research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONNECTING LIFELONG LEARNING

This chapter picks up some ideas we hinted at in the previous chapter and explores more fully the significance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and computer mediated communication (CMC), the Internet[1] and the World-Wide Web (WWW)[2] in relation to signs of learning. These technologies and modes of communication have been articulated as key to the emerging possibilities for a learning society, a projected social form signified by the ubiquity of lifelong learning. At the same time, they are also considered an important contributory factor not only in multiplying the possibilities but also amplifying the indeterminacy of what such a society might be. Often coded in a discourse of technical rationality and constructed as simply offering technical resolutions and/or requiring the development of technical skills, we want to argue that, on the contrary, these developments are playing a much more significant part than that in re-signifying lifelong learning. This is evidenced by the ever-expanding research into the semiotics of the virtual and the various calls for education to concern itself with the development of multi-literacies, silicon literacies, IT literacies and the like. Some of these are precisely concerned with the development simply of technical skills, while others, and we include ourselves here, are as much interested in the meaning-taking and meaning-making practices of what Kress (2003), and Cope and Kalantzis (2000) refer to as 'design'. In relation to this latter line of writing, there is a focus on the multi-modality of semiotic practices, involving image as well as text, and the emergence of what Kress refers to as a 'logic of the screen' that he argues is displacing the logic of the page. Here then we are pointing to the different forms of reading, writing and meaning-making that are made possible by ICTs and CMCs. It is these which are the focus for this chapter.

We argued in Chapter Two that the multiple possible meanings of lifelong learning can be understood in terms of the contemporary social order as a society of signs. We characterized this order as one where an increasing range of electronic technologies play a significant part in multiplying a multiplicity of signs, and where image and text interplay. The social relations and materiality of the world become mediated through symbolic exchanges, through the production, circulation and reception of signifying practices where signs have value or meaning in their own right. We encountered the argument that electronic communication (CMC) and information technologies (ICTs) are producing a world of infinitely extended flows and global connections – a world of all inclusive connectivity – that contributes to an enveloping of the lifeworld. We discussed an example of this in Chapter Two – Baudrillard's hyper-real where reality is no longer defined by physical time and space and where instead the world increasingly assumes a virtual form.

ICTs – and we include the mobile technologies of phones, PDAs and laptops in our framing of ICTs - are significantly contributing to this re-fashioning of the social order as a society of signs. They are being mobilized as actors in the networks that seek to network or connect. However, as interconnection approaches infinite extension, the experience of presence is diluted. The lifeworld becomes both more technologically and semiotically textured. As we noted earlier, at their most extended form, ICTs connect but also distance and with social relations becoming electronically mediated, the need for the face-to-face presence of other humans becomes less significant.

Presence is realized through other forms of interaction. With ICTs and electronic communication, information, like images, does not have a definite connection with a fixed subject or a concrete referent but rather flows freely and promiscuously, mirroring the infinitely expanding and 'promiscuous' Internet[3]. With the face-to-face as the dominant form of relationality becoming less significant, or the less life requires face-to-face mutual presence and interaction, the more its form is increasingly signified as virtual, where the latter is not simply the opposite of the material, but represents a particular realization of the material. When virtual communication alone is practiced, humans become an absence which is nonetheless still 'present', with those online still a 'presence' to one another.

A critical question arising therefore is whether the Internet should be understood in a purely instrumental way, as a handy and neutral tool, simply something that one does things with in a more convenient way. This would also imply, for example, that the Internet simply provides a means for the better realizing of lifelong learning for all, a position embedded in such initiatives in the UK as the National Grid for Learning and LearnDirect. However, such a position is problematic. There is an assumption that the relationship between people and technology is one where the former manipulate the latter to achieve their ends and do so from a pre-given position of subjectivity. But what ICTs bring about is both a de-materialization of communication and a transformation of the subject position of those who engage with it. In effect, what emerges is a new set of relationships between people and machines, and between machines and non-matter. With their ever-changing form and potential, ICTs have a powerful effect on the reconfiguring of the relationship of technology to culture and –

> . . . .as long as we remain within an instrumental framework we cannot question it, define its limits or look to new media in relation to how it might generate new cultures.
>
> (Poster 2001: 16)

Burbules poses the issue in the following way:

> In other spaces or places the characteristics of the environment are to some extent independent of the means used to represent them; but with the Internet these two levels are utterly intertwined. Paths of movement are also connections of meaning-making.
>
> (Burbules 2000: 346)

It is really only within the grand narratives of modernity, that technologies such as the Internet are signified in a narrow sense as simply a tool that makes

communication more efficient, or facilitates the achievement of its users' goals, users who are themselves signified as pre-constituted instrumental subjectivities. It is perhaps one of the reasons that governments and organizations have such problems in introducing major ICT initiatives in they are precisely coded as a more efficient tool, thereby displacing the socio-cultural effects that impact upon their implementation and realization.

In a sense, the continuing effects of the Internet are difficult to predict and can only be discerned through its further expansion. It may possibly introduce new and destabilizing elements within the social order generally, a form of babel, in which the sheer amount and diversity of sites and interactions available result in a thinning of meaning. All we can say is that the Internet is not best understood as a 'thing', but rather as signifying a social space. Any conflict therefore is likely to be over the space to be occupied by the Internet and how that space is to be coded.

Here we are not naming technology as hardware but more as *mediation*. Technologies do have transformative power even whilst they are themselves shaped by socio-cultural influences. The medium might not necessarily be the message, but the message is nonetheless transformed by the technological mediation through which it is delivered and in the case of ICTs, through which it is generated. It could be argued then that computer-mediated communication is materially reshaping the social order and culture, both through the practices it enables and the ways in which this is signified through changing metaphors of the social, not the least of which is the metaphor of the network itself[4]. With electronic communication, where for the first time in the history of the world, one person can now reach another person or a million with equal facility, ICTs increasingly shape many significant dimensions of life and practices. This is why understanding ICTs as just signifying more efficient and more widespread information storage and retrieval is a very limited way of 'seeing'. Our argument on the contrary is that they change the material basis of communication and the re-signification of socio-cultural objects. They enable new ways of communicating, new forms of knowledge formation and delivery, and the fostering of new associations and connections among people. All of this has an undoubtedly transformative potential and will necessarily impact upon the what and how of people's learning and perhaps most significantly, what they *mean* by learning. In the virtual, the connotational is less bounded and the denotational is subject to greater play.

The Internet and the WWW are often referred to as cyberspace[5] – a term that begun life as a metaphor and has now become common usage for everything that is 'out there' in the virtual world of electronic communication. It signifies the network of sites that can be accessed over the Internet and the information available on that network where information in the form of data becomes accessible from almost anywhere on the globe. It is a signifier that has a variety of significations – hypermedia, virtual reality, often as a synonym for the WWW, or for the Internet as a whole, and sometimes for the diverse range of modes of electronic communication, including the telephone, television, and other communication networks and media. But perhaps most significant it also figures as our cultural imaginary. When we

use the term cyberspace, we visualize an immensity, a non-physical terrain created by computer systems through which one can surf for networked information, a reservoir of data, always in the making, limitless in capacity, unbounded and with no final closure. This is a space of perpetual interactions yet a space easy to move around in and within which to communicate. To be in cyberspace you have to be online, so it also signifies *connecting*, being in that virtual world in which Internet users live when they are online, and perhaps also once online being part of a network that can be formed when computers and users get together. Like physical space, cyberspace contains objects such as files, mail messages, graphics, etc., different modes of transportation and delivery, and different venues for expression. Unlike other forms of space, though, exploring cyberspace does not require any physical movement beyond pressing keys on a keyboard, using a joystick or moving a mouse[6]. Once connected, a variety of activities become possible[7] and it is these that constitute the network of relationships that *are* cyberspace. These activities encompass communicating, working and playing, all of which assume a significant part in many people's lives. In an important sense then, cyberspace connotes connectivity and relationality, or relationality through connectivity, the enabling of a deepening and extension of relationality through the almost infinite connectivity that characterizes the contemporary scene. But what, if anything, and where, if anywhere is learning in cyberspace?

1. COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE ON THE INTERNET

The Internet with its immediacy, accessibility and increasing ubiquity is the most significant manifestation of ICTs. Don't try and track down the Internet – one cannot point to it and say 'there it is!' Rather it is best understood as a continual, ongoing process, expanding even as these words are being written. Since its creation it has not stopped replicating itself. It is very likely that it will keep evolving and growing as long as humans are around to keep adding to it. Even without humans, it will keep expanding as long as there is power to support it, due to the automated nature of communicative transactions that are programmed into the system. Unlike most mammals, the Internet is truly a beast that can both feed on itself and grow exponentially in the process.

Through the space-time compression that ICTs make possible, global networks now have the *potential* to connect people everywhere and any time, with a seeming absence of time and place when connected. This world wide reality is virtual but it is a virtuality that is *material*.[8] Indeed the virtual is materialized through the bringing together of human and non-human actants that make it possible. For those online, the separation and distance of geographical place has been replaced by existence in the same virtual space. The space of distance becomes rendered as one space and we are structured to feel that the Internet is temporally endless. The immediacy of being online seems to abolish time as a constraint on communication so that place and time therefore no longer signify the firm boundaries of the possible that they once were. To put it another way, boundaries have become permeable, porous and

traversable with greater ease. In cyberspace there are networks without borders, limits, or even rules; many claim that here there are truly self-enclosed and self-referential worlds, in which the codes and language games governing the everyday are abandoned for the fanciful, the arcane and the fearful.

Now, a note of caution is necessary. It is easy to get carried away into a fantastical cyber-utopian space. For example, the argument that the Internet will inevitably and fundamentally transform the social order and culture must be treated with appropriate caution. As we have noted, these predictions are easily made but the history of technological advances shows too much complexity in their effects for any firm chance of neat predictions being realized. However, there is no doubt that various technological changes have had an effect on communication patterns and relationships[9]. There is a sense in which to speak of the electronic landscape binding us together with instant connectivity is not entirely metaphorical, nor totally hyperbolic. However, the fact that this connectivity is utilized for both pornography and genealogy – two of the main uses of the Internet – suggests an engagement with bodies both live and dead that merely emphasizes the absent-presence that is key to it. The presences we seek are both absent and present…

The Internet is above all a decentralized communication system. At one time, not so long ago, the possibilities of world-wide communication would have been mind-boggling. Nowadays it is a commonplace and it is difficult to conceive of ever returning to a situation where this mode of communicating did not exist. Who now apart from junk-mailers communicates by letter post? Even e-mail is considered old-fashioned and slow, by young people for whom texting and SMS-ing are the preferred forms of communication. For some, even the use of land-line telephones is diminishing as a dominant communication medium, although for many a land-line is still needed to access the Internet. A strong argument then could be made that the Internet and the WWW have begun to revolutionize the way we communicate, not only with other individuals but with the world as well. Some would argue that it is almost impossible to imagine life without the WWW, without e-mail, without Google, without access to breaking news, no up to the minute weather reports, no online shopping, no chatting with friends or with those with whom we share interests and hobbies. But at the same time it is necessary to recognize that for many there is still no access to the Internet, let alone to all these services. Not all can manage the expense involved in logging on to the Internet through an ISP and not all have bandwidth access.

With this note of caution it is nonetheless appropriate to consider some ways in which the Internet has impacted on communication patterns and relationships and with these, what can now be signified as learning. With interactivity and one-to-many broadcast capabilities, the Internet does have unique features that set it apart from other communication media. ICTs offer niches within the communication landscape like few technologies before it. Furthermore, ICTs have helped shape a new set of expectations about knowledge that subvert the traditions of reading and linear print.

First, then, people can communicate with, and associate online with others based on interest rather than geography – the tyranny of distance is no longer a tyranny. That interest may take many forms, not least the sometimes mundane aspects of chatting with friends or organizing one's social life. Before networks of electronic communication, it was difficult and laborious to seek out others interested in a specialized hobby or area of interest, when those people were spread worldwide. No medium of communication offered a personally available means to accomplish this[10]. Second, ideas and knowledge can be widely disseminated directly from individuals, no longer needing to be filtered through organizations and institutions. This is made possible by a decentralized and non-hierarchical structure – ruled by no one and relatively open to all – that in turn has produced new structures of interaction. The Internet has extended social interaction and through that extension changed the quality of interactions. The Internet also decentralizes the apparatuses of cultural production[11], placing cultural acts, such as the writing of texts in the hands of its participants. So for example, all web pages are in a sense 'publications' that anyone can access. Anyone with a modicum of technical expertise, and at minimal cost, can create their own website and place their cultural products on the Internet. This, of course, raises issues around the loss of standard language forms through which to communicate 'properly', most notably the forms of texting associated with the use of mobile phones. It has also brought into contact people of different languages through which hybrid forms of language begin to form. For instance, depending on who they are interacting with, bilingual people may move back and forth across languages in their communications. Third, through hypertext, new expressive possibilities are opened up. The WWW for example is one enormous hypertext with any one site potentially linked to all others. Moreover hypertext is associative in the sense that there is a live link directly to other work. This associative linking enables relationships among people in addition to relationships between ideas and knowledge. Networks can be formed based on exchange of information, hobbies, games, interests, culture, or political leanings. The formation of these electronic 'tribes' links people in ways that would otherwise be impossible[12]. On the Internet, meaning is built up through the creation of these linked relationships and in the process further meaning is generated. In addition, these electronic interactions can form the basis for networking on a face-to-face basis, extending and hybridizing forms of sociality.

