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2022

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citation for published version (APA)

Smith, J. R. (2022). *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning? in fresh perspective, conversation and practice: John Hull's theological pedagogy as disruptive-inclusion.*

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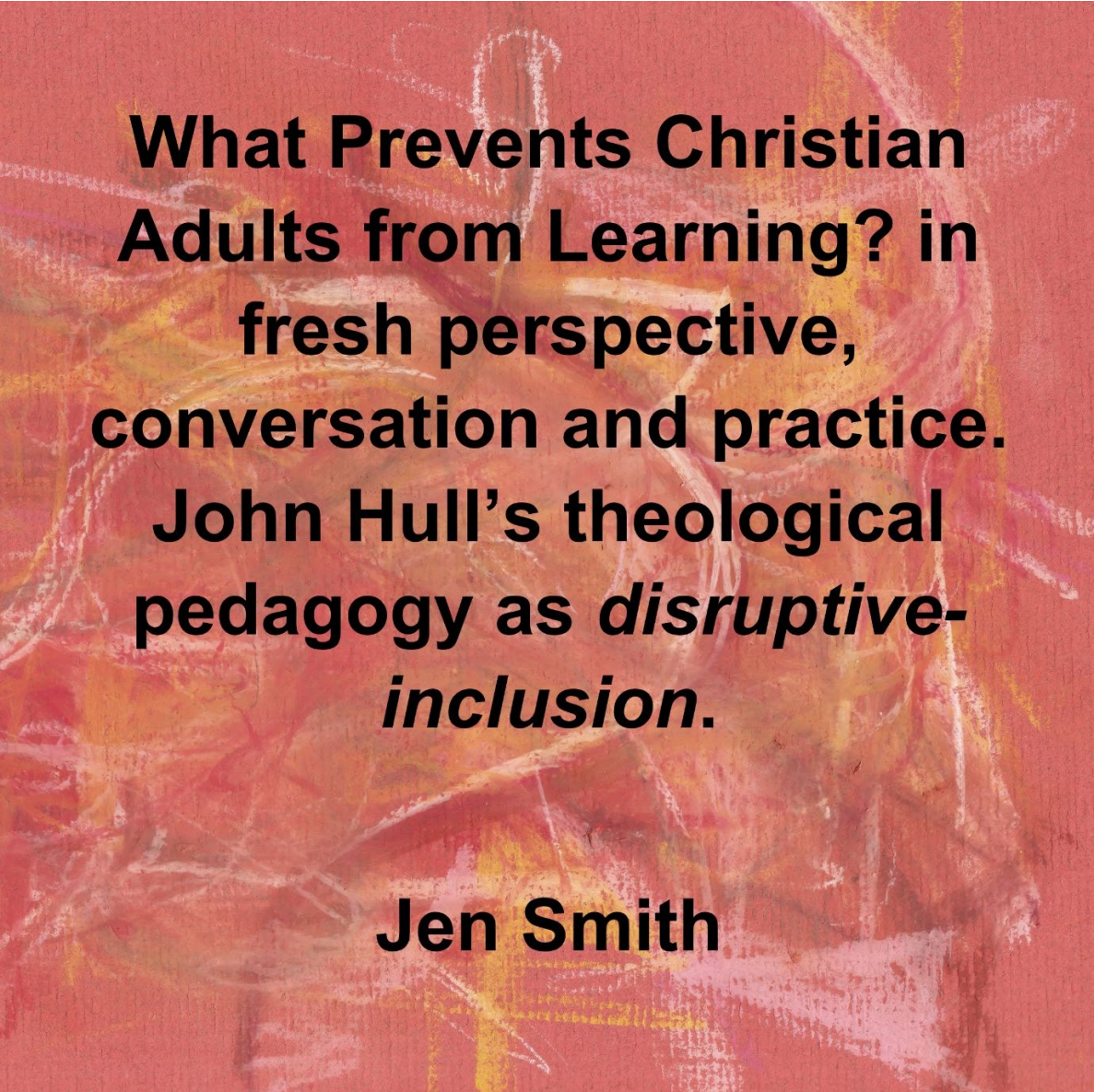
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**What Prevents Christian
Adults from Learning? in
fresh perspective,
conversation and practice.
John Hull's theological
pedagogy as *disruptive-
inclusion*.**

Jen Smith

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

**WHAT PREVENTS CHRISTIAN ADULTS FROM LEARNING? IN FRESH PERSPECTIVE, CONVERSATION
AND PRACTICE: JOHN HULL'S THEOLOGICAL PEDAGOGY AS DISRUPTIVE-INCLUSION.**

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor of Philosophy aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. J.J.G. Geurts,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de Faculteit Religie en Theologie
op maandag 7 maart 2022 om 11.45 uur
in een bijeenkomst van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

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*.... I gave everything away and I became rich,
Indebted to the abundance that You so gladly give.*

Kinship. 2020.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In line with the argument that follows, it is impossible to identify each and every time, person, place and event that has influenced and shaped this thesis. Although doctorates are not readily acknowledged as team sports, I am deeply grateful that God has given me the following 'teams' and for the ways (both obvious and hidden) they have loved, cajoled and supported the writing of this thesis (and its writer). Thank you feels deeply insufficient.

Team Gradden/Smith/Occomore. Thank you for being the first ones to teach me that I could achieve anything I put my mind to and daring me to go for it. You make me braver.

Team Manchester. Thank you for helping me realise that challenge and joy are often the same thing. You made me more determined.

Team Samuel. Thank you for not taking no for an answer. Your insistence that I have something to offer makes me dig deep when it's tough.

Team Pasadena. Thank you for sharpening my focus and deepening my resolve. You made me more appreciative.

Team KST. Thank you for showing me your potential and posing important questions that demand a better response. You make me proud.

Team Champagne Mondays. Thank you for helping me practise the extraordinary in the ordinary. You helped bring many of this project's themes to life.

Team Source. Thank you for setting a different kind of table and a place for me, both when I'm ok and when I'm not. You make me hopeful.

Team SMJ. Thank you for joining me in dissatisfaction with easy answers and quick fixes, for shouting me down and cheering me on. You make me feel heard.

Team Friday Morning. Thank you for showing me that hope is grounded in commitment and patience. You make me kinder.

Team Queen's. Thank you for showing me new possibilities. You help me imagine better things to come.

Team Hull. Thank you to the wider community of John's colleagues who have encouraged this work – particularly Trevor Cooling and ISREV members, thank you for your generosity of spirit. You made me feel welcome. To Marilyn and the Hull family, thank you for your faith in me. I hope I have captured something of John's spirit as I have certainly caught a measure of his contagious determination. You have inspired me.

Supervisory team. Thank you for offering great examples of *in-between* teaching and learning. You have demonstrated to me how excellence is often achieved through compromise and making space for the unexpected, not via single-minded self-promotion and interest. You have made me a better writer, and hopefully also a better person.

Summary:

This project examines how framing the late Prof. John Hull's work on Christian adult learning in terms of *disruptive-inclusion* clarifies its contribution to, and potential implications for, Christian adult learning methodology and practice in the UK. This overarching task is achieved in three consolidating parts. Firstly, part A considers the foundational role of the 1985 publication, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* in understanding the relationship between Hull's conception and personal experiences of Christian adult learning. Part B provides a wider contextualisation of *disruptive-inclusion* within scholarly conversations relating to Christian adult learning in the UK, Europe and North America. It also addresses the thematic resonances and contrasts between *disruptive-inclusion* and several established theological and pedagogical approaches to Christian adult learning. Finally, part C analyses the potential implications of *disruptive-inclusion* for the future of Christian adult learning. In particular, it addresses the pedagogical function of the Bible and what *disruptive-inclusive* Christian adult learning looks, sounds and feels like in the classroom, from the pulpit and in online learning settings. The three parts are divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the project by explaining the basis on which the principal research question was chosen; outlining the methodological concerns that structure this project's overall response to it and summarising the overall content of the thesis.

2.1. begins the main body of the project by clarifying its understanding of CAL and the essential *content, purpose* and *relationships* of *disruptive-inclusion* in comparison and contrast with other approaches. Overall, it presents a pedagogy that extends beyond formal classroom settings to learning that occurs in all of life. It concludes by introducing two key, recurring phrases from *What Prevents...?* that are central to Hull's theological pedagogy: *optimum distance* and *multiplicity of vision*. 2.2. moves from presentation to demonstration of these concepts by exploring Hull's analysis of John 10. In the Fourth Evangelist's presentation, Hull perceives Jesus' core pedagogical function as facilitating learning disruption. Parallel to this, Hull also surmises that Jesus' facilitation of learning disruption is not an end in itself but leads to the inclusion of that which otherwise would have remained

beyond learner purview. 2.3. concludes with an initial consideration of how *disruption* and *inclusion* come together to facilitate CAL.

Consolidating these ideas, chapter 3 offers a close analysis of how *disruption* and *inclusion* simultaneously function in Hull's interpretation of John 10, and particularly John 10:9 (I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture). Exploration of the passage and Hull's reading thereof concentrates on the pedagogical implications of Jesus' role as θύρα (gate or door for sheep), the location and identity of other characters in the passage and the role of *otherness* in learning. 3.2. makes the case that a central facet of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is the repeated, passing back-and-forth through an *in-between* learning space or mode. In 3.3., the chapter concludes with a demonstration of the implications of defining learning progress in terms of repeated *coming in and going out*. What does it look like to encourage learning in *in-between* places? How can learning facilitate repeated movement *back-and-forth*?

Chapter 4 offers further analysis of the key tenets of *disruptive-inclusion* but turns to consider how they arise from the context of Hull's lived experience (particularly his transition from sighted to blind person) as well as his published work. Developing the themes introduced in chapter 3, 4.1. addresses Hull's personal embodiment of pedagogical boundary crossing; the necessity of making space for self and others in learning and understanding CAL in terms of dynamism and emergence rather than stasis and arrival. Fundamentally, 4.2. explores how Hull's self-acknowledged first book written as a blind author, *What Prevents...?* is the quintessential exposition and embodiment of his theological pedagogy of CAL and a potentially, significantly overlooked contribution to contemporary CAL theory and practice.

Chapter 5 considers where and how a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL relates to other contributions to the debate. 5.1. examines the UK setting in which Hull's pedagogical views emerged; analyses the wider European setting in which his opinions developed and identifies some of the North-American conversations within which his arguments resonate. Specifically, 5.1.1. addresses how Hull's early 1970s engagements with sociologist Paul Hirst set the trajectory for many of Hull's later emerging pedagogical foci. 5.1.2. assesses the role

of Hull's founding of, and the subsequent, ongoing influence of ISREV (International Seminal for Religious and Educational Values) in the development of his theological pedagogy throughout his career, as epitomised in a particular exchange with Karl-Ernst Nipkow. Finally, 5.1.3. examines how some of Hull's key assumptions and conclusions concerning CAL align more with late twentieth century, North American scholarship than UK or European-based pedagogical debates.

Where 5.1. frames the discussion of *disruptive-inclusion's* most essential affinities and influences in geographic terms, 5.2. takes a thematic approach, analysing its convergence with some of the most significant themes arising in the field of CAL, both during and since the 1980s. Firstly, it explores the pedagogical relationship between the individual and the corporate. Drawing on Personalism and the work of Maria Harris and Paulo Freire, 5.2.1. analyses how a fundamentally *human* pedagogy does not place individual and corporate learning in competition but necessitates their deep and multi-layered co-operation.

Secondly, 5.2.2. analyses the widely employed language of journeying, pilgrimage and horizon in relation to learning: namely, how the idea of finding the *correct answer* can be displaced as the fixed *home* of learning success and how *disruptive-inclusion* presents learning as a *way* or *horizon* to follow that is neither conflated back into traditional pedagogical paradigms nor so *other* that it is impossible for learners to understand or engage.

Thirdly, 5.2.3. considers *disruptive-inclusion* in relation to the influential work on learning development stages and formation, most famously presented by James Fowler. In particular, it considers the pedagogical implications of transitioning between the different phases outlined by Fowler and the potential significance of this in relation to earlier claims that *disruptive-inclusion* is best understood in terms of crossing boundaries.

Chapter 6 functions as a structural fulcrum in the project between analysis and application (as more fully explained in 1.2.) that re-enforces the holistic approach that is materially central to *disruptive-inclusive* CAL and to the structure of this project's overall presentation of it. Moving from contextualising Hull's work within its contemporary, 1980s setting to

considering it set against an early, twenty-first century backdrop, 6.1. contextualises *disruptive-inclusive* CAL within the recent development of Practical Theology as a theological discipline (particularly in the UK), with specific focus on how its progression is defined by the changing relationship between *practical* and *theology*. Specifically, it considers John Swinton and Harriet Mowat's *complexified* Practical Theology, Jan Meyer and Ray Land's Threshold Concepts Framework and Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning as key demonstrations of the essential, reciprocal relationship between pedagogical theory and practice. A brief interlude (6.5.) then seeks to underline the importance of purposefully lingering in the methodological *in-between*, even if the linear nature of projects such as this cannot avoid chronological progression to the next stage.