Turning now to knowledge, it has been argued that ICTs have been crucial in enabling the growth of the technosciences, the information society and the knowledge economy and in valorizing the mode of performativity associated with these developments[13]. Electronic communication and computerization are significant dimensions of the knowledge complex that powers the contemporary economy (Burbules 2000) where the creation, distribution and manipulation of knowledge is itself a significant economic and cultural activity. Digitization and the commercialization of knowledge and knowledge production are closely linked. In a sense then, knowledge becomes coded precisely by its capacity to be commodified with a marketable value; knowledge as intellectual property. The economy is now one

where for many businesses their strategic core activities play out on a global space in real time and this too has been made possible by ICTs. Indeed some would argue that the very basis of globalization is innovation and that in turn depends on knowledge or highly knowledge intensive information (Carnoy 2000).

It is therefore undoubtedly the case that the Internet signifies a radical change in the way knowledge is coded and valorized, for example,

- By diluting institutional control over knowledge and giving more control to individuals and ad hoc, online groups, knowledge is now understood as being sourced in a multiplicity of sites.
- Electronically stored and communicated information becomes coded, albeit problematically, as knowledge
- With ICTs, knowledge becomes globally transportable to the extent where there are now a multiplicity of transnational global knowledge webs.
- With the growth in the myth of the knowledge economy, knowledge is signified as essential to innovation and becomes commodified as intellectual property that can be bought and sold.

The Internet has enabled different kinds of knowledge to flourish as well as providing tools for new approaches to knowing and knowledge. Here we are not simply referring to the use of e-mail or to surfing websites but rather to dealing with the dimensions of change. The Internet for example, has made information more abundant[14] and more accessible. Of course, it has been argued that this only indicates that in enabling the production of vast amounts of information, ICTs are simply piling trivia upon trivia, the thinning out of meaning to which we referred earlier. This raises significant issues for what we take to be signs of learning, and who is doing the taking, as the value of information still has to be subject to some form of evaluation. But undoubtedly the plenitude is significant. Because the Internet privileges information by making it so abundant and accessible, knowledge is increasingly coded *as* information and vice versa. The very proliferation of information flows and the speed of their dissemination challenges long accepted significations of what properly constitutes knowledge (Burbules 2000), and in the process questions whether a distinction can, and indeed should, be made between information and knowledge[15].

With this globally generated and distributed proliferation, the power to define what constitutes knowledge, as against mere ‘information’ or ‘data’, and to exercise a dominance over the production and dissemination of knowledge, is no longer the exclusive preserve of universities or their corollaries. What constitutes knowledge is now not bound and thus defined by disciplinary canons sourced in and policed by the university. Whilst disciplinary knowledge itself is found in abundance on the Internet, so too all kinds of other knowledge flourish in that virtual space. Any group with access to the Internet and with minimal computer literacy practices can develop their own knowledge and engage in its (virtual) publication. Someone, somewhere, is going to access it and find it useful. Thus for some, this may signify ‘trivial’ information but for others it will signify useful knowledge. And for others, it will just result in confusion due to the irresolvability of issues. This trend is

propelled by the very economy of the Internet, an economy where rather than more being less the opposite is the case. More is no more costly than less, with the value of the Internet increasing with every increase in its users and with every increase in its content. There is thus a built-in dynamic for exponential growth, for more and more connectivity.

We noted earlier the removal of a time constraint results in an immediacy of communication. This has enormous advantages for the dissemination of texts but at the same time there is a tendency to undermine the traditional authority of the writer. Poster puts it this way:

> Embodied in computer files, digital texts subsist in space only at the whim of the reader. The author of digital texts loses the assurance of their spatial continuity. Pages of digital text have the stability of liquid. They may be altered in their material arrangements of traces as they are read.
>
> (Poster 2001: 92)

There are two points to be made here. The first is that texts in cyberspace are both ephemeral and never closed. In education both these characteristics are difficult to accept given the traditional embodiment of knowledge in printed texts characterized by a seeming solidity, permanence, continuity and closure. With digitalized texts this is no longer the case. This leads on to the second point, which is to do with the author and with author-ity. As Bolter (1991) notes, cyberspace works against the fixity of texts. It functions to transfer authorship and thereby authority from the writer to the reader. This is a process of decentring where the fashioning of meaning falls onto readers who can manoeuvre in whatever sequence or way they choose. The source of author-ity changes since now it is what the online reader makes of online texts that has a much more significant role in meaning-making. One could say that the Internet is at present the best version of what Barthes referred to as 'writerly' text. As a consequence, the formation of canons and authorities is undermined by the electronic nature of texts. Texts become hypertexts, which are re-fashioned in the act of reading, where reading itself becomes subject to the logic of the screen, rendering the reader an author and disrupting the stability of experts or authorities.[16]

Here it is not just a matter of the Internet stimulating the breakdown of the boundedness of disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary definitions of what constitutes knowledge. It is also what it stimulates in terms of text, in particular the significance and impact of hypertext. Burbules (1997) puts it this way:

> The conventions of writing. . .assume a fundamentally linear and hierarchical organization of information with passage following passage in a sequence governed by (a) the relative importance, formalized in the discipline of the outline and (b) the narrative structure of argument formalized in the discipline of the syllogism. . .[17]

The outline and the syllogism have been the predominant form of written communication in the West since the scrolled parchment. They have defined the space of writing. Hypertext marks a radical difference – a difference in keeping with the rhizomaticity of the Internet – nomadic, multiple and decentred. Hyperlinks are not simply navigational conveniences but real avenues of learning, products as well as

tools. The form of writing appropriate to hypertext is, argues Burbules, the bricolage and the juxtaposition. These new forms of writing stimulate a different pragmatics of reading. This practice of reading which is also a practice of meaning-making contributes further to the increasing porosity of boundaries.

2. SPEED, IMMEDIACY AND CONNECTIVITY

We have already made reference to the importance of speed in the myths that help to give significance to notions of lifelong learning and the ways in which lifelong learning itself contributes to the speed of change. The significance of speed and its correlate, immediacy, is very apparent when discussing the space-time compression of ICTs. We have to ask – what does speed signify and what is the relationship of learning to speed? Do we now need to signify learning as *mobility*? What does this do to more contemplative notions of learning, based upon immersion in books and other printed texts? Is extended reading and writing to be consigned to the past or to the specialized discourses of the novel?

We noted in an earlier chapter that we are all now so familiar with the utterance 'the world is changing and continuing to change at an alarmingly rapid rate' that it has assumed the status of a truism. We are also aware of statements that the speed of technological change is transforming the social order and that in a technologically driven global culture no aspect of life is left unchanged. In a research study that one of us is involved in examining the literacy practices of students in further education in the UK, speed of communication is identified as being of key significance in the interactions they have with each other and others[18]. Thus, for some students, even e-mail is already a slow, old-fashioned technology. Again we might well categorize these changes as truisms and consequently neglect the fact that they are all highlighting the effects of speed. There is a double aspect to speed here. First, there is the ways in which aspects of change are coded as 'speeding up' or 'fast', including of course capitalism. Second, there are the effects of speed on meaning-making practices, as there would be less chance of coming to a settled understanding, as meaning-making itself becomes increasingly on the move. Insofar as the latter is the case, conjecture, approximation and a probabilistic account of meaning might be said to be all that is available to us. What then for the bodies of knowledge that are often positioned as that which must be learnt?

As we have seen, there are various discourses currently in the ascendant that are fast overtaking the globe, in the process creating a 'fast' globe. These discourses of globalization, informatization, risk, competition, efficiency, are reflected and enacted in a whole ensemble of specific practices. All are linked to doubled movements of the will-to-speed and governmentality. The links between these are not difficult to discern. The will-to-speed, or dromology (Virilio 1986) is realized in the destruction of space. Here the principle of the 'desire to get somewhere', of mobility in its many forms, reduces the space of the world to nothing, thereby precipitating the global epoch. People become subordinated to speed as a higher realm of ordering. As for governmentality, the proliferating discourses of risk, competition,

self-monitoring, efficiency, effectiveness and excellence clearly signify the ways in which technologies based on speed work to order the world into which people are thrown[19]. Each element feeds on the other. What Virilio refers to as 'dromocratic power' releases the 'will-to-speed' where the violence of speed precipitates the implosion of space. Virilio argues that the speed of technology is continually accelerating and as it does so it produces the paradoxical effect of slowing the movement of people to a standstill. It is this inertia that brings about the contraction of the sense of expansiveness of space and place. As the technologically textured spaces people inhabit increasingly enlarge, with the instantaneous access to those spaces increasingly enabled, so correspondingly their experience of and the signification of place disintegrates. In parallel, disciplinary society or the society of control, has actively sought to produce this violence in a variety of forms, for example, the factory, the prison, the school, as a governmental technology for the ordering of populations (in Virilio's terms, 'populations at speed'). Virilio, like Foucault, is clearly taking aim at the heart of the present. In doing so, again like Foucault, he foregroundes multiple sites of contestation and struggle. It could be said that if Foucault radicalized the politics of space, Virilio has radicalized the politics of time, in the process providing a very different, perhaps even dystopian signification of ICTs and electronic communication in which there is an implosion of meaning. In relation to meaning, we are lost in space through the will-to-speed.

What we would like to highlight however is that technologically induced speed makes possible the *immediacy* of the Internet, with the consequence that the world is itself re-signified as an electronic space, a space of infinite and fast flows. As we have noted, ICTs have made interconnectivity possible on a global scale, where being connected is a feature of what we will term *hyper-connectivity*. Here, hyper-connectivity signifies not only the infinite connections in a quantitative sense of the Internet but also to a situation where it is impossible to envisage the world and one's place in it as not being *always already* connected – or to put it another way as being fashioned through connections and through connecting. This is the thrown-ness referred to earlier. We are thrown into an already connected world and we cannot now imagine living in a world without that connectivity, and the latter is more and more apparent as a result. In just the same way as the notion of the hyper-real blurs the distinction in a society of signs between the real and the simulated, so our notion of hyper-connectivity blurs any distinction between the connected and the not-connected, or between the abstract and the virtual, the concrete and face-to-face. The structure of this *always already connected* space is that of the network, here signifying both the complex patterning of interactions and positionings that now takes place on a global scale, and to the Internet itself which makes this complex network possible and is itself an effect of that patterning. This condition of hyper-connectivity shapes the contemporary world, both physically and in terms of subjectivities. It may therefore be no accident that individualistic accounts of learning are being displaced by relational understandings, such as are found in actor-network theory, situated learning theory and activity theory, as forms of connectivity become ever more significant.

3. VIRTUALITY

The rapid spread of the Internet and its apparent enveloping of everyday life raises fears of the effects of online existence where as people become electronically connected they at the same time become disconnected from real life in the sense of structured relations of presence – raising fears of the dangerous erasure of the real.

> Hyperintelligent communication offers unprecedented opportunities for people to interact across space and time but paradoxically it also distances those it links. No longer are the individuals 'commanding presences' for each other; they have become disposable experiences.
>
> (Borgmann 1992: 102)

Thus the moral panics over children spending too much time playing games on the Internet rather than engaging with their more immediate peers. The virtual ambiguously displaces the street as the arena of play. It is both safer, as the street is signified as the space of risk from cars and paedophiles, and unsafer, as the virtual is also a space for grooming, entering adult sites, and developing a culture of the couch potato. Thus, also the strong feelings among many that forms of electronically mediated learning is not 'real' learning. The warmth of bodily presence is nostalgically wrapped around what are often the fearsome practices of classrooms.

On the other side of the argument, it could be said that virtual spaces have generated new public spheres and that new technological modes of experiencing and interaction are just as real and life-enhancing as face-to-face conversation. This would appear to be the case for those who work and play, who have affinities and shared interests, in cyberspace, and this is undoubtedly an increasing number. For many the Internet clearly does signify a form of community (Poster 2001). Burbules (2000) argues that the Internet signifies a *virtual* global community that it is accepted as a primary medium for the transmission of communication, information, culture, goods and services around the world. As such, it functions as a meta-community, an overarching congregation of communities and a set of conditions that make these communities possible, a space which confers on them a meaning *as* communities. The argument here then is that it is a mistake to dismiss the virtual as life negating and to only valorize face-to-face interaction as authentic and human.

Ultimately, the communication possibilities offered by the Internet which we have discussed earlier cannot help but change relationships and identities. People might no longer identify with a physical neighborhood for companionship or advice, but they could turn to a cyberspace neighborhood, based on mutual interests and association, as a source for support and information. This is already happening for many people in many online networks. It would be safe to say then that in the long term, the relationships the Internet fosters will certainly continue to raise more questions about the face-to-face as well as opening up new ways for people to associate.

Of course, the significance of the virtual as against the face-to-face does not involve purely technological considerations but also ones of deep rooted cultural

understandings. For some, the Internet, by undermining the face-to-face, signifies an erosion of sociality and a destabilizing of community (Poster 2001). But the valorization of direct face-to-face communication is after all itself a cultural artifact[20], a cultural understanding which although powerful is not hard wired but historically contingent. The face-to-face as the privileged mode of interaction, the dynamic and embodied interactivity of the face-to-face, is embedded in practices that signify within particular discourses and cultures. Burbules (2000: 329) makes the point that it is 'a cultural myth to imagine the more immediate interactions are always the most honest, open and intimate ones'. In this context, it is also worth recognizing that it is precisely the growth in significance of the virtual that has highlighted the value of the face-to-face. Furthermore, it connotes a democratization of subject constitution because discursive activities are not limited to one-way address and are not constrained by the age, gender and ethnic traces that are always inscribed in face-to-face communications.

As Poster (1995) points out the new kinds of interactivity that develop in cyberspace cannot be adequately specified by a binary of virtual/face-to-face. To think this way only serves 'to obscure the manner of the historical construction of forms of community' (Poster 1995: 89). He goes on to argue that what makes a community vital to its members is 'their treatment of communications as meaningful and important' (Poster 1995: 90), which is exactly what virtual communication can signify to its participants where the absence of the face-to-face is not regarded as a deficit.

However, it is clear that different semiotic practices are both possible and necessary in virtual interactions and that they do not simply replace, but supplement the face-to-face and vice versa. Thus, affinity groups may meet on the Internet, but also organize to meet in face-to-face situations. In addition, increased attention has been given to the engendering of social presence in online communication. This involves different and explicit practices to those entailed by just being there in face-to-face situations, often involving some meta-commentary on where and how one is feeling, as well as communicating on the matter to hand. While one can be *anybody* on the Internet, one can also be *somebody*. Indeed, the communication of presence online may actually lead to a greater personal engagement than one might have in face-to-face interactions, where presence is taken for granted. Certainly, for some, the anonymity of virtual communications enables a greater openness to communication than they might achieve in face-to-face situations. It can therefore be misleading to privilege one form of interaction over another, when interactions can and do take multiple and hybrid forms. Here being able to code switch between forms becomes vital to the capacity to interact. The proponents of the face-to-face also highlight the significance of its *immediacy*. Yet, as we discussed earlier, online connection also has this characteristic, albeit in a virtual way. It could be argued therefore that the immediacy of online connection is simply another form or modality of the face-to-face.

The narratives of cultural decay – from the book, to the television, to the computer, and from the face-to-face to the virtual – are powerful, but need to be

challenged. The implication that can be drawn from this is that the face-to-face needs to be re-signified, so that at the very least the taken for grantedness of the necessity of *physical* and *ocular* presence can be re-interpreted. Equally, contests over the meanings of communication are invariably entangled with contests over the meanings, the nature and scope, of community – 'the politics of communication converge with the politics of space and place' (Morley and Robins 1995: 26). We would argue that at the very least, community needs to be re-signified to take account of the fact that it is no longer definable simply in terms of geographical *proximity* or shared *physical* space. Thus, our own use of *network*.

All this has important implications for learning. We saw in Chapter Four how Lyotard assessed the impact of ICTs on the commodification of knowledge and the performativity of education. With the deployment of ICTs, learning assumes more the form of *learning networks*, fashioned and mediated by these technologies. These networks can no longer be seen simply in terms of immediate face-to-face forms of sociality. Different forms of sociality congruent with a network, for example the virtual communities of cyberspace, as we have noted earlier, are now beginning to flourish. The contemporary situation is characterized by diminishing public spaces for people to meet and freely interchange ideas. With network activity becoming a major form of communication, people are likely to associate more freely online because they are not slowed by geographical or temporal limits.

This then raises two interlinked issues. First, how will the social order deal with spaces that are formed only online and to what extent will dependence on networked communication create problems for offline relationships? Second, how will institutions, such as those of education, change to accommodate these new associations? Institutions often act as a force to help people achieve a group identity. However, if people can create their own group identity in the form of network-based communities, how will this change affect offline institutions? What will happen to those institutions whose power and influence are usurped by groups performing the same function online? It is therefore to the institutions of education that we now turn.

4. EDUCATION, LEARNING AND THE INTERNET

It could be argued that one of the reasons why the Internet and its associated technologies have inspired such unprecedented adoption is because they can more quickly and easily increase an educator's capacity to help students make connections, particularly connections to *content, context,* and *community* – all of which can result in more powerful learning experiences overall. In educational settings, we have witnessed the development in an exponential way of greater connectivity and networking as faster networks lead to newer services and from thence to new uses. Electronic networking has penetrated into all academic disciplines and formal bodies of knowledge, in the process expanding the space of learning environments. It could be argued therefore that virtualization is creating a global learning space – the 'global matrices of minds'[21].

However, many would question these developments. They argue that mutual relations of presence are necessary in producing and using worthwhile knowledge and such relations are not possible online[22]. This is an aspect of the wider questioning we have noted earlier concerning the possible replacement in meaningful communication of face-to-face interaction by electronic connectivity and trivia. The argument is that even if there really are networks in virtual spaces, these are so ephemeral and anonymous that they always limit the Internet's potential as an educational and maybe learning space.

Nonetheless the impact of the Internet and the WWW has provided fertile ground for re-re-signifying learning. Here, signifiers of space and boundaries have proved particularly potent. For example, as we noted in an earlier chapter, education signifies a modernist institution, connoting 'spaces of enclosure', such as the printed text, the classroom and the curriculum. The fixed and obligatory curriculum and the book as the paradigm form of text en-close meaning, where learning is seen as the extraction of a singular canonical meaning and teaching the exercise of authority in terms of correct interpretation and accuracy. In English-language texts, the logic of the page is top to bottom and left to right. Meaning is made through specific practices of linear reading, usually of extended text. Books and extended essays embody the modern spaces of enclosure. Knowledge is expressed through denotative meaning, out there waiting to be found.

Now the significations are changing such that these spaces of enclosure are called into question. The argument is that cyberspace creates a reader-controlled environment with knowledge no longer the consumption of fixed and definitive meanings. The logic of the screen enables an assembling of pages and sites in non-linear ways, and the interplay of image and text, giving reign to the serendipity of the library shelf but with scrolling replacing strolling. Knowledge is fashioned through increasingly diverse truth-telling practices rather than simply absorbed. Mirroring the rhizomatic features of cyberspace, meanings are less bounded and hierarchical, becoming more readily negotiable by users. Cunningham et al. (1997) argue that the hypertextual functionality of cyberspace provides learners with more scope to *construct* knowledge rather than just passively receive it. If people do not simply assimilate accepted meanings but actively collaborate in their creation, they are more likely to understand their own identity to be that of 'learner' and more likely to be in a position to determine their own learning and paths of learning. This of course might also include them becoming 'lost' in learning.

Another significant aspect is changes in ways of learning. It is plausible to talk of a 'Net generation', those who have spent thousands of hours logged on to the Internet in their formative years. They appear to share a number of characteristics:

- The hours spent online appear to have affected not so much what but *how* they think.
- They have a highly developed level of visual literacy and are able to weave together texts, images and audio.
- The Net generation is oriented to fast tasking and multi-tasking.

- They make no distinction made between physical and virtual reality and can move quickly between these worlds.
- As learners, the Net generation clearly perceive the open space of the WWW as their information universe.
- They have hypertext minds in the sense that they can leap around, piecing together information from multiple sources. They are not into careful investigation, placing more value on speed than on accuracy.
- The Net generation thrives on interactivity, e.g. online SMS and messaging. They tend to have poor listening skills but they do like to learn with others.
- They prefer Google rather than library IT systems as a way of researching.
- Yet the Net generation does not seem to want more e-learning. They rather like being on-campus. It is older learners who seem to value the convenience and flexibility of this mode of learning.

These developments pose significant questions for institutional education at all levels. All the modernist signifiers of centre, margin, hierarchy and linearity are turned on their heads, with a consequent questioning of modernist systems and frameworks of education. Thus, of course, the power of the discourse of lifelong learning. Now the signifiers are more those connoting multi-linearity, nodes, links and networks. Cyberspace becomes deployed to undermine rhetorically and thus performatively the apparent stability and coherence of all aspects of the educational project of modernity, even as audit, standards and standardization are increasingly invoked in an attempt to halt the cultural tide that the very processes of globalization supported elsewhere have unleashed. It becomes itself a semiotic myth challenging modernist spaces of enclosure, in the process providing the intellectual resources for justifying changes in what constitutes knowledge, the way it is produced (research), organized (curriculum), presented and disseminated (the book), delivered (pedagogy), justified (face-to-face participation) and the space of learning (the classroom). It becomes part of a wider questioning of the modernist subject and its signifiers of core, fixed identity. Cyberspace's new forms of textuality, intertextuality and hypertextuality are producing a re-signification of the subject, in the sense both of the person and the curriculum. Learning can thus be now signified more in terms of multiplicity, of multiple paths, non-linear forms, moving from the fixed institution-based space of education to the more open and unbounded terrain of learning. Thus, the emphasis on signs of learning both reflects and invests meaning in the multiplications of forms of interactivity that can be signed as such.

In the virtual classroom (that need not necessarily be at a distance), the focus moves from teacher as the central authority transmitting knowledge through the written text and responsible for validating input and encouraging consensus, to the learner pursuing a multiplicity of contextually defined goals in a variety of ways. And perhaps it is the dangers of this to governmentility and the social order that have resulted in the ever greater emphasis on specified outcome, accountability and audit, as the potential for learning to undermine education becomes ever more apparent. The emphasis is potentially on a pedagogy that is more self-directed (student-centred) and purpose-driven (problem-based), which therefore can encompass a

multiplicity of changing goals and purposes. With this comes the potential for a re-coding of the teacher-student relationship. On the Internet all can be experts, given the abundance and availability of information in the sites and networks of that space. Given this, it is argued that what is needed most are the skills of accessing, evaluating and using the knowledge found there. Furthermore, Lankshear et al. (1996: 172) argue that there are greater possibilities for the development of understanding, or meta-level awareness, through 'communicative practices [that] presuppose openness, self-monitoring and constant reflexivity on the part of participants'. However, it needs to be emphasized that these semiotic practices do not develop simply in and of themselves, and without them the appearance of expertise can be misleading and can result in manipulation.

The encounter of education with cyberspace is not simply performative in the sense of increasing transactive efficiency and the productivity of learning. Yet again, it involves a change in the cultural meanings of what constitutes learning, knowledge and identity. The information promiscuity of the Internet and its decentralized structure means that identities, and people's identities *as* learners, are shaped without policing by an external epistemological authority.

Earlier we referred to the discursive fashioning of virtual communities as spaces with a potential for greater participation. Cyberspace is signified as also enhancing possibilities for a greater degree of participation both in education and within educational structures. Many see it as an environment where the skills and attitudes necessary for participating in decision-making about learning can be more readily cultivated. For example, Lankshear et al. (1996) believe that in enabling access to continuously available online information and participation in a range of activities and experiences, cyberspace's virtual networks make democratization of learning a real possibility. Tabbi (1997) argues that whilst the Internet tends to be perceived mainly in terms of enabling learners to more readily access and exchange information, it can also function as a forum where differences amongst learners can be articulated and where a greater equality of participation and interaction can be established. Others however question this. They point out that whilst virtual communities may well have a democratizing potential, cyberspace, although participative, is not *inherently* democratic. They would argue that far from the Internet being an educational space where people can participate freely, it is fast becoming an electronic retail mall or a gigantic, virtual theme park. Commerce and entertainment it seems, signified in the notion of edutainment, are not compatible with learning. The argument is that any democratizing impulse in the sense of learners being able to choose what and how they learn could remain unrealized if they are not also stimulated to think critically about the impact on their learning of different technologies and the mediating processes that come with them. To put it another way, learners need to be inscribers lest they become inscribed.

With the Internet becoming an important form of communication and pedagogy for education, questions of access assume a greater significance. This issue is usually cast as one of ensuring that everyone has access to the Internet. From the standpoint of widening educational participation through electronic connectivity

this is important but it is not the whole story. The downside of hyper-connectivity is that for many who seek to use the Internet it is very often a bewildering maze[23]. Navigating this maze thus becomes critical and implies the need for some kind of Internet semiotics as well as the skills to make use of content when found. This entails more than is often suggested by concepts of ICT literacy, as it points to the complexity and multimodality of the meaning-making and meaning-taking practices in which all have to engage. Access therefore is more than just having the ability to use the hardware and software to access the Internet. It is also about learning and developing the necessary semiotic practices, and this in a context where print literacy is still not as widespread as would be desirable. Electronic communication is here to stay but only those who have the necessary skills, and those located within the necessary practices, can take full advantage of it for learning and as learners.