Chapter 7 begins in earnest to demonstrate the benefits of pedagogical crossing back-and-forth in repeatedly passing between the theoretical analysis of *disruptive-inclusion* and its practical implementation in a range of settings. Its primary focus is to progress *disruptive-inclusion* beyond analysis of Hull's existing work on CAL and examine areas of its potential future development and implementation. To achieve this, chapter 7 outlines one, comprehensive, multi-layered and multi-perspectival illustration of this: the potential impact of *disruptive-inclusion* on biblical learning. Drawing together Hull's dispersed comments on the topic, 7.1. demonstrates that Hull's core insistence is that biblical learning ought not be solely an *instructional* process for Christian adult learners but defined by a sense of *loss* and *re-ideologization*. Consolidating the intersectional patterns introduced in chapter 3 of crossing boundaries and lingering in the pedagogical *in-between*, chapter 7 demonstrates the necessarily *connected* nature of a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to biblical CAL. It expounds Hull's suggestions that pedagogical engagement with the Bible should be shaped by its *inner-connectivity*, *inter-connectivity* and *extra-connectivity*. However, it also recognises that moving from an *instructional* pedagogical posture in biblical learning, to a *connected* approach facilitated by *loss* and *re-ideologization* does not require just a few, minor modifications but a complete *re-casting* or paradigm shift in CAL methodology and practice.

Specifically, 7.2. argues that the diverse *inner-connectivity* of the Bible's composition offers significant guidance as to its pedagogical function, particularly highlighting how historical-

critical methods alone are unable to facilitate interpretive interaction between part and whole. Rather, it presents Walter Bruggemann's approach to canonical criticism as an effective example of leveraging the *inner-connected* canonical community of the Bible in its pedagogical function. The influence of these themes is then illustrated via extended, musical metaphors from the author's classroom practice and Anthony Reddie's work on the Black, jazz community.

7.3. offers a further *re-casting* of biblical CAL, highlighting the need for an *inter-connected* approach. Just as the previous section argued the importance of *two-way traffic* between *part* and *whole*, 7.3. applies the same principle to *old* and *new* approaches to biblical CAL. With a particular focus on the importance of moving previously dismissed views to the centre of the discussion, it presents the potential (and often overlooked) value of pre-critical biblical interpretation to contemporary biblical CAL. It concludes by modelling the potential impact of purposely engaging both *old* and *new* biblical learning via a worked example of a student assignment comparing and contrasting ancient and modern interpretations of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Finally, 7.4. offers a third *re-casting* of biblical CAL according to the *connected* nature of *disruptive-inclusion* by addressing the controversial perspective of *extra-connected* CAL. This focuses on Hull's consistent determination that all forms of CAL are most effective when they interact beyond the limits of the Christian faith – an argument Hull encapsulates in an idea he calls *critical openness*. Discussion focuses on the strengths and limitations of both *critical openness* and Cooling's counter suggestion of *critical realism* as the optimum means of outworking a *connected*, dynamic and yet not entirely amorphous pedagogy of biblical CAL. In response to both Hull and Cooling's suggestions, chapter 7 concludes by positing that where *critical openness* and *critical realism* both fail to translate into biblical CAL that retains criticality without being limited to it, a *playful, theopoetic* approach to biblical CAL is far more capable of holding together these seemingly paradoxical concepts. It argues that by functioning in the realm of *play* and *imagination*, *poetics* simultaneously *grounds* learners in reality *and* transports them beyond – achieving a relationship between *open* and *closed* biblical CAL that is both expansive and detail-oriented.

Chapter 8 concludes the main body of the project by considering how the implementation of a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL looks, sounds and feels in three, specific settings.

Firstly, discussion focuses on *disruptive-inclusion* practised in CAL classroom settings (i.e., of a theological education or training provider or adult, Sunday schools). Defined as a learning format that facilitates live dialogue, it considers how the beginning, central focus and ending of such classroom sessions (or sets of sessions) can optimally encourage *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. In relation to starter activities, based in an example from the author's practice, 8.1.1. details how introducing potentially challenging topics using deeply unfamiliar content and methods can be more conducive to *disruptive-inclusive* CAL than beginning with the comforting and familiar. In relation to the main body or focus of classroom sessions, 8.1.2. argues that in line with James Smith's work on *pedagogies of desire*, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL suggests that, rather than the central focus of a CAL session being cognitive ascent to pedagogical process (i.e., conscious articulation of how learning is occurring), the foundational aim of CAL classroom sessions ought to be the re-orientation of learners' desire –i.e., practising enjoying (and potentially even learning to love) *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. 8.1.3. concludes by suggesting how *disruptive-inclusion* can transform the close of classroom sessions into gateways to further phases of CAL.

8.2. takes up the same question of how *disruptive-inclusion* looks, sounds and feels, but in relation to the traditional teaching sermon – a format not generally considered to create opportunities for learner dialogue and interaction. Building on the previous concepts of *theopoetic* CAL and further consolidating Smith's work concerning the *re-storying of the pedagogical imagination*, 8.2.2. argues that even when live dialogue is not available, a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to preaching creates opportunities for interactive CAL engagement. Based in Mark Allan Powell's advice to *cast the scriptures* and Ellen Davis' suggestion that sermons ought to *illuminate not illustrate* the biblical text, the discussion outlines how a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to *re-storying the pedagogical imagination* can employ evocative language, takes an aesthetic, experiential approach requiring learners to *join the dots* for themselves and incorporates the comedic. The discussion closes with an example of a *disruptive-inclusive* sermon whose topic is Revelation chapters 19-20 and associated analysis of how its features epitomise *disruptive-inclusive* CAL practice.

8.3. addresses *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, it focuses on both the pedagogical opportunities and limitations of online CAL including the blurring of formal and informal learning modes; the shifting of barriers to participation and the potential of a pedagogical 'new normal'. As more fully explained in 1.2. and following Hull's example, the answers to *how?* pedagogical questions resist easy summary into a set of neat, consecutive points. Thus, given the central focus of this project to outline how *disruptive-inclusion* illuminates Hull's contribution to CAL and clarifies its potential implications for CAL methodology and practice, in a significant sense, this project's conclusions *are* its arguments. Thus, chapter 9 concludes with a summary of the major implications of *disruptive-inclusion* for the understanding of Hull's views on CAL methodology and practice, a range of suggestions for further *disruptive-inclusive* research and finally some personal, concluding comments on the experience of completing the project.

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Chapter 1: Prelude. Envisioning the setting, approach and summary of *disruptive-inclusive*, Christian adult learning

This project examines how John Hull's theological pedagogy strengthens, directs, and nuances contemporary Christian adult learning methodology and practice in the UK, although its implications may apply more broadly. To achieve this, it explores the following question in 9 chapters, from a variety of perspectives, grouped into 3 consolidating parts: How does framing and applying Hull's work on Christian adult learning (focused on, but not limited to, the 1985 publication, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*) in terms of *disruptive-inclusion*, clarify the contribution and potential implications of Hull's approach?

As argued variously throughout, *disruptive-inclusion* understands that learning content, methodology and motivation are inextricably linked. Therefore, this opening chapter sets the scene for *disruptive-inclusion* by outlining its material argument, the structure of its overarching approach *and* the principal sources of its rationale. To achieve this, 1.1 examines how the research question is inspired by the author's understanding of three, intertwining catalysts: a specific classroom experience; a lacuna in the academic discussion of *Christian Education*, and finally, the potentially overlooked and poorly understood, specific contribution made to the discussion by *What Prevents...?* 1.2 then introduces the main frameworks and methodologies employed in the project's overall investigation and how they are designed to combine in presenting a thoroughly holistic case for a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL. Finally, 1.3 summarises the overall content of the discussion. In brief, chapter 1 functions as an induction into the why?, the how? and the what? of *disruptive-inclusion*. The following *proto-introductions* to John Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults*

from Learning...?, theological pedagogy and *disruptive-inclusion* are included here to facilitate clear and easy engagement with these discussions.

After moving to England from Australia in 1959 to complete his degree at Cambridge and working as a Secondary teacher of Religious Education for several years, Prof. Dr John Martin Hull spent the majority of his career at the University of Birmingham, being appointed Professor of Religious Education in 1989.¹ Hull is best remembered for his work on Religious Education in UK schools and theological reflections on disability, having lost his sight in middle age. However, his Festschrift lists the hundreds of books, chapters, articles and lectures he generated across a range of disciplines during his long career - a corpus that continued to grow during his 'retirement' years as Honorary Professor of Practical Theology at the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education until his death in 2015.

What Prevents Christians from Learning...? was Hull's fourth, full-length publication after completion of his doctoral thesis.² First published in the UK in 1985 when he was Senior Lecturer in Religious Education at the University of Birmingham and then re-published in the USA in 1991, the back cover of the 1985 edition summarises *What Prevents...?* as,

A study in practical theology but it adopts an inter-disciplinary approach, drawing on sociology, social psychology and psychology as well as theology. It considers the nature of Christian education; the problems of education in what is inevitably an ideological community; the deep-seated human need to be right and the pain of learning; and the way in which faith must evolve along with the self.³

As fully discussed in chapter 2, a wide range of terminology exists at the intersection of faith and education. For clarity and consistency, the term theological pedagogy is used throughout this project to specifically refer to Hull's approach to Christian adult learning

¹ From here, Hull for ease.

² From here, *What Prevents...?* for ease.

³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* (London: SCM Press, 1985), back cover.

(CAL).⁴ Although there are many areas of overlap with Hull's opinions in other areas of education and theology, claims regarding Hull's theological pedagogy refer exclusively to CAL.

Disruptive-inclusion is a term of authorial invention whose explanation and exploration is the core theme of this project. It claims to encapsulate Hull's theological pedagogy of Christian adult learning (CAL) as best represented in *What Prevents...?*⁵

1.1. Project Setting: why this topic in this way?

Before offering a summary of the project's overall presentation and explaining some of its underpinning methodological choices, this introduction begins with a brief explanation of how I came to understand an approach such as *disruptive-inclusion* as necessary and offers some insights into the project's beginnings. At its completion, I have come to understand the principal theme of this project as resulting from the collision of three catalytic elements. Firstly, particular, classroom experiences as a learner and teacher. Secondly, the subsequent observation of a lacuna in the existing research at the intersection of Christianity and Education and thirdly, the specific contribution of *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* to the debate.

1.1.1. Three Catalysts: a moment, a lacuna and a book

Although I was unaware of it at the time, a particular event during my Seminary education significantly influenced the trajectory of this thesis. In Pentateuch class, in 2012, a young,

⁴ From here, CAL for ease.

⁵ *Disruptive-inclusion* is represented in italics as a visual prompt that the term refers to a specific definition and combination of the two phenomena (as fully discussed in 2.3.3 and beyond).

reserved woman gathered her courage to ask the professor a question. While I no longer recall her specific query, the nature of the professor's reaction has remained with me. She unceremoniously dismissed the student with a tone that clearly suggested her question as sufficiently ridiculous so as to be unworthy of a learned response and with words designed to expose the questioner's lack of knowledge. I found the exchange so disturbing that I arranged to meet with the professor in an attempt to understand the logic behind her reaction. At our meeting, I strained to posture my enquiries as objectively as possible, quizzing her about how she imagined her role as a biblically-informed educator and the kind of learning environment she aimed to create. At a pivotal moment in the conversation, the professor calmly put down the pen she had been tossing between her fingers during the careful articulation of my dissention, looked at me deliberately with more than a hint of pride and explained, "I drop students in deep water. Inevitably, some drown".

Unsurprisingly, in the following sessions, she fielded few, further student questions.

A year previous to these events, my transition from Modern Foreign Languages Secondary school teacher to Theology student had been motivated by a desire to resist the generally assumed disconnect between my sensed vocation as an inclusively minded pedagogue and biblically informed Christian. As a result, progress through my studies was (and continues to be) shaped, not only by a search for high quality and carefully considered curriculum content but also examples of theologically informed delivery. Therefore, the aforementioned professor's initial presentation as an interdisciplinary theological scholar was, in the first instance, encouraging.⁶ However, my discovery that this commitment did not extend to pedagogy (or, not at least in a way she could articulate or demonstrate), contributed to,

⁶ Including a MA in Politics and Economics to facilitate reading the Hebrew Scriptures.

rather than lessened my eventual frustration. If our paths were to cross again, my underlying question would remain: how can the God of the Pentateuch, whose character is defined by perseverance with the bumbling, broken and bemoaning, be well represented in such an inflexible, (and frankly) merciless pedagogical approach? I do not dispute that my fellow student's question that particular day exposed her limited understanding, nor that all Christian learners ought to aspire to navigate their faith deeply. Regardless, I failed (and fail) to see how a *sink or swim* pedagogical paradigm can be considered commensurate with a biblically informed, approach to CAL. While this incident represents an extreme example, my continued experiences as a theological learner and educator are filled with examples of CAL in which careful theological thought is evidenced in the course content or material being discussed but clearly absent in pedagogical decisions determining teaching and learning delivery, engagement and assessment (in fact, every area of teaching and learning other than the content of the argument presented).

As I progressed from Seminary onto various other teaching and learning settings, it became clear that the above disagreement concerning the nature of the relationship between Christian faith and pedagogy is not only illustrative of a lack of consensus in the scholarly conversation broadly referred to as *Christian Education*, but also reveals a far more fundamental failure to acknowledge the multiple dialogues converging under the same or very similar terms. In short, regardless of the content of any given argument, there is no substantive agreement or clarity as to what *Christian Education* is, even less a rich, multidisciplinary conversation as to how *it* (whatever that might be!) might be better understood and practised.⁷

⁷ There are also significant differences in terminology on both sides of the Atlantic, an issue more fully addressed in 5.1.3. Two, late, twentieth-century examples of this are John Westerhoff's, *A Colloquy on*

A search for academic books and articles addressing *Christian Education* demonstrates this point. *Christian Education* can refer to topics as diverse as the schooling of Christian children (usually in North America); the Religious Studies curriculum of state schools in the UK and Europe; the logistical challenges of running faith-based Higher Education or theological training institutions or structured, church-based ministries or programs. A close reading reveals some thematic overlap between the fundamental interests of many of these topics but also some fundamental differences. Overall, much *Christian Education* literature represents a deeply disjointed array of fundamental concerns, because, for many, *Christian Education* is primarily regulated by questions of *what?* and *where?*, while for others its nature is dominated by questions of *why?* – distinctions that have an elemental impact on the character and shape of the respective presentations.