5. CONNECTED LIFELONG LEARNING

We have highlighted the impact of the Internet, in its transcending of time and space constraints, upon the 'what' and 'how' of communication. This impact is not just a matter of changes in styles of communication – although it does enable new expressive styles – but also because it creates new relationships among people and knowledge, has effects also with regard to power and control, and thus the relative balance between meaning-making and meaning-taking. As a consequence, there are important implications for pedagogy and learning.

We spoke of hyper-connectivity by which we were trying to signify the condition of thrown-ness, or what it means to be in a world characterized by the ubiquity of ICTs and computer-mediated communication, where the distinction between the real and the virtual is often hazy. We suggested that, although still a distinction with some potency, the distinction between the real and virtual in exploring the significance of ICTs, is nonetheless not very useful in framing the practices in which we are actants. Hyper-connectivity is an environment where the Internet and its associated services become accessible and immediate. What this means for learning is that in principle it can be just-in-time, just-when-needed, and always-there. On the face of it, the ideal conditions for the realization of the dream of lifelong learning for all. This is what we mean by *connected* lifelong learning.

However, behind this ideal, issues to do with access and meaning loom large. Both the cost of access for many and, as we noted, the practices needed to make full and productive use of the Internet's potential for learning. These issues generate problems not easily resolved, which continue to militate against the *actuality* of connected lifelong learning. And even if access issues could be resolved, connected lifelong learning would not sit too easily with institutionalized education. The problem lies in the very fact that education is *institutional* whilst connected lifelong learning makes possible, more than at any other time, learning outside of formal institutions of learning. Connected lifelong learning would encourage many more

people to signify themselves as learners, and moreover as learners who do not need to go to an institution of learning in order to learn. There is a foregrounding here of what individuals and networks of learners consider worth learning, not what an institution tells them they *ought* to learn.

Behind this in turn is a contestation over what is to count as learning and what constitutes 'worthwhile' knowing and knowledge. Is learning outside of educational institutions 'really' learning? Is learning through the Internet at best only the pursuit of hobbies and interests, at worst the accumulation of trivia? In finding signs of learning in the Internet we are part of a struggle to both inscribe meaning into these virtual spaces and also participating in the semiotic practices through which such inscription becomes both possible and desirable.

NOTES

[1] The Internet is the world wide digital communications network.

[2] The World Wide Web is an information space. The term is often mistakenly used as a synonym for the Internet but the Web is actually a service that operates *over* the Internet.

[3] New subscribers to e-mail number in the thousands daily. New pages are being added to the WWW at ten times that rate. Computing speeds are doubling every eighteen months. The size and price of computers is coming down and more trade is being done online.

[4] cf Castells' monumental work on the network society (Castells 1996)

[5] A term coined by William Gibson in his sci-fi cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* (1984)

[6] There is a particular kind of cyberspace that closely resembles physical reality even though it is not. Some computer programs, particularly computer games create such a virtual reality.

[7] These activities include surfing sites, checking email, instant-messaging, using bulletin boards and news groups

[8] There are now 30-40 million users of the Internet worldwide. There are about 650,000 websites and 9.5 million hosts. The rate of the web's growth has been and continues to be exponential. The increase in traffic on the Internet is 15% per month. The doubling period is under six months. See http://www.mit.edu:8001/people/mkgray/net/internet-growth-summary.html Accessed 08.09.05

[9] With 24-hour cable news, we expect to see a dramatic or important event as it happens. With global telecommunications, we expect to reach nearly anyone worldwide by telephone. Participants in global computer-mediated communication forums such as Usenet expect to communicate with other people interested in very specialized discussion topics.

[10] This is referred to as a "media gap," and the fact that the WWW can fill this gap is certainly an important factor in its popularity and growth.

[11] The Internet is also decentralized at a basic level of organization since, as a network of networks, new networks may be added provided they conform to standard communications protocols.

[12] This no doubt being the basis of the exclamation – "Everywhere I go on the Internet I keep running into me!"

[13] See http://www.pscw.uva.nl/SOCIOSITE/websoc/introE.html Accessed 03.09.05

[14] It has been estimated that the amount of information in the world doubles every 5.5 years.

[15] To argue that information is not knowledge is not so much to make a statement about the nature of knowledge but to position oneself within an oppositional discourse that resists the perceived encroachments of digitization, commodification and commercialisation.

[16] See "The Scholar's Rhizome: Networked Communication Issues" by Kathleen Burnett for more on this.

[17] See http://faculty.ed.uiuc.edu/burbules/ncb/papers/rhetorics.html 03.09.05

[18] See www.lancaster.ac.uk/lflfe Accessed 08.09.05

[19] 'Thrown' in a Heideggerian sense.

[20] an example of what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence rooted in the humanistic tradition of the West where presence and the present are privileged.

[21] See http://is.gseis.ucla.edu/impact/s94/students/timothy/timothy_final.html Accessed 07.09.05

[22] See Kellner, D 'Intellectuals and New Technology' http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/ed235a/dk/INT.htm Accessed 07.09.05

[23] For example, the indexable WWW contains 320m pages http://www.neci.nec.com/~lawrence/websize.html Accessed 07.09.05

CHAPTER NINE

LIFELONG LEARNING AS TECHNIQUE, AND...

We have suggested throughout this text that there are both corollaries and effects to the emergence of discourses of lifelong learning. We have also argued that lifelong learning can be read as a sign of differing techniques of governing, associated with changing exercises of power and governmentality. Here also lifelong learning has become embroiled in the language games of performativity, which Lyotard identified as part of the postmodern condition. In addition, we have suggested some of the ways in which lifelong learning becomes mobilized insofar as it is taken up within different actor-networks. This entails a mobilization of meaning in the naming of lifelong learning, which takes different forms in the process of its uptake. We are not arguing that this is all that there is to be said about lifelong learning. Indeed we are aware that we may be building our own myth of lifelong learning in the very excursions that we are generating.

Central to our argument that lifelong learning is a sign and can usefully be read semiotically is that it has become in part enfolded in the discourses of the postmodern condition. As we have noted earlier, this presents two seemingly contradictory significations, one an emphasis on the performative and technique, the other the radicalizing of difference. To date, we have focused on technique as a technology of the self, that stance that subjects adopt in relation to themselves, the enterprise of the self that they can make of themselves. However, we also wish to explore the ways in which the uptake of signs of learning in certain of the discourses of lifelong learning have also turned teaching into a technique to be applied to learners, and learning as a set of techniques to be acquired, even as these significations are themselves challenged by those radicalizing discourses to which we have already referred. To do this, we will turn to a reading of Deleuze and Guattari (1988) to provide us with the conceptual resources we need.

What we want to suggest in this chapter is that signs of lifelong learning have emerged alongside, and as part of, the increased emphasis on *learning* as a sign per se. Now learning is obviously an important concern of educational research, but how it is framed in relation to other aspects of educational discourse is itself of significance. From an educational perspective we might consider teaching an important sign too, and indeed it is, but our contention is that the increased interest in many places in learning theory is at the expense of curriculum or pedagogic theory, with the consequence that learning is made a sign of technique rather than a sign of culture, or perhaps more accurately a sign of a culture wherein technique has taken hold as that which is to be dominantly valued. Thus, the self-help manuals and makeover programmes on television to which we referred earlier when we spoke of techniques of self-fashioning – for example, twelve steps to becoming a better person.

This is particularly the case in those parts of the globe with greater Anglo-Saxon influences, where traditions of pedagogic research have been relatively weak by comparison with elsewhere, and where pedagogical discourses are often collapsed into techniques of learning and teaching. Thus for instance, in the UK, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) administers a Teaching and Learning Research Programme[1] where around £30 million has been put into research projects. The TLRP itself has an explicit if mild enlightenment aim 'to improve outcomes for learners of *all ages* in teaching and learning contexts across the UK' (emphasis ours). There has been much discussion within and around this Programme about the extent of its enlightenment aim in relation to an emphasis on the performative, or what works, that is, in finding effective techniques of teaching to enable learners to be more effective in *their* techniques of learning. Here, we are not arguing that the TLRP is either one thing or the other. It is simply a current site within which are played out the issues we want to address in this chapter. Once again then, our concerns are not merely theoretical.

What we are suggesting therefore is that signs of learning and signs of teaching are increasingly inscribed in terms of technical effectiveness, measured by performance indicators and located in the contemporary culture of accountability. And indeed, in this semiotic chain the effectiveness of teaching is in one sense measured by the effectiveness of learners and their learning, in particular through the attainment of credits and qualifications. At one level, therefore, lifelong learning, usually measured by the proxy variables of qualifications thus becomes a sign of the effectiveness of teaching. This contributes to the tyranny of transparency, as Strathern (2000) has suggested, and the associated forms of paperwork through which one has to formally and publicly demonstrate one's personal and organizational effectiveness. Consequently, even as signs of learning signify in relation to a range of practices across the social order, within an educational discourse those signs are limited in meaning to qualifications. They re-inscribe teaching – and effective teaching at that! – as a central focus.

Thus, even as we have emphasized the centrality of signs of learning in discourses of lifelong learning, in one sense at least, teaching re-enters these discourses as well. Thus, the research programme we mentioned above is not a 'Lifelong Learning Research Programme', but a Teaching and Learning Research Programme. In other words, learning is once again signed with teaching, as it invariably is, and it is this which points to the significance of the 'and' in teaching *and* learning. Even though discourses of lifelong learning do not explicitly code a teacher as a requirement for learning, the 'and' keeps popping up, and teaching re-enters the scene, signified as the means of ensuring that learning is effective, that learners acquire the *techniques* of learning. Here autodidactism is a set of techniques to be taught and learnt, inscribed in the discourses of self-directed learning and learning to learn, rather than a set of individual dispositions.

In this chapter, we both want to follow this line of argument and to disrupt it. Here it is important for us to make clear that we have nothing against technique as such. We do not support the blanket critique of instrumental rationality that is common in

some circles. Techniques are important, and they are not always purely instrumental. However, a discourse of techniques can be appropriated to narrow the terms of the debate about what are signs of learning, to precisely foreground the proxy variables of qualifications to which we have already referred. We will explore this narrowing in the next section of the chapter. After that we will outline some of the critiques that have emerged of this discourse of technique and the alternative connotations of teaching/learning sought. We then introduce the work of Deleuze and Guattari and their concept of the rhizome. Here there is an unfamiliarity to the discourse for many as that which we draw upon resides in a critique of representation. We draw upon this to re-enter difference into the meaning of lifelong learning. Following that, we will extend our own meaning of lifelong learning by radicalizing the 'and' found in the discourses of learning and teaching, thereby pointing to the diversity of practices that can be signed as lifelong learning. It is the 'and' which allows us to engage in both aspects of the analysis, and this once again indicates the importance that language plays in relation to our social practices, including those of lifelong learning.

1. TEACHING/LEARNING OR LEARNING AND TEACHING?

We begin our discussion with the discourses of learning and teaching that fashion a domain of 'effective techniques'. How have these two become conjoined in this domain in this way? What type of semiotic chain is being suggested in the deployment of the conjunction 'and'? With what purpose and with what effects? Why this particular conjunction rather than others? What is implied in the use of 'and'? And how does the 'and' glue together concepts such as teaching/learning? We have already given some indications of our answers to these questions, but let us now examine this more slowly and with greater care.

We follow Doel (1996: 422) in his enthusiasm for the 'and' when he says;

> 'and' enables everything to be put in general circulation. And yet, who amongst us has reflected seriously on this little super-glutinous superconductor, rather than on that which it supposedly bonds, binds and connects?

Who indeed? There is a tendency to focus on teaching/learning, even within discourses of lifelong learning, but to give little attention to the 'and' that attempts to glue them together. Let us briefly provide a couple of illustrations. The first is an examination of changing pedagogic practices and identities in a range of post-compulsory settings by a number of Australian-based academics (Chappell, et al. 2003). The second is a recent English publication of a series of lectures presented at the College de France in 1976 by Michel Foucault (2003). In different ways, both provide examples of pedagogical practices, which for us crystallize a focus on the 'and' as an essential component in signifying a chain of effective techniques.

In the text by Chappell, et al, they describe a parent attending a TAFE (Technical and Further Education) college in Australia and asking the Principal about the college's approach to teaching and learning. The Principal's bemused response was

apparently – 'we teach, they learn'. The authors treat this response as somehow representative of an outmoded way of thinking about pedagogic practices, perhaps reading into it that the Principal understands teaching as active and learning as passive, and that teachers are not, and cannot be, responsible for learning. In other words, there is no necessary conjunction, no necessary 'and'. Learning may happen or it may not. Teaching may be effective, but it may not. That is one possible reading. Our own reading is slightly different, as we would argue that the response refuses a chain of equivalence between effective teaching and effective learning. For us, the disappearance of the 'and' in the Principal's response poses the wider question of why it might be there in the first place, and how it came to be there at all in understandings of teaching/learning. In Vygotskian psychology, the Russian concept for educational practices precisely translates as 'teaching/learning', two sides of the same cultural coin, immanent in and co-emerging from the practices of each other, rather than teaching *and* learning (Daniels 2000) with its connotation of effective technique to which we have alluded. Here then we can question any common-sense linking of the two activities and ask what sense we make of the 'and' within the phrase itself. In other words, there is the question of what the 'and' connotes, effective technique or something more?

What was the second example? A condition of Foucault's Chair at the College de France was that he taught twenty six hours per year, reporting on his original research. Much of this teaching took the form of lectures and anyone could attend these lectures. They were given in rooms for 350 people that often held 500, due to the interest in Foucault's work. Second lecture theatres were available to listen to the lecture over a loud speaker system when the audience became too large. To try and cut down on the numbers attending, Foucault moved the lectures to early morning. Here, Foucault professed and no questions were allowed. The obvious question here then is what anyone might have learnt from such an experience. Reading the lectures in print is a challenging enough experience, so what did people learn from being present at the lectures? We would suggest that, in his professing, Foucault was unconcerned about whether, and what, his audience were learning in terms of learning as a technique. But this does not imply that Foucault was merely 'teaching' nor engaging in 'ineffective teaching', since what was also going on was the enactment of an aspect of French intellectual culture, and this perhaps was more significant.

This example once again points towards the problematic nature of the 'and' in learning and teaching *as* the conjoining of techniques. It also points to whether this is a descriptive and/or prescriptive pairing. In the description of learning and teaching, there is also implied the prescription that they are or *must be* conjoined, that the effectiveness of one is implied in the effectiveness of the other, that is, any failure in the signs of learning (qualifications) is ipso facto a failure in the signs of teaching. Furthermore, in relation to the latter, the sign of teaching is usually embodied in the teacher rather than in other aspects that make up the pedagogical moment. The teacher becomes signed as 'failing' and becoming subject to, and in need of, staff development – that most governmental of technologies. We can

imagine within this scenario, the TAFE Principal and Foucault sitting side by side in a staff development session on 'student-centred learning'!

What these two examples show is that there is teaching *and* there is learning. What there is not is 'learning-and-teaching' as if these were *necessarily* conjoined set of techniques. That they could be is a matter of contingency, unless it is already assumed that the effectiveness of one is implied in the effectiveness of the other, or in other words that both are nothing other than techniques. The TAFE Principal is neither antediluvian in his understanding of teaching, nor is he implicitly criticizing his college's teaching. He is pointing rather to the culture and social relations of TAFE colleges where learning and teaching are signed differently and not conjoined by the sign of effectiveness. Equally, whilst many would criticize Foucault for the clear lack of learner-centredness in his teaching, such criticism is inappropriate, as we suggest that there is something else to do with French intellectual culture, and thus something other or more than learning, going on in Foucault's lectures. There is a 'going beyond' rather than simply an entry into existing ways of knowing and bodies of knowledge.

The 'and' in discourses that denote learning and teaching as technique is precisely the making of a conjunction so that the play of lifelong learning is limited to a performativity, which in this case consists of the effective gaining of qualifications. Qualifications are the signs of learning that count, not least in national and international league tables, through which governments are able to fashion the next 'crisis' in education that needs addressing. This is not simply the work of the 'and' but it does play a role. The use of 'and' in the political domain has also been explored in critical applied linguistics. In Fairclough's (2000) analysis of the language of the New Labour government in the UK, he argues that 'and' is used in the Third Way discourse of the government as a means of bringing together elements previously understood as opposites, as contradictory or at least in tension with each other. The government in this way signifies and presents itself as able to realize a range of apparently irreconcilable goals, for example, economic competitiveness *and* social inclusion. These are treated as necessarily conjoined. Such Third Way discourse is not restricted to the UK. Indeed we might surmise that naming the discourse as 'Third Way' is itself a way of positioning the use of 'and' as 'new' with all the signifying power that goes with this, when political discourse is suffused with 'ands'. Fairclough is critical of this discourse for the ideological work it does in mystifying choices that governments have to, and actually do, make. In other words, economic competitiveness is not necessarily going to bring about social inclusion. Indeed the historical record shows that the former is usually attained at the expense of the latter. The implication is that such uses of 'and' are illegitimate and ideologically misleading.

For us, this reading of the political is in some ways relevant to our discussion of learning and teaching, as it reinforces our argument that there is semiotic work being done by the 'and', even if it differs from that in Fairclough's elaboration of Third Way discourse. The critical similarity lies in the discourses of lifelong learning themselves, wherein it might be agued that, as with the Third Way,

they can be deployed to elide the choices that have to be made between say, effectiveness (performativity) and inclusion (equity). However, that these discourses themselves attempt to challenge the either/or logic framing Fairclough's critique is itself significant, as it points to the ways in which governing is becoming not about either/or but precisely about the performativity of effective technique. This shift is semiotically coded in the very discourses that emerge through which to make sense of the situation. Thus the Third Way. Thus lifelong learning.

There is no necessary one-to-one relationship between learning and teaching therefore and they can be considered separate, as well as related, activities. Apart from anything else, as Strathern (1997) has pointed out, there can be a lapse of time in learning for re-contextualization, absorption and reformulation. Thus the effectiveness of teaching may lose its hold. Similarly, Eraut (2004) has argued that there are different temporal dimensions with different forms of learning. The 'and' therefore has a temporal signification. The Principal in the example above was expressing perhaps an over-generalized view of this, but the import of his remark was that the 'and' in learning and teaching is not inherently and exclusively descriptive, nor necessarily immediate. In understanding this, we can see that it does not simply name what is but rather it carries that certain semiotic imperative, that teaching *should* entail learning, that teaching must always lead to learning, even if the reverse is not posited as similarly necessary. Insofar as they are conjoined therefore, we seem to be caught within a coding of teaching and learning as effective technique.

The increased hegemony of learning and teaching discourses and their reverse (teaching and learning) in educational practices is indisputable. They are themselves linked to the emergence of discourses of lifelong learning, and serve to focus the educational gaze on particular objects – learning, teaching – rather than others – curriculum, pedagogy, resources. They bring to the fore the techniques of each that are signified as in need of effective development i.e. learning to learn, continuing professional development, that are themselves practices of lifelong learning within a particular understanding of the latter. The 'and' conjoins them in particular ways, inscribing lifelong learning with the meaning of effective learning and teaching as performatively measured by a range of standardized indicators.

2. CRITIQUES OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

This hegemony has not been without resistance. We are not the first to criticize the discourses of learning and teaching. However, not all have gone as far as us in attempting to relate these discourses to those of lifelong learning.

Many critiques of the discourses of learning and teaching are precisely that they code these activities as a set of techniques and skills to be learnt by individuals, which, once having been learnt, can then be utilized across multiple contexts. Questions of context, embodiment and power are thus removed from discussions of curriculum and pedagogy and indeed displace the very discussion of curriculum and pedagogy. Both learning and teaching are fashioned as disembodied and

disembedded – as mind-based intellectual activities, free of the intruding influences of bodies and desires. For example, Nicoll and Harrison (2003) argue that in such discourses, teaching, in their case in higher education, tends to be positioned as a universalized and decontextualized set of process skills that can be adapted and applied as appropriate. Here there is the assumption that teaching can be defined by a set of generally accepted rules for pedagogic practice. Teaching is signified as a technique that can be articulated across subject domains and institutional contexts. It is mobilized as a professional order through the specification of universal standards that can be applied regardless of context.

As have noted earlier and in other chapters, learning also tends to be signified in this decontextualized, abstract and technicist way. It is fashioned as an individualized essentially cognitive activity that can, and has to, be regulated and controlled by the teacher through an application of pragmatically relevant techniques drawn from research and experience. What we can say is that techniques of learning have to be developed along with techniques of teaching. The irony is perhaps that this situation has developed even as more situated and contextually sensitive understandings of learning have become popular in many parts of the academic domain. However, it could be argued that learning through 'communities of practice' and 'legitimate peripheral participation' are increasingly being signified in a technicized way rather than being utilized as explanatory framings of learning.

For Zukas and Malcolm (2000: 7), this conjunction of learning and teaching as techniques produces a separation of disciplinary and pedagogic knowledge that –

> enables pedagogy to be analyzed simply in terms of 'teaching and learning' rather than as an aspect of knowledge production, and in effect creates a superfluous community of (decontextualized) pedagogues.

They are providing a critique from within a discourse of pedagogy as knowledge production. They argue that Pedagogic practice becomes a technical and atheoretical activity, focusing on methods and lacking a reflexive understanding of what is involved in the generation of disciplinary or subject knowledge. Pedagogy becomes simply a question of didactics rather than considered as a wider socio-cultural and therefore semiotic practice, with the implication that this is really what it should be about. Here Zukas and Malcolm are making their own linking of course, conjoining disciplinary and pedagogic knowledge. We view these not simply as knowledge but as *practices*, where their separation into distinct domains in order to create a link by means of the 'and' is itself significant. So, in addition to the linking work that 'and' does, it also *separates*, in order that the conjunction can be made. To conjoin must imply two separate objects that can be related. The discourses of learning and teaching precisely require the separation of learning from teaching in order that they can be joined. And here is a push-pull-effect, which may be better represented through a concept of learning-teaching rather than learning and teaching, with the hyphen signifying a constant struggle for meaning rather than settled effective technique.

Interestingly, another critique of learning and teaching adopts precisely this notion of the work of 'and'. Like Zukas and Malcolm, McWilliam (1996) is highly critical of the separation of the learner from the teacher, of learning from teaching, and the emphasis on the individual learner in contemporary educational discourse. 'Within the framework of education as an academic discipline, current literature usually interrogates educational practices through the binary formulation of 'learning and/*as distinct from* teaching' (McWilliam 1996: 2). For McWilliam therefore who views pedagogical practices as involving encounters, she is critical of the 'and' that not only links the two practices explicitly but also provides a space between them. For McWilliam, this separation has been constituted by, and reinforced through, the primacy of certain psychological theories of the individual and a philosophy of liberal humanism. She argues that in the process, teaching has been partially erased as a focus of research and developmental practice (McWilliam 1996). In other words, 'and' is unbalanced insofar as the link mystifies the primacy of learning and the learner in discourses of learning and teaching. As Malcolm and Zukas (2003) put it:

> 'Learning' thus becomes a highly effective perlocutionary device for implying that any discussion of the purposes and social relations of educational practice (rather than its facilitative techniques) is so much teacherly self-indulgence, akin to spending too much time in front of the mirror..

Both McWilliam, and Malcolm and Zukas share some of our concerns, but their critique results in a re-inscription of teaching, whereas ours suggests that teaching is inscribed in these discourses of learning as technique; it is there precisely as technique itself. Their assertion of re-inscribed discourses of teaching takes us so far, but insofar as learning and teaching are conjoined at the level they are, we are not convinced that such approaches are able to radicalize the discourses of lifelong learning sufficiently. The discourses of lifelong learning may erase the teacher and teaching from its core significations, or at least limit their significance for the practices of learning but in our view, this is not what is going on with the debates about lifelong learning in discourses of learning and teaching. The conjunction cannot simply be reinforced since it is semiotically coded by the notion of effective technique. There may be other connotations, but how to give them significance we shall come to in a moment.

Although positing a different argument to Zukas and Malcolm, McWilliam reaches some similar conclusions. With the multiplication of forms of resource-based learning, teaching is increasingly divided into techniques of 'design' and 'delivery', in the process further depleting any emphasis on teaching and the teacher. The learner, and lifelong learning, becomes a core of much discourse. McWilliam (1996) argues that these separations and elisions tend to reinforce contemporary views of pedagogy simply as knowledge dissemination and consumption, deflecting attention away from pedagogy as a relational practice of cultural exchange and exercise of power. This appears to have occurred within the UK where signifiers of teaching as 'delivery' suffuse educational discourse. This suggests a need

for refocusing on pedagogy as a relational socio-cultural practice, which does not separate the learner from the teacher or from knowledge production. Malcolm and Zukas also argue for a 'revitalized understanding and reclaiming of pedagogy', to counter the signifying of pedagogy simply as techniques for teaching – a signification that is 'linked with the dominance of psychologistic explanations of learning, and encourages a technicist view of the processes of "effective" teaching' (Malcolm and Zukas 2003). The argument for a refocusing on pedagogy is also to be found in Lingard, et al. (2003: 401) who argue that 'pedagogy should be recentred' and that there is a need for a sociology of pedagogy, a call also made by Daniels (2000). A 'recentred pedagogy' is presumably what Lingard, et al. are trying to achieve in their work on 'productive pedagogies' in Queensland schools, where the starting point of the critique (in their case, following Bernstein, 2001) is that pedagogy in contemporary policy discourses has become 'thinned out' as 'mere technology'. While such arguments are powerful, there is however a need to caution against generalization, for, as Hamilton (1999) suggests, in other than Anglo-Saxon contexts, didactics is as much about codes as it is about techniques.