In the case of the categories defined above as *what?* and *where?* approaches to *Christian Education*, arguments focus almost uniquely on the delivery of specific curriculum content, particularly (but not limited to) the teaching of Christian Theology or doctrine. This is best demonstrated by some (particularly US) Christian colleges and home-schooling networks,⁸

Christian Education (Philadelphia, Pa.: United Church Press, 1972), and Jeff Astley's article, *Theological perspectives on Christian education: an overview*, in *Theological perspectives on christian formation: a reader on theology and Christian education* (eds. Astley, et al.; Leominster; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Gracewing; Eerdmans, 1996). The latter opens by acknowledging that we must first attempt "some definition of the term 'Christian education' and the related terms 'spiritual formation', 'theological education' and 'religious education'" before offering an extended discussion of how 'Christian education' "may be defined in a variety of ways", see p.x. Further, the 2018 publication, *Reimagining Christian Education* begins by outlining multiple, different ways in which the titular term has been understood and developed in the early twenty-first century. Luetz, et al., "Reimagining Christian education: cultivating transformative approaches," (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 4. In 2021, Trevor Cooling confidently opened a review of the book *Innovating Christian Education* with the claim, "The literature on Christian Education research is limited and of variable quality." Cooling, "Innovating Christian education research: Multidisciplinary perspectives," 43, no. 4 (2021), 490.

⁸ For example, Liberty University's Philosophy of Education reads, "Liberty University will promote the synthesis of academic knowledge and a Christian worldview in order that there might be a maturing of spiritual, intellectual, social and physical value-driven behaviour". "Mission Statement ", <https://www.liberty.edu/aboutliberty/index.cfm?PID=6899>. In his book, *Homeschooling in America*, Joseph Murphy claims that "the dominant Christian conservative sector of home-schooling [] organizations at the broadest level are about three goals: the Christianization, collectivization, and politicization of

who deem education to be Christian when the content of an entire curriculum aligns with the teachings of the Church (or at the very least, the convictions of the denomination concerned).⁹ In such cases, *Christian Education* is considered the inter-generational transfer of a particular set of Christian thoughts and beliefs – clearly differentiated from other educational approaches by the substance of the curriculum.¹⁰ Approaches to *Christian Education* that begin from a *why?* perspective often take the form of a conscious, institutional, Christian ethos or motivation for learning.¹¹ They concentrate on fostering teaching and learning environments with qualities commensurate with, or sympathetic to, Christian values, i.e., treating others as you would like to be treated and caring for the vulnerable in society. This approach often translates into student participation in worship and prayer alongside teaching sessions or volunteering in the community.¹² In comparison with the understanding in which *Christian Education* is entirely dependent on the material delivered, in *why?* shaped approaches, Christian values and beliefs are often adjoined to an otherwise unaffected pedagogy or considered an emergent property arising from it.

homeschooling". Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: capturing and assessing the movement* (New York, N.Y.: SkyHorse Pub., 2014), 43.

⁹ This is clearly demonstrated in resistance to the theory of evolution. "I Was Never Taught Where Humans Came From", <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/09/schools-still-dont-teach-evolution/598312/> offers a good summary of the ongoing battle between creationism and evolutionism in US courts and classrooms.

¹⁰ For a further definition of *Christian Education*, see Miranda, "Some Problems with the Expression 'Christian Education'," 8, no. 2 (1986).

¹¹ For example, the Chapel St. Community Schools Trust describes its Christian identity as grounded in "grace, love and fellowship". See "Our Approach to Education", <https://www.chapelst.org/education/what-is-a-chapel-st-school/>. For more on Christian ethos schools in the UK see, Francis, et al., "Christian ethos secondary schools in England and Wales: a common voice or wide diversity?," 39, no. 4 (2018). Although fewer in number, there is also a small number of independent, Christian ethos schools across Europe. For one example see the ACE network, <https://www.christian.education/>

¹² Hull had strong opinions on the place of Christian worship in school life, most notably detailed in *School worship: an obituary* (London: SCM Press, 1975), However, they primarily relate to the role of worship in state schools without a conscious, Christian foundation, not schools set up by independent Christian charities and academies.

The relative value and limitations of the above approaches aside, the most significant issue created by *what?*, *where?* and *when?* dominated understandings of *Christian Education*, is that while they compete – the *how?* is almost entirely overlooked.¹³ Fundamentally, paying primary attention to the *how?* of *Christian Education* suggests that it is defined by certain teaching and learning methods, rather than being dependent on the nature of material delivered or the ethos of the institution in which it is delivered. Among the many *Christian Education* volumes proposing effective curricula for Christian schools and Universities and church-based education programs, there is a small collection that addresses what this project refers to as theological pedagogy – the *how?* of *Christian Education*. Many of these are referenced in this research, but many also have limited relevance to this particular project because they either belong to different eras, primarily address children’s education or do not address a UK setting. Still more are so hidden within wider collections of essays that they are almost impossible to find unless searched for by name.

As I considered the prospect of doctoral research at the intersection of Christian faith and learning, both my personal experiences and observations regarding the lack of cohesion within *Christian Education* literature left me confused as to how to proceed. I reached out to a variety of authors, scholars and educators whose work demonstrated an interest (however peripheral) in theological pedagogy, asking for advice on how to further my interest. In the gracious responses I received, a particular title was mentioned in relation to Christian adult

¹³ Considered from the perspective of *teaching*, Parker Palmer considers that “what?”, “why?” and “how?” considerations of Christian teaching and learning are generally well covered, but the “who?” question is more neglected. “How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes?” Palmer, *The courage to teach: exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 19. Although, considered from the standpoint of learning as opposed to teaching, several sections (4.2.1. in particular) demonstrate that Palmer’s desire to address and include issues of pedagogical selfhood are of core importance to *disruptive-inclusion*.

education more regularly than any other: *What Prevents Christians from Learning?* by John Hull. From the book's title, one would be forgiven for assuming that (according to the above categorisation) *What Prevents...?* belongs to the *what?* category of approaches to *Christian Education*. However, on closer inspection, it quickly becomes clear that the primary concerns of *What Prevents...?* are with the *how?* and redefining the *why?* of *Education* for Christian adults. Put another way, in Hull's use of the phrase *Christian Education*, the word *Christian* functions adverbially and not adjectivally in relation to *Education*. *Christian* is a way *Education* is done. It is a posture to learning (and by extension, to teaching) that permeates its every element and stage, rather than the *Christianness* of *Education* being concentrated only in curriculum substance or ethos.

The substance of Hull's arguments for the *how?* and *why?* of CAL is fully addressed in chapter 4. However, it is important to acknowledge here that, as demonstrated by many of its initial reviewers, *What Prevents...?* is easily misinterpreted according to the standards associated with curriculum and ethos-based definitions of *Christian Education*. Based on these assumptions, it is unsurprising that some have deemed its content irrelevant and confusing: "faulty analysis"¹⁴ that does not make "the task any easier".¹⁵ This is also exacerbated by Hull's provocative style and non-linear structure (similar ideas are dispersed throughout, rather than grouped together). The most vocal opposition point to *What Prevents'?* meandering themes and under-corroborated claims as unhelpful in addressing the problems it raises. However, a more accurate description of its central question is, *What does it mean for Christian adults to learn?* and as a result, rather than offering concrete

¹⁴ Farmer, "Book Review: What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?," 36, no. 2 (1988), 193.

¹⁵ Farmer, "Book Review: What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?," 193.

solutions, *What Prevents...?* “leaves behind more questions than answers”.¹⁶ Not because it fails in its aim to offer a cohesive, comprehensive argument, but because it betrays a different, core interest. It suggests a pedagogical paradigm shift that goes to the heart of how Christian educators and learners perceive and posture themselves, relate to God and participate within a re-ordered reality.

My interest in *What Prevents...?* grew further upon discovering that it has taken up an unusual position in the field of *Christian Education*, or to speak of it on its own terms (as from here on and fully discussed in 2.1.1), *Christian Adult Learning*. Despite drawing relatively little scholarly attention and analysis (in comparison to Hull’s widely lauded publications regarding Religious Education in schools), the significance of *What Prevents...?* is anecdotally upheld by a range of leading scholars in the various disciplines intersecting CAL. The book has been repeatedly described to me as *the* quintessential address of CAL; an essential, enduring ‘classic’ on any self-respecting Christian educationalist’s bookshelf.¹⁷ Yet, among the seventeen chapters in Hull’s Festschrift, the solitary substantive reference to *What Prevents...?* is that although “significant”, “we will not dwell in detail on its contents here”.¹⁸ Although the exact reasons why respect for *What Prevents...?* has not translated into its more widespread analysis and influence may never be fully known, the following,

¹⁶ Unidentified, annotated booklist from John Hull’s personal collection, dated 1986, 31. Cadbury Special Collections, University of Birmingham.

¹⁷ Despite first publication more than 35 years ago, *What Prevents?* and articles such as *What is Theology of Education?* (most recently reprinted in February 2019) have featured in select bibliographies on Christian and Adult Education into the twenty-first century and remain regularly cited in academic texts at the intersection of theology and education. For example, <https://neice.webspace.durham.ac.uk/aceprogs/> and Chater, *Jesus Christ, learning teacher: where theology and pedagogy meet* (London: SCM Press, 2020).

¹⁸ Bates, “John Hull: a critical appreciation,” in *Education, religion and society: essays in honour of John M. Hull* (eds. Bates, et al.; London: Routledge, 2006), 17. Equally, in the 2009 collection of essays in Hull’s honour, the only direct reference to *What Prevents...?* is found in Hull’s own contribution.

underlying observations about the book offer some clues as to why this work has not yet been undertaken but also highlights its persisting, potential value.

Firstly, at no stage in either *What Prevents...?* nor anywhere else in his wider address of CAL does Hull offer a concise, theological learning methodology, or even suggest a central thesis or organising principle to his approach. Key, recurring themes do arise but overall, his broad, multi-disciplinary and the developing nature of his approach to CAL throughout his career means that a definitive 'Hullian' pedagogy simply does not exist.¹⁹ As a result, synthesising and analysing the implications of Hull's arguments in both *What Prevents...?* and his wider work on CAL is not a straightforward task and requires a *piecing* together of multiple segments against the backdrop of his global tone and approach.

Secondly, the difficulties created by the lack of an organising principle in *What Prevents...?* are exacerbated by the fact that the parameters of Hull's discussion are far broader than any of his other publications addressing specific issues related to CAL. In essence, if *What Prevents?* can be said to offer a single answer to its titular question, it is: CAL is prevented by many, inter-related factors. Seamlessly switching between sociology and anthropology, philosophy and cognitive psychology, biblical studies, educational theory and systematic

¹⁹ The closest Hull comes to "a theory of adult pedagogics" is in *Adult Religious Faith: Some Problems of Definition, of Research and of Education* Hull, "Adult Religious Faith: Some Problems of Definition, of Research and of Education," 40, no. 4 (1999), 45. Here, his analysis focuses on various perceptions of how the content and structure of adult religious learning combine. However, it is far from a conclusive or definitive framework. In fact, at a critical point in its argument Hull acknowledges, "We are on the point of breaking into a practical theology, but this will not be undertaken here". Hull, "Adult Religious Faith: Some Problems of Definition, of Research and of Education", 46. In a 2014 video, *The Learning Church*, Hull refers to his "theology of Christian education", but only expounds his meaning in the briefest terms, Hull, "North West and Mann Learning and Development Network: The Learning Church," (2014). The final chapter of *What Prevents...?* contains some of the necessary components for a hypothetical "theology of learning", 212. However, to refer to it as a thorough educational methodology would be misleading. In fact, in 1999 Hull stated, "There is no universal or perennial Christian education, since Christian education is always a branch of practical theology" Hull, "Karl Marx on Capital: Some Implications for Christian Adult Education," 38, no. 1 (1997).

theology, its chapters draw on an array of contributory factors and allude to a range of their potential implications for CAL. While biblical scholars occasionally consider issues relating to educational methodology, a few educational philosophers acknowledge the practical implications of their theorising and various ecclesial practitioners explore the theological territory of learning methodology,²⁰ *What Prevents...?* stands apart as a truly intersectional discussion located at the overlap of all of the above (and other) academic disciplines. As a result of Hull's determination to oscillate between and refuse to *land* his discussion in any single, academic field, *What Prevents?* straddles categorisation as either a theological assessment of pedagogy or a pedagogical analysis of theology. Although it cannot be said to make a wholly unique contribution to the wider field, or even within 1980s CAL, its arguments can be said to occupy a different *space* to much of the rest of Hull's work and the vast majority of other addresses of the same topic.