It is one of the paradoxes with which educators work that expanded understandings of learning – the range of practices now named as 'learning' seems ever expanding – might actually produce a reductionism, where *all* social practices are taken to be forms of learning. We are left with the question of how to make the link between learning and teaching if not with an 'and', which, in turn, raises questions about whether the very concepts of teacher and learner, and teaching and learning are themselves appropriate starting points. Would other footings provide a firmer and more fruitful basis for understanding educational practice? Following the above critiques, we would appear to need to engage in a different discursive trajectory by reframing our starting points, putting pedagogy back into the picture of lifelong learning, and conceiving the latter as more, or other, than effective technique. To do this, we turn to the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

3. WHAT A DIFFERENCE 'AND' CAN MAKE...

The critiques of discourses of learning and teaching we have presented are undoubtedly useful and insightful. However, they do remain framed within a foundational view of knowledge and language. They tend to provide forms of ideology critique that attempt to strip away the apparent mystifications at play in contemporary discourses and by so doing expose 'what is really going on' – or to put it another way, to get to the 'root' of the issue. So, what is really going on in discourses of teaching and learning is an elision of pedagogy, and it is the latter which is what we should be talking and writing about. This is a form of discursive struggle which is familiar and ubiquitous in education and it is a language game that suffuses the social sciences. It is the attempt to anchor language with certain specific and final meanings rather than others, even as the very existence of this discursive struggle points to the insecurity of such a conception and the intertextual traces in all discourses. Rather than provide a critique of the critiques, the discourses

of learning and teaching as a foundation for reframing the debate around concepts such as pedagogy, in this section we want rather to move in a different direction, one that involves not so much a problematization and critique of the 'and', but rather its radicalization. To do this, we draw very selectively on Deleuze and Guattari within whose work the conjunction 'and' plays a significant role.

Unlike Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard, the work of Deleuze and Guattari has had until recently relatively little influence on educational research. Their best known work *A Thousand Plateaux* (1988) is not an easy read because it is itself written as a complex rhizome. Yet, like those other post-structuralist writers, their work attempts to refashion our understanding of, and therefore our practices in relation to the dominant history of Western modernity. In other words, their writing is not simply a writing *about* a subject, but also a *performance of* the different forms of writing that makes their critique possible –

> There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made . . . contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world . . .
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, 13)

Central to their work is an effort to undermine foundational and fixed views of language and meaning associated with pervasive arboreal metaphors such as the 'tree of knowledge' or 'twigging something'. This foundationalism signifies knowledge as something that can grow and be secure and located, wherein language can truly represent that which is. The arboreal metaphor signifies a logical hierarchy of root, trunk, branch, twig and bud. All is ordered, all is in its place, all is rooted. Their concept of the rhizome on the contrary signifies opposition to the tree of hierarchical structures, stratification, and linear thinking, even though it can also infiltrate a tree creating 'strange new uses' for it (Deleuze and Guattari 1988 15). In what follows we shall examine this metaphor of the rhizome in more detail and also other concepts associated with it, such as de-/re-territorialization, lines of flight and strata.

Deleuze and Guattari describe themselves as developing a 'philosophy of immanence' in order to distinguish their work from the dominant logocentric tradition of Western philosophy. They argue that knowledge is always 'in' rather than 'of' the world. As Deleuze said in his interview with Foucault (1997: 206-7), 'representation no longer exists; there's only action – theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks'. The key question is not *what does it mean* but always *how does it work*? Thus the dualist conjoining of world and word through representation is taken apart to be displaced by actions that result in the circulation of meaning. In contrast to the arboreal metaphor therefore, Deleuze and Guattari (1988) introduce the rhizome, and by so doing displacing roots with *routes*, introducing unexpected eruptions rather than steady growth into language and meaning, and where desire plays a role in reason, and logic is not privileged over interpretation:

> We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 17)

Deleuze and Guatarri argue that people are connected in rhizomatic networks that are a constant state of movement, setting up fluid spaces that continuously avoid being bound or enclosed. Like some of the other positions we have drawn upon in this text, here flux, movement and flow are introduced into the framing of language and meaning; things are metaphorically and literally 'up-rooted'. Movements and flow are multi-directional, enabling a multiplicity of entwinements –

> Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even non-sign states.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 21)

Rather than focusing exclusively on the content of a discourse, there is instead a more productive focus on both linguistic and *extra*-linguistic elements. In other words, semiosis is not structured by some underlying rules of language but through the production of flows performed by both signs and desire, themselves semiotically promiscuous. Through these flows, different and multiple meanings emerge. What is significant here is the way in which connectedness is represented. In challenging the arboreal metaphor, Deleuze and Guattari are challenging the centrality of 'to be' as the fashioning through which the world is represented and the associated view that everything has to be structured in terms of either-or. As Doel suggests (1996: 434),

> whereas an arboreal system works through branching and hierarchical organization (a genealogy), a rhizome comprises an entanglement of contingent (dis)connections (an anti-genealogy). A tree or root fixes a central point, and thus an order, from which there emerges a pre-programmed, irreversible, and essentially hierarchical series of bifurcations. By contrast, everything on a rhizome is connectable and disconnectable, everything is reversible and displaceable, and everything can be broken-off or set in play; it is a multiplicity and a becoming, with a consistency all of its own – its does not lead, or refer back, to a being subject, object, unity, or totality.

And it is at this point that we move in an alternative direction, making different connections to those critiques of teaching and learning that we outlined above. Central to the struggles of the latter are the attempt to uncover 'what is really going on' in discourses of teaching and learning. In other words, the signification is that the current 'what is the case' needs to be 'rooted out' in order to discover a more 'truthful' conception of what is the case. We can now say, following Deleuze and Guattari, that these critiques are immovably located within an arboreal system, or 'strata' to use their term. They are attempting to provide a firmer conjoining of word and world. Our own attempt at critique by contrast is hopefully more rhizomatic. Rather than discourses of lifelong learning embedding those of learning

and teaching, we want to suggest that lifelong learning might be alternatively considered as rhizomatic, as lines of flight, linking and conjoining in all sorts of unexpected ways, and that cannot be totally regulated by the totalizing and technicist significations to which we have referred above and throughout this text. Here, once again, lifelong learning connotes difference.

As with Baudrillard, no attempt to explicate Deleuze and Guittari's work, let alone deploy their concepts, can succeed without highlighting their understanding of contemporary capitalism. It is a nuanced and subtle understanding. They argue that capitalism has two faces. At one level, it is the abstract machine, the rationalizing and rationalistic network of modernity. This 'machine' is manifested as *strata* or levels of organization. Strata influence -

> . . . significance (what and how we speak), subjectivity (who we are), the organism (the constitution of bodies), and faciality (expression) . . . the power of the capitalist machine works through organizing our politico-ethical space in a manner that articulates what we say and who we are.
>
> (Fleming 2002 201-2)

The other face is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the 'plane of consistency', a latent surface of non-organization that recognizes no difference or hierarchy. It is named as 'consistency' because upon this everything is made the same.

Deleuze and Guattari articulate capitalism as being solely concerned with individuals and their profits. It combines anything with anything into assemblages whose only function is to maximize profits. As a consequence it must in the pursuit of individualistic profit, subvert all territorial groupings such as the church, the family, the group, indeed any social arrangement. It renders everything the same or, to put it another way, into the nothing of the plane of consistency. It is in this sense that capitalism de-territorializes. But at the same time, capitalism's paradox is that it needs social groupings, some of which will then become re-stratified, in order to function effectively and therefore it must enable re-territorializations, or new social groupings such as new forms of the state, the family, or the group. That strata are always with us is what is. Furthermore, these de- and re-territorializations are not sequential movements but happen simultaneously. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari characterize the life of any capitalist culture as always in the process of both collapsing and being restructured, of de-territorializing and re-territorializing.

What then marks the significance of the rhizome?

> The tree imposes the verb 'to be', but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and . . . and . . . and'. This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be'.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 25)

It is important to bear in mind the play of words here, so beloved of certain strands of social theory and so detested by others. In French 'is' (*est*) and 'and' (*et*) are homophones, spelt differently but pronounced in the same way. There is thus a playfulness present in the argument, which is nonetheless serious in its intent. The conjunctive 'and' here becomes integral to rhizomatic approaches that

metaphorically shake the tree of knowledge, disrupting arboreal meaning. In this disruption, meaning is mobilized rather than grounded:

> It is odd how the tree has dominated Western reality and all of Western thought . . . : the root-foundation, *Grund*, *racine*, *fondement* . . . Thought is however, not arborescent, ... unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point . . . In contrast to centred (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths, the rhizome is an acentred, non-hierarchical, non-signifying system without a General . . . It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion . . . A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, inter-being, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1988 21)

Here, an essentialist ontology of being and a logic of either-or is displaced with one of becoming, of flux, movement, flow – and the 'and' of connections and alliances. It is the particular formulation of their argument and the compelling metaphors they articulate that marks the distinctiveness of the work of Deleuze and Guattari. Their aim is to 'establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 25). Perhaps their most radical concept here is what they refer to as 'lines of flight'. These can be understood as a metaphor for everyday resistance (Fleming 2000), but there is perhaps more to it than that. For Deleuze and Guattari, they are the means of escape from the repressive orders or strata that are everywhere and through which individuals affirm their desire. It is the rhizomatic that engenders lines of flight, re-opening flows that tree-like structures have shut down. The rhizome with its capacity for endless connectivity has the potential to generate virtually boundless lines of flight. In this sense therefore, a line of flight is a *bridge* to a new formation. Whereas the tree builds no bridges, the rhizome is constituted by an endless series of inter-connecting bridges[2]. There is thus a beginninglessness, an endlessness and multiplicity in rhizomatic meaning, which one can code precisely in certain discourses of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning itself signifies as beginningless and endless across the span of one's life, and this beginninglessness and endlessness contributes to, and arises from, the logic of the rhizome.

A line of flight then is a de-territorialization. In a sense it is a liberating move but not as understood within a grand narrative of modernity. For Deleuze and Guattari, any notion of a subject with agency is highly problematic, if not impossible, and especially problematic when subjects are locked within grand narratives and the abstract machine of capitalism. So whilst a line of flight is 'liberating', it is liberating without the benefit of such discursive formations because these are yet another instance of the normalizations of a repressive or homogenizing order, and as we have noted, a line of flight is precisely a move away from such totalities. Yet as we have noted any territoriality or strata has *immanently* within it a movement toward de-territorialization. All territorialities are shot through with lines of flight and this is why Deleuze and Guattari claim that, like strata, lines of flight are everywhere and again these are ways through which individuals affirm their desire.

Deleuze and Guattari sound like revolutionaries but they are not ones in the old Left sense. For them, it is not a matter of breaking in from the 'outside' and taking over the 'inside', as in classic strategies to take over the state. Such strategies simply create another repressive totality. They speak of nomadism, lines of flight, deterritorialization and their politics is a micro-politics. What they want is creative hybridization. Their intensive signification of the rhizomatic foregrounds the possibility of a 'thousand lines of flight', a multiplicity of exits resisting the totalities of monolithic/homogenized social orders or strata. This points to some of the political forms adopted in recent decades that do not focus on generalized strategies to take over the state, but work at many levels on particular issues. We might then suggest that rather than seeking out and critiquing the meaning of lifelong learning, we are fashioning our own lines of flight, in the process engaging in practices of de- and reterritorialization. This is an action in telling us something about that action.

At this point, we need to explore Deleuze and Guatarri's account of the subject. If lifelong learning as technique signifies a disembodied and disembedded set of practices, this is not the case with Deleuze and Guatarri. They present an account of a subject that is body-oriented, but not in a way we might expect, for they refer to a 'body without organs' or BwO. There is no mind-body dualism in Deleuze and Guattari. Ther body is material through and through, and affective. The material/affective body or BwO is the subject as a body that is a desiring machine, one kind of assemblage among many[3], but where desire is a force or energy, an energy fuelled by the endless resources of language and cultural codes. Desire is always potentially creative energy –'desiring-production'. Parts of the body are linked to other objects, signs, energy flows in endless patterns of productive activity. The connections which can be made, the channels which can be formed are, in theory, infinite. This is why subjects are potentially capable of infinite creativity and change. We see here resonances with some of the ideas we explored from actor-network theory in Chapter Seven.

Deleuze and Guattari speak of a human body that is not governed by reason but one which is capable of affect, of having feelings, passions, sensations – all located in the body and all of which are pure flows of desiring energy. The energy states of the material body are linked through connective flows between the body and to other bodies and objects. A major element of these connected flows are signs (Jowers and Watson 1995). Signs are material objects with exactly the same status as all other elements in these material/energy assemblages. To put it another way, signs too have energy, they are connecters, 'grooving' the body into affective states that arise within linguistically grooved material assemblages. Desiring production never reaches an end. Individuals are always moving between on the one hand, a desire which is creative but anti-social in the sense of nomadic and rhizomatic and on the other, a desire which is social and habituated.