Thus, in summary, this project resulted from the collision of the above, three, key observations. Firstly, as both an adult Christian learner and educator, I had experienced how little CAL practice was robustly informed by an underpinning theological pedagogy. Secondly, I had surmised that a major, contributory factor to this was the disjointed, difficult-to-navigate, literature of *Christian Education* largely focusing on issues related the *Christianness* of educational institutions, curriculum content and ethos. Finally, in *What Prevents...?*, I had discovered a serious, inter-disciplinary address of CAL theological pedagogy that was generally well received but whose potential, wider influence and

²⁰ E.g., Brüggemann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1982), Smart, *The teacher and Christian belief* (London: Clarke, 1966), and Seymour and Miller, *Theological approaches to Christian education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1990), respectively.

appropriation had been limited by its lack of an organising principle and refusal to *locate* itself in any particular, existing discipline.

As my engagement with Hull's work on CAL continued, I became increasingly convinced that identifying an appropriate central thesis or organising principle for *What Prevents...?* could provide a helpful starting point from which its arguments could more substantially participate in, and shape conversations concerning, the nature of CAL and in turn, potentially influence and inform contemporary practice. The following sections explain the basis on which I arrived at the organising principle of *disruptive-inclusion*. Initially, it is sufficient to recognise a threefold rationale behind its conception and presentation. Firstly, *disruptive-inclusion* is designed to present a cohesive analysis of the argument of *What Prevents...?* on its own terms, that is needed to encourage sustained engagement in Hull's arguments on how CAL might be understood and practised. Secondly, its aim is to demonstrate how Hull's inter-disciplinary, compelling resistance to overly simplistic, compartmentalised approaches to *Christian Education* in *What Prevents...?* is capable of providing a different starting place for a richer, more nuanced and *joined-up* discussion concerning the nature and aims of *Christian Education* in its many forms. Thirdly, *disruptive-inclusion* acknowledges that such a paradigm shift in contemporary research is required to underpin long-overdue improvements in CAL practice.

1.2. Project Approach: methodological and thematic foci

Moving from underlying motivation to method, this threefold rationale provides a tripartite superstructure for this project. After being introduced in this opening chapter, in chapters 2, 3, and 4, a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL (argued primarily from *What Prevents...?*)

functions as the fulcrum of a detailed and multifocal analysis of Hull's theoretical approach to, and personal experience of, CAL (part A). Then, in chapters 5 and 6, *What Prevents...?* functions as a touchstone for a wider contextualisation of Hull's theological pedagogy within various geographic locations, the academic debate into which it entered in 1985 and recent developments in practical theology more broadly (part B). In other words, in part B, *disruptive-inclusion* is clarified both in connection to, and in contrast with, other conversations and specific approaches concerning CAL. Thirdly, chapters 7, 8 and 9 primarily employ an analytic, autoethnographic framework in which "personal experience becomes a data source for a critically reflexive methodology" and *disruptive-inclusion* acts as a springboard from which the discussion moves beyond direct observations of that while Hull understands to prevent effective CAL and its place within the wider debate, onto to its potential, future developments and applications (part C). Thus, chapters 7 and 8 employ particular examples from the author's experience to consolidate earlier arguments concerning *disruptive-inclusion's* potential to positively impact CAL experiences and outcomes in a range of settings.²¹

1.2.1. A disruptive-inclusive building project

To further nuance and outline the above, methodological progression in tangible terms, the project's chapters are presented as representing stages of a construction project. The particular functions of various stages are outlined at the beginning of each chapter. However, overall, it serves to convey several, significant elements of both Hull's and this project's approach to CAL. The construction of a building suggests an overarching shape and

²¹ See Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography," 35, no. 4 (2006) and Walton, *Writing methods in theological reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2014), 3.

direction of progression, without treating any contributory process as discrete or disconnected from the others. For example, the foundations must precede the construction of the rest of the building, but they must also be designed with its eventual, desired shape and function in mind. Many other construction processes run in parallel and reciprocally interform. Decisions concerning roof and windows must take into consideration the potential noise and light implications for the desired use of the space. Likewise, there are several stages within the argument for *disruptive-inclusive* CAL which necessarily appear early in the discussion, but all reciprocally inter-inform to contribute to a holistic outcome.

According to this pattern, Chapter 1 is presented as the *envisioning* stage of building, in which its primary tasks are to express the specific aims of the eventual structure, define its limits and understand its essential rationale. Chapter 2 is couched as the surveying of the site. Any architectural design must take into account the characteristics of the ground on which it will physically stand. In this case, the pedagogical *ground of disruptive-inclusion* is proposed as Hull's work on CAL (particularly *What Prevents...?*) and therefore, this chapter offers a thorough survey of its foundational elements in increasing levels of relevant detail. Chapter 3 is understood in terms of drawing up of specific plans based on the findings of the survey. In this way, chapters 2 and 3 work in tandem to provide clarity as to the overall scope of the project and translate its initial aims, limits and rationale into a specific (but still only theoretical) size and shape and specify necessary, further preparations before the physical construction can begin.

In line with the overall argument made for *disruptive-inclusion*, having completed the preparatory stages in chapters 1, 2 and 3 (setting out the building's footprint and pouring its foundations), chapters 4 and 5 represent a procedural, liminal space between the invisible,

preliminary work and creating the visible shape of the eventual building. Thus, chapter 4's pivotal, detailed examination of Hull's lived, learning experience as represented in *What Prevents...?* is understood in terms of the setting out of a clear footprint for the building – pacing out its eventual shape and setting on the site and offering a first, material engagement between the theoretical and experiential. Then, following that outline, chapter 5's wider contextualisation of Hull's views on CAL is proposed as the creation of sufficient foundations to enable the structural integrity necessary for the future construction.

Chapters 6 and 7 represent the phases of active construction. Chapter 6, *translating blueprint to concrete*, recognises the complex, close relationship between planners and builders as ideas take physical shape, so that the final product is both theoretically sound but also able to fulfil its practical purpose. In the development of Practical Theology in the UK, CAL scholarship more specifically, and the ongoing challenges of CAL methodology and practices, it is clear that simple, mono-directional progression from theory to practice does not result in good outcomes - the relationship must be reciprocal. Following this, chapter 7's discussion of a *connected* approach to biblical CAL tests out the idea presented in chapter 6, by demonstrating the kinds of collaboration between the theoretical and practical required to avoid either a building that is unusable because the builders took insufficient heed of the planners or vice versa. Specifically, it makes the case that the Bible should be considered the *mortar* holding together a *disruptive-inclusive* CAL structure. Overall, chapter 7 answers the question: how does a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to a biblical, theological pedagogy demonstrate the effective, ongoing collaboration of theory and practice in CAL?

Finally, chapter 8's discussions concerning CAL classroom settings (i.e., in churches or of theological education or training providers), teaching sermons and COVID-shaped learning

are understood as the completion of the construction process by its appropriate *fitting out* with materials and furnishings that serve its ultimate identity as a facilitator of human life. This chapter addresses the question: how can different learning settings within a *disruptive-inclusive* structure be shaped and equipped to best fulfil their specific functions?

As outlined in the overview, chapter 9 acknowledges that as with a new building, the answer to the question, *what is the building like?* is far more effectively *experienced* than narrated. The concluding chapter offers a summary of its major points, rather than offering any supplementary argumentation. Furthermore, in the hope that this first, *disruptive-inclusive* structure will not be the last (but continue to be supplemented and re-developed in line with the changing needs of the dynamic CAL community), this project concludes by offering some ideas as to how *disruptive-inclusion* may function as (borrowing Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza's language from chapter 7) a *structuring-prototype* for further research in the area of CAL methodology and practice.

1.2.2. The medium is the message: a postliberal methodology?

Before summarising the overall argument presented here, it is important to recognise that the substance of the argument presented for *disruptive-inclusion* and several of the means by which it is explored, share some of the concerns of *postliberal* theology and hermeneutics.²² Namely, the repeated rejection of either-or frameworks in favour of both-and options (what Roland Michener refers to as “a *tertium quid* solution between the[]

²² Frei, *The eclipse of Biblical narrative: a study in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974), and Lindbeck, *The nature of doctrine: religion and theology in a postliberal age* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1984), are widely considered to have laid the foundations for postliberal theological discourse.

perceived extremes of modernism and propositionalism”);²³ the close discussion of the relationship between theory and practice and boundaries between Church and world; explorations of the pedagogical implications of a biblically-based, narrative pedagogy of CAL and more specifically, critical-realism.²⁴ Overall, it is fair to say that *disruptive-inclusion* aligns with (methodologically, if not always thematically) postmodernism’s call for a shift in which seemingly incompatible concepts and concerns “are overlapped, dismantled, and reconstituted on a new and different plane”.²⁵

However, this is not to suggest that this project takes a *postliberal*, theological approach or more broadly, offers a *postliberal* pedagogy, for several reasons. Firstly, because postliberalism, particularly as it relates to epistemology and pedagogy, “encompasses several different, sometimes competing, proposals”²⁶ and this would require a tightly-defined argument as to *which* or *whose* postliberalism was being assumed, and thus become undesirably narrow. Secondly, although it is not impossible to identify some echoes of postliberalism in Hull’s pedagogical propositions, it would be misleading to suggest that he considered himself representing such a standpoint. In fact, as both Trevor Cooling and Dennis Bates have acknowledged, Hull’s agenda is likely better categorised as radical, liberalist rather than postliberal.²⁷ Bates loosely categorises Hull’s theology within Hans

²³ Michener, *Postliberal Theology: a Guide for the Perplexed: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), 2.

²⁴ Walter Bruggemann identifies the core facets of post-liberal exegesis as: imagination, *the critique of ideology*, the importance of embodied contextualisation and the *practical urgency* of the task – all of which are discussed later in the project. See Bruggemann, “The re-emergence of Scripture: post-liberalism,” in *Using the Bible in pastoral practice: readings in the place and function of Scripture in the church* (eds. Ballard and Holmes; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2006).

²⁵ Hunsinger, “Postliberal theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (ed. Vanhoozer; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44.

²⁶ Hector, “Postliberal Hermeneutics: Narrative, Community, and the Meaning of Scripture,” 122, no. 3 (2010), 106.

²⁷ Cooling, *A Christian vision for state education: reflections on the theology of education* (London: SPCK, 1994), 67. Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 25.

Frei's type three theology in which "the real question ... is, how is Christian self-description related to external descriptions of Christianity?"²⁸ Or, as Bates quotes David Ford's summary of Frei's type three: "all sorts of philosophies or worldviews might help in doing Christian theology".²⁹

Thus, in relation to postliberal, theological methodology, this project takes a similar methodological stance to Astley's *Ordinary Theology* project that "shares the 'postliberal' theological emphasis on the actual religious tradition in which people are formed, and its communal context" but also draws on a far wider range of resources and disciplines in a "more distanced critical reflection and evaluation of ... given belief-systems".³⁰ In short, as thoroughly addressed later, although Hull repeatedly determined that CAL ought to be addressed on its own terms, he equally insisted that any learning progress was impossible without reference beyond itself.

This project takes the manner of its presentation seriously as a means of reinforcing the *disruptive-inclusive* pedagogy it argues is both central to the content of Hull's work on CAL and experienced in the reading of *What Prevents...?* Thus, arguably its most significant *postliberal* methodological trait is its determination to blur medium and message. Just as *postliberalism* asserts that, "Human thinking, acting, and judging are deeply rooted in the forms of life from which they emerge",³¹ so too this project's arguments for a particular, pedagogical approach emerge from a structure that is not just an empty, neutral vehicle for

²⁸ Frei, et al., *Types of Christian theology* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 35.

²⁹ Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 20 quoting Ford, *Theology: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27.

³⁰ "Exploring Ordinary Theology: A Research Project", <https://neice.webspace.durham.ac.uk/ordinary/>

³¹ Michener, *Postliberal Theology: a Guide for the Perplexed: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 15.

the communication of *disruptive-inclusive* ideas but also participates in, and consolidates, their presentation.

Therefore, while not compromising readability, where necessary, this project does not refuse opportunities to challenge and potentially *disrupt* reader expectation. For example, multiple chapters of this project deal with the implications of *disruptive-inclusion's* rejection of either-or paradigms in favour of both-and frameworks. This is mirrored methodologically in that, after the metaphorical language of construction outlined above, the next most common arena of imagery used by this project is the arts – music, poetry, painting, theatre, play and imagination. Acknowledging that architecture is also a deeply creative discipline, it remains counter-intuitive to argue for a building's structural stability as shaped by its *poetic* and *playful* nature. Bricks and songs, concrete and imaginative play sit together and invite the simultaneous embrace of the abstract, ethereal and subjective alongside the material and measurable – a tension that epitomises *disruptive-inclusive* CAL.

As well as re-enforcing the connection between the method and message of this research, it is hoped that the above choice to offer a both-and rather than an either-or approach might also achieve a far more personal goal. Although I never met Hull in person, in poring over his writings and from the knowing smiles and countless stories of those who worked with, learned from and loved him, I have come to understand that a strong commitment to the unconventional and not easily categorised, is representative of Hull's strong-minded soul and mischievous streak. In a quote that sums up Hull's resistance to simple, predictable, formulaic responses, he claimed in 1997, "There is no direct path. There is a long detour, a stripping off, a laying bare, a circuitous track by means of which we discover that in losing

everything, not everything is lost, that in losing we find and in dying we live".³² Therefore, the choices represented in the following project are not only a vehicle by which a thorough argument is conveyed (although it is my sincere hope that this is also true) but they also aim to offer a more holistic insight into the theologian, educator and learner Hull was and I have become in the process of its creation.

1.3. Project Summary: key elements and areas of discussion

Having outlined the basis on which the principal research question was chosen and the methodological concerns that structure this overall response to it, this closing section of the introduction summarises the various components that comprise the substance of the discussion.

2.1. begins by clarifying how this project understands CAL and outlines the essential *content*, *purpose* and *relationships of disruptive-inclusion* in comparison and contrast with other approaches. Overall, it presents a pedagogy that extends beyond formal classroom settings to learning that occurs in all of life. It concludes by introducing two key, recurring phrases from *What Prevents...?* that are central to Hull's theological pedagogy: *optimum distance* and *multiplicity of vision*. 2.2. moves from presentation to demonstration of these concepts by exploring Hull's analysis of John 10. In the Fourth Evangelist's presentation, Hull perceives Jesus' core pedagogical function as facilitating learning disruption. Parallel to this, Hull also surmises that Jesus' facilitation of learning disruption is not an end in itself but leads to the inclusion of that which otherwise would have remained beyond learner purview. 2.3.

³² Hull, *On sight & insight: a journey into the world of blindness* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 233.

concludes with an initial consideration of how *disruption* and *inclusion* come together to facilitate CAL.

Consolidating these ideas, chapter 3 offers a close analysis of how *disruption* and *inclusion* simultaneously function in Hull's interpretation of John 10, and particularly John 10:9 (I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture). Exploration of the passage and Hull's reading thereof concentrates on the pedagogical implications of Jesus' role as θύρα (gate or door for sheep), the location and identity of other characters in the passage and the role of *otherness* in learning. 3.2. makes the case that a central facet of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is the repeated, passing back-and-forth through an *in-between* learning space or mode. In 3.3., the chapter concludes with a demonstration of the implications of defining learning progress in terms of repeated *coming in and going out*. What does it look like to encourage learning in *in-between* places? How can learning facilitate repeated movement *back-and-forth*?

Chapter 4 offers further analysis of the key tenets of *disruptive-inclusion* but turns to consider how they arise from the context of Hull's lived experience (particularly his transition from sighted to blind person) as well as his published work. Developing the themes introduced in chapter 3, 4.1. addresses Hull's personal embodiment of pedagogical boundary crossing; the necessity of making space for self and others in learning and understanding CAL in terms of dynamism and emergence rather than stasis and arrival. Fundamentally, 4.2. explores how Hull's self-acknowledged first book written as a blind author, *What Prevents...?* is the quintessential exposition and embodiment of his theological pedagogy of CAL and a potentially, significantly overlooked contribution to contemporary CAL theory and practice.

Chapter 5 considers where and how a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL relates to other contributions to the debate. 5.1. examines the UK setting in which Hull's pedagogical views emerged; analyses the wider European setting in which his opinions developed and identifies some of the North-American conversations within which his arguments resonate. Specifically, 5.1.1. addresses how Hull's early 1970s engagements with sociologist Paul Hirst set the trajectory for many of Hull's later emerging pedagogical foci. 5.1.2. assesses the role of Hull's founding of, and the subsequent, ongoing influence of ISREV (International Seminal for Religious and Educational Values) in the development of his theological pedagogy throughout his career, as epitomised in a particular exchange with Karl-Ernst Nipkow. Finally, 5.1.3. examines how some of Hull's key assumptions and conclusions concerning CAL align more with late twentieth century, North American scholarship than UK or European-based pedagogical debates.

Where 5.1. frames the discussion of *disruptive-inclusion's* most essential affinities and influences in geographic terms, 5.2. takes a thematic approach, analysing its convergence with some of the most significant themes arising in the field of CAL, both during and since the 1980s. Firstly, it explores the pedagogical relationship between the individual and the corporate. Drawing on Personalism and the work of Maria Harris and Paulo Freire, 5.2.1. analyses how a fundamentally *human* pedagogy does not place individual and corporate learning in competition but necessitates their deep and multi-layered co-operation.

Secondly, 5.2.2. analyses the widely employed language of journeying, pilgrimage and horizon in relation to learning: namely, how the idea of finding the *correct answer* can be displaced as the fixed *home* of learning success and how *disruptive-inclusion* presents learning as a *way* or *horizon* to follow that is neither conflated back into traditional

pedagogical paradigms nor so *other* that it is impossible for learners to understand or engage.

Thirdly, 5.2.3. considers *disruptive-inclusion* in relation to the influential work on learning development stages and formation, most famously presented by James Fowler. In particular, it considers the pedagogical implications of transitioning between the different phases outlined by Fowler and the potential significance of this in relation to earlier claims that *disruptive-inclusion* is best understood in terms of crossing boundaries.

Chapter 6 functions as a structural fulcrum in the project between analysis and application (as more fully explained in 1.2.) that re-enforces the holistic approach that is materially central to *disruptive-inclusive CAL* and to the structure of this project's overall presentation of it. Moving from contextualising Hull's work within its contemporary, 1980s setting to considering it set against an early, twenty-first century backdrop, 6.1. contextualises *disruptive-inclusive CAL* within the recent development of Practical Theology as a theological discipline (particularly in the UK), with specific focus on how its progression is defined by the changing relationship between *practical* and *theology*. Specifically, it considers John Swinton and Harriet Mowat's *complexified* Practical Theology, Jan Meyer and Ray Land's Threshold Concepts Framework and Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning as key demonstrations of the essential, reciprocal relationship between pedagogical theory and practice. A brief interlude (6.5.) then seeks to underline the importance of purposefully lingering in the methodological *in-between*, even if the linear nature of projects such as this cannot avoid chronological progression to the next stage.

Chapter 7 begins in earnest to demonstrate the benefits of pedagogical crossing back-and-forth in repeatedly passing between the theoretical analysis of *disruptive-inclusion* and its practical implementation in a range of settings. Its primary focus is to progress *disruptive-inclusion* beyond analysis of Hull's existing work on CAL and examine areas of its potential future development and implementation. To achieve this, chapter 7 outlines one, comprehensive, multi-layered and multi-perspectival illustration of this: the potential impact of *disruptive-inclusion* on biblical learning. Drawing together Hull's dispersed comments on the topic, 7.1. demonstrates that Hull's core insistence is that biblical learning ought not be solely an *instructional* process for Christian adult learners but defined by a sense of *loss* and *re-ideologization*. Consolidating the intersectional patterns introduced in chapter 3 of crossing boundaries and lingering in the pedagogical *in-between*, chapter 7 demonstrates the necessarily *connected* nature of a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to biblical CAL. It expounds Hull's suggestions that pedagogical engagement with the Bible should be shaped by its *inner-connectivity*, *inter-connectivity* and *extra-connectivity*. However, it also recognises that moving from an *instructional* pedagogical posture in biblical learning, to a *connected* approach facilitated by *loss* and *re-ideologization* does not require just a few, minor modifications but a complete *re-casting* or paradigm shift in CAL methodology and practice.

Specifically, 7.2. argues that the diverse *inner-connectivity* of the Bible's composition offers significant guidance as to its pedagogical function, particularly highlighting how historical-critical methods alone are unable to facilitate interpretive interaction between part and whole. Rather, it presents Walter Bruggemann's approach to canonical criticism as an effective example of leveraging the *inner-connected* canonical community of the Bible in its

pedagogical function. The influence of these themes is then illustrated via extended, musical metaphors from the author's classroom practice and Anthony Reddie's work on the Black, jazz community.

7.3. offers a further *re-casting* of biblical CAL, highlighting the need for an *inter-connected* approach. Just as the previous section argued the importance of *two-way traffic* between *part* and *whole*, 7.3. applies the same principle to *old* and *new* approaches to biblical CAL. With a particular focus on the importance of moving previously dismissed views to the centre of the discussion, it presents the potential (and often overlooked) value of pre-critical biblical interpretation to contemporary biblical CAL. It concludes by modelling the potential impact of purposely engaging both *old* and *new* biblical learning via a worked example of a student assignment comparing and contrasting ancient and modern interpretations of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Finally, 7.4. offers a third *re-casting* of biblical CAL according to the *connected* nature of *disruptive-inclusion* by addressing the controversial perspective of *extra-connected* CAL. This focuses on Hull's consistent determination that all forms of CAL are most effective when they interact beyond the limits of the Christian faith – an argument Hull encapsulates in an idea he calls *critical openness*. Discussion focuses on the strengths and limitations of both *critical openness* and Cooling's counter suggestion of *critical realism* as the optimum means of outworking a *connected*, dynamic and yet not entirely amorphous pedagogy of biblical CAL. In response to both Hull and Cooling's suggestions, chapter 7 concludes by positing that where *critical openness* and *critical realism* both fail to translate into biblical CAL that retains criticality without being limited to it, a *playful, theopoetic* approach to biblical CAL is far more capable of holding together these seemingly paradoxical concepts. It argues that by

functioning in the realm of *play* and *imagination*, *poetics* simultaneously *grounds* learners in reality *and* transports them beyond – achieving a relationship between *open* and *closed* biblical CAL that is both expansive and detail-oriented.

Chapter 8 concludes the main body of the project by considering how the implementation of a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL looks, sounds and feels in three, specific settings.

Firstly, discussion focuses on *disruptive-inclusion* practised in CAL classroom settings (i.e., of a theological education or training provider or adult, Sunday schools). Defined as a learning format that facilitates live dialogue, it considers how the beginning, central focus and ending of such classroom sessions (or sets of sessions) can optimally encourage *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. In relation to starter activities, based in an example from the author's practice, 8.1.1. details how introducing potentially challenging topics using deeply unfamiliar content and methods can be more conducive to *disruptive-inclusive* CAL than beginning with the comforting and familiar. In relation to the main body or focus of classroom sessions, 8.1.2. argues that in line with James Smith's work on *pedagogies of desire*, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL suggests that, rather than the central focus of a CAL session being cognitive ascent to pedagogical process (i.e., conscious articulation of how learning is occurring), the foundational aim of CAL classroom sessions ought to be the re-orientation of learners' desire –i.e., practising enjoying (and potentially even learning to love) *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. 8.1.3. concludes by suggesting how *disruptive-inclusion* can transform the close of classroom sessions into gateways to further phases of CAL.

8.2. takes up the same question of how *disruptive-inclusion* looks, sounds and feels, but in relation to the traditional teaching sermon – a format not generally considered to create opportunities for learner dialogue and interaction. Building on the previous concepts of

theopoetic CAL and further consolidating Smith's work concerning the *re-storying of the pedagogical imagination*, 8.2.2. argues that even when live dialogue is not available, a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to preaching creates opportunities for interactive CAL engagement. Based in Mark Allan Powell's advice to *cast the scriptures* and Ellen Davis' suggestion that sermons ought to *illuminate not illustrate* the biblical text, the discussion outlines how a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to *re-storying the pedagogical imagination* can employ evocative language, takes an aesthetic, experiential approach requiring learners to *join the dots* for themselves and incorporates the comedic. The discussion closes with an example of a *disruptive-inclusive* sermon whose topic is Revelation chapters 19-20 and associated analysis of how its features epitomise *disruptive-inclusive* CAL practice.

8.3. addresses *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, it focuses on both the pedagogical opportunities and limitations of online CAL including the blurring of formal and informal learning modes; the shifting of barriers to participation and the potential of a pedagogical 'new normal'. As more fully explained in 1.2. and following Hull's example, the answers to *how?* pedagogical questions resist easy summary into a set of neat, consecutive points. Thus, given the central focus of this project to outline how *disruptive-inclusion* illuminates Hull's contribution to CAL and clarifies its potential implications for CAL methodology and practice, in a significant sense, this project's conclusions *are* its arguments. Thus, chapter 9 concludes with a summary of the major implications of *disruptive-inclusion* for the understanding of Hull's views on CAL methodology and practice, a range of suggestions for further *disruptive-inclusive* research and finally some personal, concluding comments on the experience of completing the project.

PART A: WHAT PREVENTS...? AS FOUNDATION OF HULL'S *DISRUPTIVE-INCLUSIVE* ANALYSIS AND EXPERIENCE OF CAL.

Chapter 2: Surveying the site. Identifying the core characteristics of Hull's theological pedagogy and *disruptive-inclusion*.

In the overarching construction metaphor that shapes this project, this chapter is represented by the process of surveying the conditions of the chosen site. Before any of the groundwork can take place or specific plans be drawn up, the particular qualities of the designated ground must be ascertained. Any discoveries can then be taken into account in the overall shape and substance of the resulting building. In this case, the *ground* of this project is Hull's theological pedagogy of CAL. Thus, this chapter comprises three subsections. 2.1. offers an overarching survey of Hull's approach to CAL: beginning by tracing the primary, conceptual implications of his views, comparing and contrasting them with others' and excluding some of the issues beyond the scope of this project. This overview then forms the basis of an initial introduction of the core mechanisms and essential traits of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. 2.2. then offers a more in-depth introduction as to how Hull imagines the functions of disruption and inclusion in CAL, based in his various readings of John 10. The chapter closes by explaining why the exact nature of the pedagogical collaboration between disruption and inclusion is so important and sketches some of the first details as to how Hull surmises this occurs. By the end of the *surveying* stage, enough information should have been gleaned to begin drawing up a detailed plan for a *disruptive-inclusive* structure for CAL.