For Deleuze and Guatarri, the subject, like capitalism, has two faces. On the one hand, the subject has a nomadic potential. This does not signify a fixed identity but rather an endless migration across the networks of assemblages and other desiring

machines. In this sense, subjectivity is distributed. But the subject can also be frozen by immersion in the strata of the abstract machine. The repetitive, habituated, and compulsive channelling of bodily energies lock the body into a stasis where the body becomes the host of an affective parasitism, or to put it another way, its affect is no longer its own. In particular, contemporary capitalism produces a sense of lack at the heart of the subject. For Deleuze and Guattari the subject therefore, and indeed the social order, is fashioned by the limiting of connectivity and nomadism, the closing down of the infinitely possible avenues of desiring-production through the re-territorialization and re-forming of strata. Nomadism is de-territorialization, the taking off on creative lines of flight. As nomads, subjects randomly connect signs, energy flows, data, knowledge, fantasy, objects, and other bodies in new flows of desiring production. Lack, on the other hand, is something that is artificially created. This fusion of desire and lack at the heart of the subject is then the product of the capitalist socio-economic order, the modern state and the Oedipal family. But even the most solid strata do, as we have noted earlier, carry lines of flight within themselves. The rhizome deterritorializes strata, subverts hierarchies and restores desiring-production. It follows the flight of heterogeneity, there is a multiplicity of learning, other ways of knowing, as connections are made and unmade.

The argument then drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual resources is that lifelong learning can be considered both as strata and as rhizomatic. As the former, it is a vital component in contemporary governmentality. As rhizomatic, as lines of flight, it links and conjoins in all sorts of unexpected ways, and therefore cannot be totally fixed and regulated by the totalising significations of strata where it assumes one dominant and definitive meaning. As strata, lifelong learning is located in an economy of the same. But lifelong learning is also located in an economy of difference, connoting itself as different to the dominant discourses of lifelong learning as strata. Lifelong learning as sign therefore is opened up to difference.

4. STAMMERING AND....

What there is then, is not merely a conjoining of teaching and learning, word and world, but a signifying of the multifarious connections, the lines of flight that are possible, which in relation to discourses of lifelong learning, points to the play of difference that contrasts with, and contests, the abstract machine of the governmental. Paradoxically, what emerges now is a more tentative form of discourse. Rather than simply being able to say what is the case, the assertion of an authoritative stance on the nature of the world and the meaning of things, Deleuze and Guattari (1988) argue that the 'and ... and ... and' of rhizomatic lines of flight result in a certain tentativeness, a stammering:

> It's easy to stammer, but making language itself stammer is a different affair, it involves placing all linguistic, and even nonlinguistic, elements in variation, both variables of expression and variables of content. A new form of redundancy. AND ... AND ... AND ...
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 98)

Making language stammer may seem perverse in an era where plain speech, communication skills and being articulate are valued, and their lack correspondingly decried – perhaps another assemblage, another sign of effective technique as that which attempts to constrain and finalize meaning. But even in articulate speech language can stammer in the multiple conjoinings and connections that are possible though the desiring production signified by 'and'. As there are always additions, infinite connections, it is language, not necessarily the speaker of language that stammers. Herein can be found the lines of flight, the creative possibilities for meaning-making, not least because more is being said than might be immediately apparent, and where any one person is only one point of connection in a network. 'And' is the mark of the never ending quest of desiring production.

This suggests a different understanding of conjunction. 'AND is less a conjunction than the atypical expression of all the possible conjunctions it places in continuous variation' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 99). Thus, while many want to root the meaning of lifelong learning, and teaching and learning, on this understanding of the 'and', it is nonetheless ceaselessly de-territorializd, given that rhizomatic variation is always in play:

> 'And' is not simply a connective, joint, hinge between two things, it also implies progression (better and better), causation (and then), great duration (on and on), great numbers (more and more), addition (this and that equals those), differentiation (there are writers and there are writers), variety (X and Y), and succession (walking two and two).
> (Doel 1996: 422)

Thus 'and' does all sorts of supplementing work and as Derrida reminds us a supplement both completes and *adds to*. Lifelong learning cannot therefore be signified simply within a strata as effective technique. 'And' mediates, mobilizes, completes and radicalizes. It involves power in de-territorializing and re-territorializing. It can be the glue between assemblages but one could easily end up with sticky fingers by taking it for granted, stratifying it and thus not seeing the multiple forms to which it points. And the possibility that it should not be replaced by an alternative discourse, but should be radicalized by further additions, more connections, for instance, teaching and learning and pedagogy and curriculum and didactics and learners and resources and *bildung* and . . . and . . . and . . . In this situation, we would be brave to try and answer the question of what 'is' lifelong learning. Indeed the point becomes less one of examining what is the case and more of finding what sticks, or in other words, we are back to contingency.

As Doel (1996: 424, 427) indicates, 'the conjunctive "and" unfolds a space that holds onto, whist hollowing out, that which it relates . . . It deconstructs the borders, boundaries, and limits which are projected between things'. Conjunctures, connections and events rather than layers, strata and levels come to the fore, where there is always more and more and more. The radicalizing of the 'and' on this reading already mobilizes the fashioning of a range of possibilities that emerge rhizomatically rather than adding cumulatively to the tree of knowledge of lifelong learning and lifelong learning as the tree of knowledge. Where we disagree with assemblages, we have to try to unstick them by sticking together alternatives, which

may or may not be more felicitous. This is semiotic work, for as is shown by many oppositional discourses, their effects are limited often because their conjoinings are too limited.

Of course, merely by articulating these arguments we are already falling back into the either-or logic that we are meant to be displacing by drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari, by privileging the rhizome over the arboreal. With every de-territorialization, there is a re-territorialization. However this is a tension in the work which we acknowledge and upon which we draw. At a certain early point in their discussion Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 20) argue that –

> the important point is that the root-tree and canal-rhizome are not two opposed models: the first operates as a transcendent model and tracing, even as it engenders its own escapes; the second operates as an immanent process that overturns the model and outlines a map, even if it constitutes its own hierarchies . . .

The arboreal and the rhizome do different work, which suggests that rhizomatically we could argue for trees and rhizomes, roots and routes, foundationalism and anti-foundationalism. Would these conjoinings hold firm or do they share the fate of Third Way thinking that Fairclough condemned? What is clear is that Deleuze and Guattari do privilege the rhizome over the tree, even though they recognize that both are present in the social order. However, whilst they are often in danger of falling into the binary logic of the abstract machine by privileging one pole of the binary over the other, they do so despite themselves and without the ‘ghost in the machine’ that has haunted Western philosophy. They are not concerned about the contradiction implied in the co-existence of trees and rhizomes because for them the central problem is the danger, continually signified in their work, of the phenomenon of *totalizing theory*, a theory or philosophy that becomes monolithic and whose effects can be ubiquitous and destructive (Taylor 1998). A totalizing theory is a stratum in the sense that it functions like one. By articulating form, it territorializes, and controls. Everything is seen through its own lens that then, in turn, fashions the world according to that lens. Here we see similarities with Baudrillard’s critique of systems that code the world in their own image and in so doing produce a condition of hyper-reality.

And so, what are the implications of articulating lifelong learning rhizomatically? It certainly shakes the roots of any view that learning and teaching are rooted in decontextualized techniques, indeed that they pre-exist the *performances* named as teaching and learning at all. The multi-directionality of the ‘and’ and its rhizomatic movement point to a range of further connections, additions, that need consideration, as the boundedness of teaching and learning practices becomes unsustainable once lifelong learning is taken on a line of flight that unsticks it from effective technique.

It also points to the tentativeness that is both embraced in lifelong learning practices and in research about lifelong learning. Implied in this is the question – what does it mean to articulate lifelong learning as a rhizome? It could be argued that learning escaped on a line of flight from the stratum of institutionalised education into the rhizome of lifelong learning only to find with effective technique that it

had become lodged in yet another stratum. The abstract machine of the contemporary order always attempts to stratify learning, one manifestation of which is the foregrounding of the rational at the expense of desire and the affective. Yet this stratified learning is always in tension with the learning involved in desiring production – affect laden and always potentially able to take off on a line of flight away from all the stratified signifiers of lifelong learning – including effective technique, flexible skilling, good citizenship and happy, self-fulfilled people. Thus lifelong learning is not any one thing – it is not 'the mere acquisition of any new skill or bit of information, but instead the accession to a new way of perceiving and understanding the world' (Bogue 2004 328).

Earlier, we mentioned Strathern's (1997) argument that learning is something which cannot be evaluated immediately, as it takes time to absorb and reformulate things. Mobilizing 'and' is consistent with this view. Learning takes time, engendering the very lifelong dimension, which the lifelong learning discourse attempts to make sense of. Learning stretches and bends and conjoins, making all sorts of intended and unintended senses, stretched across time and space in unexpected rhizomatic ways. Our learning is through the connections we make rhizomatically as well as those that are allowed and valued by the abstract machine. 'And' therefore inscribes a certain grasping for more, but not necessarily just in terms of climbing trees, perhaps more through following different lines of experimenting, of taking off on lines of flight. Thus the discourse of lifelong learning both gives expression, and is subject to, the logic of 'and'. There is always more and the more can be and often is very different.

The 'and' becomes the constant lament within lifelong learning, the endlessness, the ever-more, immanent within it, even as it is rooted in specific and definitive meanings. In a sense, the stammering of language makes a mockery of any firm assertions about what lifelong learning *is* and about how it can be best enabled. Inferences may be drawn from particular contexts, but manifestations elsewhere, as lines of flight, are inherently unpredictable. Nor can we take for granted the strength of the glue that holds lifelong learning together for it is possible for the 'and' to become explicit rather than immanent, a conjoining of lifelong *and* learning. Indeed if we were to follow Deleuze and Guattari, there is always learning as the energy of the desiring body and it is always lifelong because this desire is never final or finalised.

NOTES

[1] TLRP For more details of this program see: http://www.tlrp.org.uk

[2] Or as Deleuze and Guattari playfully put it: *pas les points, mais les ponts*

[3] This is why Deleuze and Guatarri deploy the term 'body without organs'. They don't literally mean a body with *no* organs. What they are pointing to is that the subject does not look inward to its biology or mind but outward to its connections. It is the unstratified body, the body without an organisation imposed by the abstract machine of capitalism.

CHAPTER TEN

LINES OF FLIGHT...

In a novel by John Sandford, a Russian intelligence officer on a trip to an American city comments, 'this could be a Russian town, except for the signs. I don't mean the words on the signs. I mean the signs are everywhere. Everything is signs' (Sandford 2004: 63). The character, Nadya, is of course here referring to billboards, and it is this which contrasts so strongly with her own environment. However, it is a useful observation, as it points to a significant issue. That issue is America. Are the signs we have been following primarily about America? Is America such a mediated social order that it alone can be signified as a society of signs? Is representation, the rooted relationship between word and world, still to be found elsewhere? A tempting thought perhaps. But not one to which we can subscribe. While the crisis of representation and the import of semiosis may vary spatio-temporally, as Nadya comments 'everything is signs'. Indeed.

And so, here we are. The final chapter. And in the process, we have undoubtedly revealed something of ourselves in the performance of this text. As it has progressed, perhaps some veils have fallen away to reveal a nomadism that is inscribed in and through this text. Yet in articulating such a metaphor we are back to visibility and revelation as a way of understanding meaning-making – the meaning of meaning as it were. Or back to representation. We are revealed, no longer hidden by the gauze that marked us as exotic/eccentric, as other. We can well imagine such a reading of this text, a search for its 'authentic' or even 'mundane' meaning. Yet our lines of flight both reside and move within alternative framings in our attempts to articulate a rhizome with and about the world of lifelong learning. The struggle to secure and pin down meaning is a constant one, where some meanings are more powerful than others. We have argued that there are powerful attempts to root the meaning of lifelong learning as the techniques, skills and subjectivities associated with perfomativity and governmentality within the contemporary myth of fast capitalism and the knowledge economy. Many of the critiques of that discourse – and there are many such lines of flight and fancy – however, working from alternative strata continue to follow the rooting and rooted logic. Here, even as the meaning of lifelong learning is opened up to question, de-territorialized, it is also closed down, re-territorialized. Our own lines of flight have been somewhat more tentative, attempting con-joinings and en-twinings that yet remain unsettled, and where the play of semiosis is itself constantly at play. Here lifelong learning is inscribed in the very view of language upon which we are drawing and thus it signifies learning that cannot be rooted. It erupts in strange places, at different times, in different ways. It cannot be scaled by assessment regimes alone. It is a form of de-territorialization, of paralogy, of difference, each of which does not signify a denotational meaning, but one of nomadic polysemy.