2.1. Identifying the challenges of working at this intersection: introducing CAL and *disruptive-inclusion*

As highlighted in chapter 1, a major challenge of research at the intersection of Christian theology and education is a lack of consistency in key terminology. This point is aptly

demonstrated by *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, whose title, at the very least, suggests that its core discussion addresses a person-centred activity and does not primarily comment on broader, structural or administrative perspectives of *Christian Education*. This is confirmed in Hull's opening declaration that *What Prevents...?* is "concerned with those adults in the churches who find religious learning difficult".³³

However, even this illustrates Hull's fluent, interchangeable use of terms such as *religious learning, Christian learning, Christian Education and theological adult education*. As declared earlier, for clarity, and to highlight Hull's ultimate pedagogical focus (particularly in *What Prevents...?*) on people, rather than institutions, curriculum or ethos, this project exclusively refers to Hull's central concern as Christian adult learning (CAL) or theological pedagogy.³⁴

However, as also outlined earlier, Hull does not offer a precise, succinct definition of CAL and therefore, before a case can be made for *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, as clear as possible an understanding of his most fundamental, pedagogical convictions must be ascertained. I.e., any argument presenting Hull's views on CAL through a particular lens must first address the much more foundational question: what exactly does *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* mean by *Christian Adult Learning?*

2.1.1. CAL's primary concern: Christian learning in all of adult life

While neither *What Prevents...?* nor *disruptive-inclusion* directly address issues relating to formal, University education, Religious Education taught in schools or the education of Christian children, the implications of this project's arguments may extend into a range of learning settings and its discussions reference Hull's work on several of the above themes.

³³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, ix.

³⁴ There are a few exceptions to this, where other terms are used in to accurately represent others' arguments. For example, the discussion concerning North American contributions to the CAL debate in 5.1.3. However, this is always noted when the case.

However, without undermining the importance of formal education settings (8.1. addresses the specific implications of *disruptive-inclusion* for the CAL classroom setting, i.e., of a theological education or training provider), the central interest of this project is Hull's approach to Christian adult theological pedagogy broadly worked out in "the life of Christian learning".³⁵

The first, essential trait of Hull's theological pedagogy of CAL is that *learning* is not limited to formal educational opportunities, spaces or mechanisms. Rather, it takes place in all of life – both mundane routine and pivotally significant life events.³⁶ "We learn all the time. We learn without knowing that we are learning. We even learn as we breathe, simply and progressively".³⁷ Thus, as succinctly expressed by Peter Jarvis, this project asserts that "lifelong learning is not the same as lifelong education – learning and education are fundamentally different concepts".³⁸ In turn, the primary question is not *whether* learning is taking place but analysis of the *kinds* and *quality* of learning happening.³⁹ CAL understood in this sense is not measured according to information retained or qualifications gained. Hull gauges CAL progress according to the quality of connected engagement between self, others, the wider learning environment and God in all of life. In Hull's words, the fundamental aim of CAL is to be "more aware of itself, more coherent, more integrated,

³⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, xi.

³⁶ These events are variously referred to by James Fowler as "intrusive marker events", Fowler, *Faith development and pastoral care* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1987), 105, Mezirow as "special dilemmas" Mezirow, "Perspective Transformation," 9, no. 2 (1977), 154 and Friedrich Schweitzer as "Schlüsselerfahrungen" (marker [or literally, key] experiences) Biehl, et al., *Jahrbuch der Religionspädagogik (JRP). Band 16 (1999): Schlüsselerfahrungen* (2000), 191-215. The polyvalent term *event* is purposely used here to avoid any unwanted allusion to the specific nature of these occurrences. At this early stage, it is sufficient to recognise that such significant experiences can be either momentarily fleeting or significantly longer, seasonal episodes.

³⁷ Dunne, et al., "The Pedagogics of Unlearning," (Baltimore, Md.: Project Muse, 2020), 15.

³⁸ Jarvis, *Adult and continuing education: theory and practice* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

³⁹ Jarvis, *Adult and continuing education: theory and practice*, 87.

more supple, readier for further change and better related to the reality which faith confronts today".⁴⁰

Another foundational element of Hull's theological pedagogy of CAL comes into focus when considered from the perspective of educators. Learning principally concerned with quality of connection shifts an educator's function from expert information transfer to that of model *connector*. Thus, teaching is defined more in terms of demonstrating optimal responses to inevitable learning challenges; equipping learners to accurately monitor and optimise their own learning engagement and progress than telling learners the 'correct' answers. Hull describes CAL as "not the education of content through the imparting of theological knowledge but it is the promotion of the ability to deal in a flexible and adaptive way with theological problems".⁴¹ A *disruptive-inclusive* educator's role thus takes the form of learning guide responsible for skilling in leveraging challenges in support of progress, not protecting learners from potential difficulties. Subsequently, Hull displaces the classroom as the *destination* of learning opportunities. Instead, the classroom functions as a pedagogical laboratory or rehearsal studio in which learners practise a range of learning scenarios, with the aim of being better prepared to fully participate in multiple learning opportunities encountered in everyday life.⁴²

Hull's pedagogical focus on prioritising growth in quality and scope of relatedness via embracing challenge is shared by many. Jarvis explains that, "Through the process of maturation human beings have a variety of experiences some of which might integrate

⁴⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 82.

⁴¹ Hull, "Adult Religious Faith: Some Problems of Definition, of Research and of Education", 41.

⁴² 8.1. explores how the classroom can function as a pedagogical *dry-run*.

creatively with the previous biography but sometimes a process of restructuring occurs".⁴³ Mezirow imagines Christian maturity as a "Development process of movement through the adult years toward meaning-perspectives that are progressively more inclusive, discriminating, and more integrative of experience".⁴⁴ Crucially then, Hull's most basic pedagogical conception consolidates and functions alongside many existing approaches.⁴⁵ However, one significant difference between Hull's and many others' understandings of how CAL might be enriched, accelerated and extended is Hull's lack of concern with identifying optimum pedagogical locations (i.e. *where?*), nor prescribing curriculum content (*what?*), nor the mechanics of learner stage or age (*when?*). Rather, his concern is with *how* the key to CAL is adopting the optimum learning posture and unpacking the theological and pedagogical consequences of adopting said posture. It is this posture, based in the above observations of Hull's basic approach to CAL that this project refers to as *disruptive-inclusion*.

2.1.2. CAL: not vague, abstract or 'empty'

Recently, some educationalists have questioned the move from terminology of *education* to *learning*. In particular, Gert Biesta has critiqued what he calls the *learnification* of education.⁴⁶ In brief, his criticism is that "the ambition to counter a one-sided emphasis ... on the input side of education, without paying sufficient attention to what all this does on the

⁴³ Jarvis, "Learning as a Religious Phenomenon," in *Adult Education and Theological Interpretations* (eds. Jarvis and Walters; Malabar, Fla: Krieger Pub. Co, 1993), 10.

⁴⁴ Mezirow, "Perspective Transformation", 159.

⁴⁵ Later chapters demonstrate the major intersections between Hull's arguments and a variety of well-attested frameworks of CAL. In particular, 4.2.3. considers Fowler's *Stages of faith* Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1981). However, alongside this, Hull also recognises the contributions to faith stage development theory made by Daniel J. Levinson, Robert Kegan and particularly Erik H. Erikson.

⁴⁶ See Biesta, "Freeing Teaching from Learning: Opening Up Existential Possibilities in Educational Relationships," 34, no. 3 (2015), Biesta, "Should Teaching be Re(dis)covered? Introduction to a Symposium," 38, no. 5 (2019) and Biesta and Hannam, "Religion and education: the forgotten dimensions of religious education?," (Leiden: Brill Sense, 2021).

side of people and students”,⁴⁷ has resulted in the vague, “unhelpful” and “empty” use of the language of *learning*.⁴⁸ Likely, Biesta would include Hull’s address of CAL with its seeming disinterest in optimum pedagogical location, curriculum content or mechanics or learner stage and age in the following criticism: “The problem with the language of learning is that it is a language that refers to processes that are ‘empty’ with regard to content and purpose ... the point of education is not that students learn, but that they learn *something*, that they learn it for particular *reasons*, and that they learn it from *someone*”.⁴⁹ Although it is obviously impossible to claim that Hull’s 1985 presentation either understands Biesta’s concerns or addresses his claims, this project presents *What Prevents...?* and Hull’s theological pedagogy of CAL as an example of how *learning* research need not fall into the traps with which Biesta is concerned.

As claimed in chapter 1 and demonstrated throughout, rather than offering a *thin* description of learning, Hull’s deeply theological address of the *how* of CAL unavoidably spills into areas of content and purpose – what exactly is being *done*, *why*, and *to whom* etc.? The substance of these arguments is addressed in later chapters. However, the fundamental observation here is that Hull’s discussions of *learning* can never be *empty* or become disconnected from its embodied practice or underlying motivation because he holds that the *content* of learning (i.e., what is available to be learned) is not limited to the substance of information transferred – the *how* of learning – the posture adopted by all who participate,

⁴⁷ Biesta, "Education, Education, Education: Reflections on a Missing Dimension," in *Religion and education: the forgotten dimensions of religious education?*(ed. Biesta and Hannam; Leiden: Brill Sense, 2021), 10.

⁴⁸ Biesta, "Freeing Teaching from Learning: Opening Up Existential Possibilities in Educational Relationships", 230 and 234.

⁴⁹ Biesta, "Freeing Teaching from Learning: Opening Up Existential Possibilities in Educational Relationships", 234. Biesta’s counter-suggestions are ‘pupilling’ and ‘studenting’ Biesta, "Freeing Teaching from Learning: Opening Up Existential Possibilities in Educational Relationships", 233.

does not just expediate the process, but makes a material difference to *what* is learned. In this way, despite its close reference to learners and learning throughout, *disruptive-inclusion* is not presented as a *student-centred* pedagogy nor a *content-based* pedagogy, nor in fact a *teacher-centred* pedagogy, but its identity is found in the rich, multi-layered engagement of all of the above (and more). To borrow Sean Whittle's language in his description of the relationship between theology and education, this project does not make the argument that *disruptive-inclusion* is "the icing on the 'educational' cake",⁵⁰ but suggests an altogether different recipe that brings together some of the more traditional ingredients and some new ones in a different way, resulting in an overall, different kind of cake!

This sense is consolidated further by Hull's 1975 claim that a core trait of an effective, pedagogical posture is that it "must necessarily be deliberately critical of its own content".⁵¹ Hull's focus on self-criticality means that his methodology cannot easily tend towards reductionism or over-simplification (if anything, the opposite). As will be repeatedly demonstrated, Hull's references to CAL are not designed to exclude questions of teaching, content and purpose but acknowledge their multi-faceted interconnectedness.

2.2. The essentials of a *disruptive-inclusive* posture to CAL

To consolidate the above claim that Hull's (and subsequently also this project's) treatment of CAL avoids Biesta's concerns of *vagueness* and an *empty* pedagogical approach, the below, initial introduction to *disruptive-inclusion* is structured to address each of Biesta's following points and demonstrate how despite interpreting the questions differently, Biesta's

⁵⁰ Whittle, "Some Theological Reservations Surrounding One Contemporary Christian Approach to Teaching and Learning," 18, no. 2 (2014), 195.

⁵¹ Hull, *School worship: an obituary*, 56.

concerns are not ignored in Hull's arguments, but key to the CAL theological pedagogy presented here as *disruptive-inclusion*. Biesta insists, "The point of education is not that students learn, but that they learn *something*, that they learn it for particular *reasons*, and that they learn it from *someone*".⁵² Thus, this section considers the *something*, the *reasons* and the *someone* (*i.e.*, the content, purpose and relationships) of *disruptive-inclusion*.

2.2.1. The 'content' of disruptive-inclusion

The critical substance of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is the challenging, unforeseen and unpredictable – in fact, anything that may instinctively appear as counterintuitive to effective CAL is recognised as its potential catalyst and accelerator. Thus, the fear, pain and confusion of any circumstance need not be ignored nor excluded from CAL but embraced as accompanied by increased freedom, self-knowledge and sense of wider connectedness. In this way, Hull's theological pedagogy of CAL is not focused on individual survival or even flourishing, but broader and deeper learner participation and connectedness.⁵³ A key mechanism of *disruptive-inclusion* is two simultaneous (and seemingly, potentially paradoxical) forces at work. One pushes learners out into the unknown, rejects old, insufficient ways and embraces the freedom associated with doing things differently and engaging from new perspectives. The other pulls learners into a deeper sense of self, orienting them to an increasing sense of belonging and connectedness.

Although CAL is not limited to traumatic life events, they provide the most incisive illustration of the above. Hull (along with many others) recognises acute times of unforeseen challenge and obstacle play an invaluable role in CAL. Using the term "bafflement", he

⁵² Biesta, "Freeing Teaching from Learning: Opening Up Existential Possibilities in Educational Relationships", 234.

⁵³ Issues regarding collaborative and community learning are addressed in 4.2.1.

describes moments in which Christian adult learners “have reached the limit of our ability to understand to analyse, to clarify and interpret”.⁵⁴ This is caused when existing knowledge, skills and other resources are exposed as insufficient in navigating the current situation, leading to “the dismantling of time-honoured certainties, where comfort, equilibrium, coherence and predictability for one’s life disappear”.⁵⁵ In such situations, there is a choice of response. Firstly, Christian adult learners can abandon attempts to progress in a particular direction and turn back to safety and familiarity. Alternatively, they may refuse to accept the new implications created by the current obstacle and attempt to progress by (mis)applying ‘old rules’. Or finally, they may acknowledge both the discomfort and simultaneous freedom offered by the current *baffling* learning experience and allow it to re-shape understanding and perception in irreversible ways. In the most general sense, the final option describes a fundamentally *disruptive-inclusive* pedagogical posture that this project argues offers unparalleled opportunities for CAL progress.

A significant implication of CAL understood in terms of effectively navigating an unpredictable and changing world is that the educator’s focus is no longer on helping learners develop the necessary knowledge, skills or experience to overcome a given challenge or obstacle, because once any given challenge has been successfully negotiated, an identical situation will never be faced again (for reasons fully explored later). Rather, experienced learners are more effectively able to navigate the constantly surprising and

⁵⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 57.

⁵⁵ Fleming and Mudge, "Leaving Home: A Pedagogy for Theological Education," in *Learning and Teaching Theology: some ways ahead* (eds. Ball and Harrison; Eugene, Ore: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 74. As fully explored in 2.3.3, Hull describes the disorientating experience of losing his physical sight using the metaphor of his front door. “On this door there was all sorts of bits of metal, there was a letterbox, there was a number for the house, there were hinges and there was a door knocker. Now, it wasn’t just as if the door knocker had dropped off, the whole door had caught fire and all the metal bits and pieces ... once so carefully set out in space had collapsed in the dust”. Hull, "Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world," in *Memory Marathon* (ed. The Space Arts, 2012).

unpredictable. Accordingly, CAL progress may not be easily perceptible in the immediate experience or aftermath of a particularly disorienting event (at which stage, the process may still seem very chaotic and even destructive). However, as peak disruption subsides (a process whose timescale will depend on the depth and type of present difficulties, as well as learners' previous experiences), the most influential learning space or mode is entered. Hull refers to this as "optimum distance".⁵⁶

2.2.2. The 'purpose' of disruptive-inclusion

The principal reason suggested by *disruptive-inclusion* as to why the embrace of the painful and unexpected is so pedagogically valuable, is the opportunity to access *optimum distance*. Hull uses this term to describe the apex of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in which decreasing levels of disruption and simultaneously increasing levels of inclusion intersect, creating the ideal conditions for the exploration of new information, insights and forging of new connections. In a key idea that will be examined from multiple angles as the project progresses, Hull explains, "If a picture is too far away, you can't see the details, but if it is too close then, once again, the details are lost. There is an optimum distance for clarity of definition, and this seems to apply not only to our sight, but to our beliefs as well".⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 54. Despite addressing education in very different ways, there are also some significant resonances between Hull's concept of *optimum distance* and Lev Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Distance (ZPD)*. Most notably, from a global, methodological standpoint, as Pablo del Río and Amelia Álvarez argue, ZPD is considered the "leading window" of Vygotsky's work because "it addresses all the basic questions that can be posed" ... specifically, it addresses "the subject, the object, the mechanism ... and the conditions in which this takes place", del Río and Álvarez, "Inside and Outside the Zone of Proximal Development: An Ecofunctional Reading of Vygotsky," in *The Cambridge Companion to Vygotsky* (ed. Cole, et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 281. This is an excellent example of the earlier claim that Hull's *how?* shaped approach to CAL is the foundation for a richer, multifaceted discussion, not the means of compartmentalising or ignoring various elements of the educational debate.

⁵⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 54.

As disruption is embraced, the fear and turmoil associated with the experience partially subsides; it no longer has a paralysing effect but neither has the comfort and familiarity that hinders effective questioning and critical engagement fully re-emerged. Inversely, *optimum distance* provides sufficient disruption for critical analysis (of both self and *other*) but also just enough familiarity for fresh insights and connections to be made. The pedagogical efficacy of *optimum distance* lies in how learners are simultaneously located in multiple camps or experience what Hull refers to as “multiplicity of vision”.⁵⁸ As demonstrated through Hull’s own learning experience in chapter 4, *optimum distance* describes a point at which learners have access to multiple, concurrent modes of perception – allowing for connections to be made that require the ability to analyse a situation from multiple positions. Therefore, the long-term purpose of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is growth in learner ability to arrive at, and progress through, *optimum distance* in order to practise *multiplicity of vision* as much and effectively as possible.

2.2.3. The ‘relationships’ of disruptive-inclusion

Finally, addressing Biesta’s call for questions of the educational *who?* to be identified and addressed, leads to the discussion of the *christianness* of *disruptive-inclusion*. Although difficult to abstract from the wider discussion (almost every subsequent chapter contributes to the argument concerning the distinctive *christianness* of *disruptive-inclusion* in some way), the pivotal *relationship* in Hull’s understanding of CAL is between God and learning. From a variety of different angles, a core question of *What Prevents...?* is what does the Christian God, as revealed in the Bible, witnessed by the Church and experienced by believing communities have to do with CAL?

⁵⁸ This phrase can only be fully appreciated upon reflection of Hull’s transition from sighted to blind person. See 4.1. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 75.

Hull's response to this question is, however, not straightforward or acceptable to many. He is among those who present a distinctively, Christian theological pedagogy of CAL but also suggest that the inherently Christian character of such claims does not limit their implications to Christian learners or the teaching of Theology. Rather, Hull claims that their potential, positive consequences *could* apply to learners of all faiths and none and all subject matters. Both the fundamentals and nuances of this claim are highly contested and will be raised repeatedly in this project. For example, in 5.1.1., discussion focuses on Paul Hirst's categorical rejection of the idea that Christianity and learning should have anything to do with each other and 5.1.2. addresses Hull's initial rejection and later agreement with Karl-Ernst Nipkow's understanding of the relationship between theology and education as *dialectical-convergence*. Furthermore, 7.4.1. addresses how Hull's use of the Bible is drawn into this pattern of the distinctively Christian and the simultaneous, potential universal benefit of CAL, the discourse focuses on Hull's specific arguments as to how CAL can be simultaneously tight and loose, open and closed.

Hull's commitment to promoting the benefit of CAL beyond its religious borders does not impact his conviction that ultimately, any case for a Christian "theology of learning"⁵⁹ must be made on its own terms and not be forced to own properties naturally resisted by the Christian faith in any sense. He summarises, "Christianity itself cannot only be thought credible if it can compete successfully within the same limitation of knowledge [positivistic scientific knowledge]".⁶⁰ Rather, Hull's entire theological pedagogy aims to ensure that

⁵⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 212.

⁶⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 35.

“inspiration is drawn from within ... [a learner’s] faith and not from some objective, educational source outside his faith”.⁶¹

Similarly, *disruptive-inclusion* is presented as a “distinctively Christian voice” in the conversation at the intersection of Christian faith and learning, by several, key means.⁶²

Firstly, as fully explained in 7.1., but demonstrated throughout, the Bible is Hull’s primary reference point and pedagogical framework. *Disruptive-inclusion* follows closely the central, biblical pattern in which life arises from death: a pattern in which the seeming end is, in fact, a new beginning and the *conventional* way is often not the way God chooses to intervene.

Whether via interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, understanding of God’s own active, learning participation with humanity, or the inherent *connectedness* of the biblical narrative, this project seeks to not only use the biblical witness as a demonstration of *disruptive-inclusion* but, like Hull, as its source text – informing its shape, function and overall aims.

Secondly, *disruptive-inclusion* is presented as an inherently *Christian* theological pedagogy of CAL due to its roots in, and reflection of, the testimony of the Church. In essence, the fundamentals of *disruptive-inclusion* are not new ideas, but rather at every stage of her development, the Christian Church has flourished when embracing and using unexpected challenges as springboards to progression and struggled when disruption has been ignored or somehow circumvented. In particular, analysis of *What Prevents...?* considers how community learning (represented by some as *koinonia*) is critical to *disruptive-inclusion*; how the history of biblical interpretation offers significant guidance on how tension can be

⁶¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 76.

⁶² Higton, "A theology of higher education," (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 107.

embraced, and ultimately, how the body of Christ is a pedagogical asset to be leveraged, not a liability to be overcome.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, *disruptive-inclusion* is presented as a distinctively Christian theological pedagogy of CAL due to its central embrace of the paradoxical and ultimately mysterious ways of God. It suggests that by resisting the idea that a set of rules can be easily applied to CAL, better progress can be made. While it also highlights how CAL requires personal responsibility, ultimately it recognises the pedagogical role of divine mystery – *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is not primarily the goal of Christian action, but a means by which Christian adult learners acknowledge that it is ultimately God in whom all things hold together, find their identity and place in the world (c.f., Col 1.17).⁶³ *Disruptive-inclusion* suggests that CAL cannot be reduced to mastery of a particular method or idea but requires recognition that the message of Jesus, as witnessed through the ages and to contemporary culture, is that progress often masquerades as deterioration – more often than not, going last and losing everything are key markers of the *Jesus-way* forward. As Hull notes, “in the image of divine man and a crucified God Christianity presents cognitive dissonance at the very heart of its self-understanding”.⁶⁴

2.3. *Disruptive-inclusion* introduced: shepherds, gates and doors

Having sketched the initial parameters of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in broad terms, this section now offers a fuller introduction of how Hull imagines *disruption*, *inclusion* and *disruptive-inclusion* function within CAL, beginning in his interpretations of John 9:1- 10:21. Hull’s multi-layered address of this passage is particularly effective in highlighting the content and

⁶³ All biblical references are NRSV, unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 101.

development of his theological pedagogy of CAL for several reasons. Firstly, Hull returns to its analysis repeatedly at key points during his career. In particular, John 10 appears in multiple chapters of *What Prevents...?*, the 2001 title, *In the beginning there was darkness* and several, short Lent reflections from 2002.⁶⁵ Secondly, Hull also actively interprets the passage through a deeply personal lens. In Jesus' critique of the Pharisees' inability to see (John 9:40) or hear his voice (John 10:5; 10:16), Hull finds deep synergy between his personal experience of losing his sight and his passion for CAL.

Thus, Hull's interpretations of John 9:1 – 10:21 offer a condensed illustration of the inextricable link he understood between his transition from sighted to blind person; his calling as a Christian disciple and vocation as a pedagogue, practical theologian and biblical scholar. To demonstrate this, 2.3.1. specifically expounds Hull's interpretation of Jesus' declaration, "I am the gate" (John 10:9) as an incisive synopsis of the role of disruption in CAL. Secondly, 2.3.2. analyses the implications of Hull's interpretations of the different learning *locations* in John 10. In particular, his identification of *inside* and *outside* as an effective basis from which to appreciate Hull's conception of *inclusive* CAL. Finally, 2.3.3. addresses how the development in Hull's views on John 10 offers some initial clues as to how he imagined disruption and inclusion to facilitate CAL in tandem.

2.3.1. Disruptive CAL: Jesus as shepherd and gate

Among the scholarly interpretations of the Fourth Gospel's "I am" statements, Jesus' declaration as θύρα (generally rendered gate(way) or door(way) for the sheep in John 10:7

⁶⁵ Hull, *In the beginning there was darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 2001) and Hull, "First Sunday in Lent: I am the Gate for the Sheep," in *Jesus: hope for life: the Christian Aid/Hodder Lent book 2002* (ed. Clifford; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001)

and 10:9) attracts a more diverse range of responses than the others.⁶⁶ Firstly, many interpreters highlight how Jesus' presentation as θύρα is not a remedy to a present and obvious, spiritual or practical problem.⁶⁷ Secondly, the inextricable entanglement of Jesus' identity as shepherd *and* θύρα in John 10 leads many to comment on their respective, and potentially conflicting meanings.⁶⁸ Among the most prominent examples of this is Rudolf Bultmann, who commented in 1972, "Thus while vv.8 and 10 seem to continue the thought of vv. 1-5, vv. 7 and 9 run counter to it, for here the door is not thought of as the way through which the shepherd goes into the sheep, but as the door through which the sheep are led out to pasture and led back again into the fold; and in so far as this section refers to Jesus, the image alters from verse to verse".⁶⁹

Although Bultmann's solution to this 'problem' is more far-reaching than many others, with significant interpretive implications for the wider Fourth Gospel,⁷⁰ he was neither the first, nor the last to address John 10's intertwined imagery. In 1963, C. H. Dodd dramatically referred to John 10 as "The wreckage of two parables fused into one, the fusion having

⁶⁶ A detailed discussion of θύρα in John 10:9 follows in 3.1. While the lack of consensus among English translations of θύρα as either door or gate may seem incidental (CEB, NIV and NRSV opt for *gate*. NIV, NASB and ESV, *door*), the choice carries significant interpretational power. Does the Fourth Evangelist envisage Jesus as *door* or *doorway* for the sheep? The object filling the space, or the space itself that makes entrance and exit possible? To avoid pre-empting or further complicating later analysis, the Greek term θύρα is used throughout.

⁶⁷ In the face of hunger, Jesus is the bread that satisfies (6:3); for those who walk in the darkness of evil and confusion, Jesus is light (8:12); to those for whom physical death seems to have had the final word, Jesus is the resurrection and the life (11:25). As the disciples struggle to grasp the nature of their ongoing connection to Jesus after he is no longer with them, Jesus declares himself the way (14:6) and the true vine into whom they can all be connected (15:1). In comparison to ultimately self-serving hired hands and thieves, Jesus is a self-sacrificing and protective shepherd (10:11).

⁶⁸ In particular, pointing to the shepherd's own entrance, "the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep" (10:2). How can Jesus be both shepherd and gate?

⁶⁹ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: a commentary* (trans. Beasley-Murray, et al.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 359.