Our lines of flight have taken us a long way from what may be considered the heartland of where semiotics in a disciplinary sense is usually deployed – if indeed such a strata exists. However, we have sought out those influences that give different substantial forms to semiosis and, at the same time, exemplify it. The writers we have drawn upon – Baudrillard, Foucault, Lyotard, Callon, Latour, Virilio, Deleuze, Guattari, to name only the most well-known – all problematize 'common sense' views of representation about the relationship of world and word as one. They also all problematize conventional views of critique that seek to find out what lies behind the mask. They all struggle to fill the gap opened up by questions of meaning and meaning-making. Whilst not obviously so, their work, we would argue, is therefore significant for educators, not least if we consider educative work to be more than mere reproduction of the social order. Reproduction takes place at many levels and involves meaning-making and understandings of the practices of meaning-making. We have not sought to provide an alternative rooting for semiosis, but we have engaged in lines of flight of our own in order to explore how we might be entangled in meaning. Thus, our search for signs of learning has been and is as much about a search for meaning as it is about the meanings of lifelong learning. For us, this is ongoing, lifelong, and involves the 'going beyond' that we consider important as an educational purpose. 'Going beyond' involves following a rhizomatic logic rather than constructing the same connections again and again and again – which of course is what reproduction is about where the 'and' is tied into an endless circle of reproduction rather than the lines of flight we have followed, and others which we might have followed.

Underlying what we have tried to do in this text is our recognition of the need for an 'analysis of how we deploy our cultural resources for making sense of the world: language, depiction, action' (Lemke 1994: 3). And indeed such an analysis itself reflexively involves a deployment of cultural resources for sense making purposes about sense making and so on. . .We are acutely aware that our lines of flight may have become too tangential to be persuasive for some, as we cannot assume a readership familiar with, nor accepting of, the logic or focus of our discourse, even if we have played along fairly conventionally with the genre of academic book writing. Our rhizomes may be wormholes for some and we may have ended up in territories too far removed – 'Beyonders' in Ian M Banks terms (Banks 2005). Yet the view that 'discourse is a mode of action, almost synonymous with meaning-making itself' (Lemke 1994: 4) sustains us in the view that, if you are reading this, you have at least come along for the ride.

In the course of this ride we have had much to say about learning and its significations. It is a truism that much learning takes place outside of educational institutions. Whilst it is a truism with a history, it is also the case that the majority of research on learning has focused on the institutionalized and structural arrangements of formally provided education and training, in particular schooling and higher education. This focus has meant that learning in domains outside education has not received as much attention as it might, despite the fact that most of us spend only a limited time as students in formal education and training institutions. Even

for children, learning *outside* of schooling is not a major topic of research. For those beyond adolescence and early adulthood, learning in the many contexts of our lives, however defined, is something that we just do. However, all this depends upon what is valued and signed as learning and the connotations of learning outside of education and its degree of mundanity. This is what we have been exploring in this text.

1. WHO IS NAMING WHAT?

Under the sign of lifelong learning, greater attention is being given to those diverse domains outside educational institutions where people are now signified as learning. The workplace, the home and the community, and specific sites within these are all held to be such domains of learning. In this sense, learning is distributed across the social order and embedded within many if not all practices, which themselves become opened up as exotic by their positioning within a lifelong learning discourse. However, it could be argued that insofar as we expand our concept of learning apparently to embrace all domains of life, we start to lose any conceptual basis for speaking specifically of a *learning* context. What is specific to a learning context that is not to be found in other contexts? Who names these contexts as *learning* contexts? How are they named? Learning itself can become mundane with little to be valued.

These questions are important insofar as the discourses 'spoken' by researchers are not necessarily shared by those who are engaging in practices within the domains researched and identified as contexts of learning by researchers. Researchers, for example, may identify homemakers as learning a range of skills and understanding from experience, but for those people, the significance of their practices may consist simply in the mundane everyday of homemaking. Researchers may identify the literacy gains from playing interactive games, but for the people concerned, they may be simply playing games. Researchers may identify workers as learning the culture and habitus of the workplace, but for those concerned, they may be simply getting by. That is why we have emphasized that the meaning and significance of practices is always contested. Based upon the situations in which they emerge, the same practices can be invested with different meanings. For those concerned, it may be the fact that their practices are precisely *not* signified as learning that may be important for their own situations and identities.

Who then has the authority or power to rename practices as learning, with all the associated connotations of formal education and the hierarchies of value, and particularly schooling such a naming can have? Is the social order to be schooled, or ordered through learning? On one side, we may suggest that this re-signifying of practices as learning could open up opportunities since by naming practices as learning, routes and avenues are provided through which educational and social mobility might be supported, or, more radically, existing exercises of power in the social and educational orders may be challenged. If we recognize ourselves as learning individually, organizationally and collectively, do we not thereby become

more effective? It is these assumptions that most probably underpin the calls for lifelong learning, learning organizations, learning regions and a learning society.

However, signifying practices as work, pleasure, fun, mundane, indeed anything but learning, might also be considered a form of distancing or resistance to incorporation into the social order. Why learn? Here then the discourse of learning may be considered not a challenge to established order, but rather as we have suggested in our discussion of contemporary governmentality, it may actually involve a fuller incorporation into that order. Extending learning also extends the regulation of experience through education, one of those ‘actions at a distance’ that are, as we have suggested, part of contemporary governing. Further, insofar as our practices are all identified as learning, some may be given greater value and status than others through processes of accreditation and credentializing. This extends the traditional role of education in valuing particular forms of learning, a process that can also provide a greater range of socializing and regulating practices through which the social is ordered, normalized and divided. If it is learning, then credentialize it!

The danger is in seeing this as an either/or situation: either empowerment *or* regulation. And in homogenizing, say, all work-based learning as either at one end of the spectrum or the other. This is the rush to generalization and the foundational grounding of significations generated through practices that dogs much educational research - researchers revealing the ‘real’ meaning of practices to the unenlightened. Obviously this is a caricature, but there is something in it nonetheless. It also points to important challenges for those researching these arenas. It is something we have attempted to avoid by refusing to ground lifelong learning, to say what it ‘really’ is – instead highlighting some of its many connotations. However, we have to admit that the pull towards dichotomies is strong and we may well have ended up, even inadvertently, re-inscribing our own into this text. Given the play of categorization in the writing of texts, binaries just keep popping up (Bowker and Star 2000).

The question of naming poses semiotic challenges to researchers. If participants in a research project do not see themselves as learning in their day-to-day practices, how can data on their *learning* be gathered, and what then is the status of this data? These are classic issues for researchers examining participation in learning outside formal educational environments. For many people, learning is precisely signed only as what takes place in structured education and training and is invariably understood as involving some kind of formal assessment. Following the progress of one’s soccer team through websites and fanzines would not for many signify as learning. Does it signify as such for those so engaged? Probably not. This is the likely reason why responses to surveys attempting to establish participation rates in learning may tell us little, other than what we as educational researchers want to know, as the understanding of what is being asked may vary significantly. Similarly, sitting in a coffee house with a group of friends discussing the pros and cons of wind-power may from some perspectives be signified as learning, but from others it is simply an interesting conversation that passes the time of day – and

indeed is significant as such. This then raises the question of why we should worry about whether learning is taking place and why we should bother researching it.

This is deliberately provocative, as at one level we might say that educational researchers should focus on education, as that is their area of expertise. Branching out into these other arenas of social life to claim them as part of the domain of lifelong learning results in them spreading their wares too thin, and also in them encroaching, sometimes unknowingly, on existing research in other terrain, for example, sociology, organizational studies and cultural studies, wherein studies of the everyday take very different forms. These are turf wars in research perhaps, in which educational researchers stake a claim to practices which are signed differently through other traditions of enquiry. Yet at the same time educators cannot help but be concerned with learning given that this is the means by which any educational project is realized.

There is a question, therefore, about the extent to which studies of learning find out or discover something or re-signify it, that is, give it a meaning that is other than that given by those who participated in the research – making something of it other than those who live it do. All practices may involve learning, but whether learning is the critical dimension to the meaning given by those engaging in those practices and/or simply the means to meaning is another matter. And insofar as we mark these practices as learning, in what sense are they transformed and with what consequences? We find this particularly acutely for example, in relation to research on tacit knowledge – a knowledge deemed essential to participation in a social practice. Tacit knowledge is, by definition, tacit and therefore inarticulable. Insofar as we research tacit knowledge, identify and articulate it, it immediately stops being what it is, since as tacit knowledge is surfaced and articulated it is no longer tacit but becomes explicit. Furthermore, the attempt to surface and articulate such knowledge is misguided since the significant thing about it is that it is performative – the knowledge and the learning is manifested in a *doing*. Thus such articulation might be pedagogically useful, but paradoxically it turns the focus for research into something other than itself. The educational focus of research into practices might then be said to be itself performative or transformative in terms of making those practices other than they are for those concerned.

There are other ways in which there is a strong ethical and/or political base to researching learning. We may want to be able to recognize people's diverse learning and capacities. We may want to be able to value the lifelong and lifewide aspects of learning through life. We may want to provide evidence that learning is more than what one learns in schools and other educational and training institutions. We may want to recognize that learning is wider than that associated with a formal curriculum. But who is the 'we' here? For many, therefore, the interest in lifelong learning is part of a wider challenge to established institutions and curricula, which select and value some learning and ways of learning over others. However, this can itself result from, and in, some unsustainable dichotomies and binaries. Structured education and the institutions of education and training can be positioned in an inherently negative light, denying the legitimate learning of those variously named

other. Here learning through the practices of the everyday takes to the barricades against the institutionalized power of the social order as represented by educational institutions. Such learning, particularly in its experiential and community-based forms, is held to be in some ways more worthwhile and/or authentic than that occurring in institutions.

This oversimplifies of course. Such challenges are legitimate, as education and curricula are not settled once and for all. However, some caution is also necessary. Is everything that can be signified as learning worthwhile? We expose our own values base in answering this question, but the answer we would argue has to be no. Learning from their own experience often results in people becoming violent abusers and oppressors of others. In tightly knit communities, we may learn to relate to each other, but not to others from different groups and communities. Learning is therefore not *inherently* worthwhile. Embedded in the signs of lifelong learning are usually value-based hierarchies that identify some learning as more worthwhile than others. Some will share these values, others not. This is why the meaning and significance of values is such an important arena for debate and discussion in relation to education. Here we need to draw a distinction between values and principles. Thus, for instance, inclusion as a value has to be interpreted contextually i.e. where the basis for the inclusion of some and exclusion of others is articulated on the basis that all practices entail an Other. As a principle, people might argue for inclusion for all, but this does not get us very far in terms of practical, contextualized judgements.

Thus we might also raise the question of whether institutionalized curricula are inherently bad. As long as there are educational institutions, then there will always be curricula and these are always a selection from the culture and social order of which they are part. Lifelong learning as it is currently signified is no exception to this – it too has a 'curriculum' – albeit one which is more varied and complex than traditional institutionalized curricula. In any event, any selection means valuing some things over others and this is inherently contentious. These are legitimate debates, from which are derived what is to be valued as learning. And it is perhaps not surprising that the educational research community, itself usually part of the institutionalized structures of education, contributes vociferously to such debates.

Although then nothing is inherently worthwhile in either learning or curricula, there can be a danger of using learning pejoratively as a rhetorical device through which to attempt a critique of the selection, values and power embedded in the existing formal curricula. But on what authority? This is part of a bigger question, as the authoritative or 'legitimate' exercise of power may be considered different from power which is exercised in other ways, for example, through coercion or seduction. But it also points to the need for surfacing assumptions about values and power in any discussion of lifelong learning. And maybe looking for signs of education in learning as well as signs of learning in education. Thus our interest in the relationship between certain discourses of lifelong learning and changing exercises of power and forms of governing the social order.

2. COMING TO AN ENDING.....

In this text that is now approaching its end, there can be no conclusions as such. All we can offer is a temporary anchoring point. In Chapter One where we outlined our intentions for this text we emphasized that our examination of lifelong learning would proceed in a somewhat unorthodox way. We have attempted to move away from orthodox treatments by a refusal to locate ourselves in the discursive practices of educators and psychologists. Instead we have sought to entwine ourselves in relation to the work of scholars informed by a broadly post-structuralist spirit and who on the face of it have nothing to say about learning, let alone lifelong learning. But through the networks they articulate – of hyper-reality, virtuality, governmentality, fast capitalism, etc – we have been able to speak of lifelong learning as a significant aspect of the social order – and to do so, hopefully, in a way which is different yet not completely ex-centric from the discourses and pronouncements of governments and educational researchers.

We do not claim to have written all there is to be known about lifelong learning, but we have attempted to explore both the semiosis in its discourses and how different approaches help to illuminate the play of semiosis. Broadly, this suggests that both in relation to research and pedagogy, the development of a broadly semiotic approach is to be encouraged. However, the possibilities for this are probably restricted, not least by the industry of literacy as a set of basic skills and the increasing emphasis on the warranting of research. We cannot warrant for what we have written and no doubt some will issue warrants against us as a result. In which case, signs of learning will have become signs of 'crimes'...Whether it is the crime of this century or the last, we leave to you to judge for it depends upon the name of the game in which we are entwined and from which we take flight.

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