⁷⁰ He concludes that John 10 could not have originally followed John 9 and therefore John 10:19-21 must have been the original conclusion to the story of the man born blind, not the Good Shepherd discourse. He surmises that the order of John's Gospel chapters 9-10, as currently received, is the work of a later redactor.

partly destroyed the original form of both".⁷¹ More recently, Christopher Skinner analysed John 10's "mixing of metaphors"⁷² and whereas John Ashton does not observe the same difficulties as Bultmann and Dodd, he summarises John 10 as "an intricate mosaic

[consisting of] two statements [that] are not contradictory but mutually illuminating".⁷³

While Ashton's views resonate most closely with my own, the above approaches all seek to take seriously the Fourth Evangelist's presentation of Jesus as both "'the Door leading to the Flock' and the Door for the use of the Flock".⁷⁴ In different ways, each response acknowledges that the innate integrity and complexity of the passage is violated unless Jesus' dual function as saviour and protector of the sheep is acknowledged *alongside* his function as the means by which the sheep exit and enter to find pasture.

While the overall pattern of much ancient and modern Johannine scholarship has been to downplay, compartmentalise or simply disregard elements of John 10's imagery,⁷⁵ the interplay of John 10:9's various sub-clauses ("I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture") is central to Hull's interpretation. This focus results in a dialogical reading of how the dynamic interaction between shepherd and sheep leads to abundant life (c.f. 10:10). Although Hull does not question that Jesus equates legitimate entrance into the sheepfold to salvation, neither does he separate this from the subsequent, repeated entrance and exit of the sheepfold by which the sheep access pasture

⁷¹ Dodd, *Historical tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 363.

⁷² Skinner, "The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21) and John's Implied Audience: A Thought Experiment in Reading the Fourth Gospel," 40, no. 2 (2018), 185.

⁷³ Ashton, *Studying John: approaches to the fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 129.

⁷⁴ Ashton, *Studying John: approaches to the fourth Gospel*, 129.

⁷⁵ While some contemporary scholars *resolve* John 10's apparent interpretational conflicts by ignoring 10:9b altogether, it is a fair, overall representation of Johannine scholarship to state that, Jesus' primary function in John 10 is considered in terms of a boundary between 'in' and 'out' of the sheepfold and ongoing protection for those inside. However, Augustine's reading of John 10 demonstrates that a compartmentalised approach is not new: "He is gate in his head and shepherd in the body" Elowsky, *John 11-21* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 342.

(an issue fully addressed later). Putting aside the wider soteriological repercussions and implications of Hull's interpretation of these elements for the theology of conversion, considered pedagogically, Hull's reading implies that CAL requires ongoing, active engagement with both shepherd and θύρα. He resists interpretations that reduce pedagogical development to a singular trajectory towards a fixed, familiar destination and suggests a nomadic conception of a Christian adult learner as "a pilgrim on a way".⁷⁶

In some ways, Hull's reading of John 10 could reasonably be said to be as mono-focal as other approaches - distinct only in its overemphasis of details ignored or downplayed by others. However, Hull does not *entirely* bypass the more traditionally-held theme of pastoral protection and security provided by Jesus as shepherd. He references the significance of sheep "following a voice, being called by name" and highlights how Jesus' voice provides required guidance, confidence and orientation.⁷⁷ Yet, no attempt is made to synthesise nor co-ordinate the multiple elements of Jesus' role in John 10, or even acknowledge the stark and de-stabilising implications of the interpretation presented. Ultimately, the overarching tone of Hull's 1985 interpretation of John 10 supports a pedagogy in which Jesus' roles as shepherd and θύρα *facilitate* rather than minimise or even aid learners' management of disruption. This reframes Jesus' pedagogical role from primarily understood as maintaining the "self-protective, self-indulgent, comfort" of the sheepfold,⁷⁸ to "disrupting our present equilibrium, and calling us through pain and transition into the maturity which is our Christian calling".⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 195.

⁷⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 138-9.

⁷⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 67.

⁷⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 195.

2.3.2. Inclusive CAL: “on the far side”

The previous section proposed Hull’s 1985 interpretation of John 10 as an introductory example of the function of disruption in *What Prevents...?* However, this is only a first step in fully demonstrating *disruptive-inclusion* in and from Hull’s work on CAL. Now, the focus turns to his conception of inclusion in CAL. By examining the closing paragraphs of the first chapter of *What Prevents...?*, this section considers what Hull is suggesting should be pedagogically included. How and why does Hull suggest that CAL *inclusion* should take place?

In exploring the *inclusive* aspect of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, it is important to acknowledge that while Hull was a strong advocate for the Inclusive Church agenda,⁸⁰ this project’s claims that Hull is pedagogically *inclusive* do not refer to the inclusion of specific groups or individuals with Specific Learning Differences that create supplementary obstacles to their learning participation. Rather, as outlined in chapter 1, it refers much more widely to the connection of learners to self, others, God and the wider created environment. In contrast to how *inclusion* has come to refer, in wider pedagogical discourse, to the active involvement of specific individuals, its function in *disruptive-inclusion* is more global – the process by which *any* Christian adult learner actively engages with whom or whatever had previously been deemed inaccessible to or beyond them. As Hull succinctly explains, “Learning breakthrough happens when someone dares to include something they had formerly considered unable to find God in or through”.⁸¹

⁸⁰ In 2016, Marilyn Hull defined Inclusive Church as “an ecumenical organisation that seeks to wake the church up to its responsibilities regarding sexuality, disability, mental health and race”. Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark* (London: Profile Books: Wellcome Collection, 2017), 202. <https://www.inclusive-church.org>. Hull’s specific interest in the Inclusive Church agenda can be seen in his contribution to the accompanying series of books, his volume focused on disability. Hull, *Disability: the inclusive church resource* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2014).

⁸¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 18.

One of the clearest examples of Hull's understanding of the inclusion of that which was formerly, pedagogically excluded appears in the closing pages of *What Prevents...?* opening chapter. To the great frustration of some reviewers,⁸² Hull reflects on H. Richard Niebuhr's statement in *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* that "the fulfilment of an educated Christian spirituality lies on the *far side* of the Trinity, not in falling back from it".⁸³ Although a full analysis of Hull's wider use of Niebuhr is unnecessary here, Hull's key juxtaposition of a successful Christian adult learner aiming for the "far side" with an unsuccessful one "falling back from it" is critical to this discussion. Fundamentally, Hull distinguishes between the rejection of what Niebuhr dubs a non-radical monotheism of "docile, unquestioning obedience" and the practice of a radical monotheism defined by a "life of active enquiry".⁸⁴

In the first instance, the distinction between non-radical and radical monotheism neatly parallels the contrast between interpretations of John 10 that focus on the sheep's single entrance into the sheepfold and ongoing entrance and exiting in search of pasture. Where the aim of CAL is accessing "the far side" rather than remaining in the confines of the sheepfold, progress only occurs where previously unknown or unattainable, *outside* learning opportunities, are now in reach.⁸⁵ Hull consolidates this by highlighting how Niebuhr's conception of genuine monotheistic faith cannot be driven by fear of other powers because it does not acknowledge their existence. Rather, "true monotheism of universal faith"⁸⁶

⁸² In particular, it is this that Farmer highlights as a key example of Hull's "faulty analysis" in his *British Journal of Educational Studies* review. Farmer, "Book Review: What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?".

⁸³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 39. C.f., Niebuhr, *Radical monotheism and Western culture* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1970).

⁸⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 37.

⁸⁵ Interestingly, language of "the far side" can also be found in Hull's exploration of his transition into blindness. In one of his final diary entries of the original selection published in 1990, Hull explains how he "finally learned how to touch the rock on the far side of despair". Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 22.

⁸⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 38.

requires that a believer “integrate the whole of her/his life around her/his faith”⁸⁷ and not draw, “Sharp distinction between the in-group and the out-group creating henotheistic theological justifications for both distrusting the outside world, hating it and defeating it by evangelizing it and converting it”.⁸⁸

Thus, Hull understands disruption as an effective facilitation of CAL only where it leads to the interaction and subsequent inclusion of otherwise estranged elements of life, faith and society. Hull’s use of Niebuhr further consolidates this idea, pointing out that divine participation in CAL is not restricted to the ‘near side’ nor limited to its starting point. Rather, in giving the Trinitarian mystery central place and importance, he claims that divine presence is not only found as sheep enter the comfort of protective enclosure but also as they leave again in search of pasture. Thus, where Hull’s earlier interpretive stance to John 10 demonstrated the important of disruption to CAL, his reflections on Niebuhr’s work now bring the inclusive element of his approach into view.

2.3.3. Disruptive-inclusive CAL: Learning on both sides of the door

Via Hull’s 1985 interpretations of John 10 and his analysis of Niebuhr’s language of *the far side*, the basic functions of both disruption and inclusion in Hull’s theological pedagogy of CAL have been demonstrated. However, it is now necessary to take the first, tentative steps in understanding how Hull envisages disruption and inclusion work together in CAL – a task best achieved by considering Hull’s later analysis of John 10 – explained in terms of his front door. The overall premise of Hull’s 2001 reading of the Jesus θύρα is that, just as doors have

⁸⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 38. In many places, Hull does not use gender inclusive language in *What Prevents...?* I have added third person female pronouns here and in further examples, not least to include the author of this project in their reference.

⁸⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 38.

two physical sides, their function is also bi-focal; dividing and separating; orienting and bringing immediate spaces into tighter focus. Hull recounts how, since becoming blind, the front door of his home had come to function as both dividing boundary *and* point of connection between what he refers to as *known* and *unknown* universes.⁸⁹ Therefore, Hull remains convinced that in the same way sheep must venture to “the far side” to access the very best life has to offer, he too must venture beyond his front door, despite the associated unpredictability and loss of control. Thus, Hull’s 2001 observations might be considered a real-life application of his undermining of the claim that in CAL “the pastures of nourishment always lie on the inside”.⁹⁰ Yet, in another sense, these later reflections on John 10 demonstrate a significant development in Hull’s thought not represented in earlier excurses: life happens on *both* sides of his front door. He recognises that CAL takes place not only on the *outside*, but also in the familiarity of *inside*, enabling him to relax and achieve a level of independence.

Fundamentally, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL seeks to represent the pedagogical, inter-dependent symbiosis Hull understands between *known* and *unknown* learning worlds. He imagines his door as a catalyst to disruption, ushering him out into the unknown, encouraging exploration beyond comfortable, predictable, present parameters. However, simultaneously it also welcomes home his weary body into the security of the familiar and comforting. While Hull’s 1985 interpretation of John 10 almost exclusively concentrates on the disruption of *going out*, by 2001, he had arrived at an understand that includes both *going out* and *coming in*, in which Jesus’ function as $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha$ for the sheep combines boundary *and* point of connection, security giver *and* portal to adventure.

⁸⁹ Hull, *In the beginning there was darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible*, 140.

⁹⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 67.

While the above, extended metaphor demonstrates how the pedagogical functions of disruption and inclusion cannot be fully extrapolated, it does not follow that their respective roles are identical or interchangeable. Rather, as is true of a range of other developmental and pedagogical frameworks,⁹¹ disruption functions as a pedagogical gateway or catalyst, whereas the same is not true of *inclusion* alone. This project proposes Hull's theological pedagogy be represented as *disruptive-inclusion* rather than *inclusive-disruption* to reflect his view that disruption is not the goal of CAL but that without its catalytic capacity for re-alignment and re-assessment, inclusion of the new or unknown is pedagogically ineffective. Disruption "stimulate[s] new discoveries and may inaugurate a realignment of the whole system".⁹² It creates possibilities for new inclusion by rendering the former 'rules of engagement' defunct and freeing the learner to explore new territory and forge new connections with self, others and the wider world without previous constraints.

For Hull, the mere existence of the comfort and refreshment available behind his front door made navigating *unknown* learning significantly less daunting and draining – their functional co-existence allowed Hull to continue to increasingly access life on both sides. Crucially, without having to physically be at home, the effects associated with the *known* transcended their physical limits and supported Hull's learning in more challenging settings. As Brüggemann describes in his analysis of the Psalms, "a disturbing but salutary disorientation [] frees us to see the truth more clearly".⁹³ In other words, pedagogical freedom is not only

⁹¹ Including the previously mentioned Erikson, Levinson, Kegan and Fowler as well as work on child and adolescent development by Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget.

⁹² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 98-99.

⁹³ Brüggemann and Sharp, *Disruptive grace: reflections on God, Scripture, and the church* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2011), 4.

available once disruption has significantly subsided. Rather, the functional co-existence of disruption and liberating inclusion makes CAL progress possible.

Chapter 3: drawing up plans. *Disruptive-inclusion* demonstrated in John 10:9

Having *envisioned* the project – setting out its eventual aims, preferred methods and overall structure and identified the characteristics of the site it will be built upon – the next phase requires the drawing up of specific plans, beginning with a general outline of the structure’s eventual size and shape and progressing onto greater levels of detail. The previous chapter underpinned the argument for a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL by demonstrating that, despite not being a term appearing in Hull’s work, the concepts, values and mechanisms of *disruptive-inclusion* both arise from, and consolidate, his theological pedagogy of CAL in multiple ways. To achieve this by the clearest and most representative means, *disruptive-inclusion* has been expounded via Hull’s various interpretations of John 10. This section consolidates this further by offering a detailed analysis of the pedagogical implications of Hull’s reading, particularly as concerns the imagery and themes of John 10:9, “I am the door. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.” In acknowledging key questions raised and intersecting areas of academic dialogue, this chapter mediates between the preceding, broad strokes introduction of *disruptive-inclusion* and the subsequent, detailed analysis of *What Prevents...?*

3.1. The role of θύρα in John 10:9

As highlighted earlier, Jesus’ identification as θύρα is a pivotal image in John 10:9. This section considers its pedagogical significance in two, major regards. Developing the idea of a symbiotic relationship between *outside* and *inside* suggested in chapter 2, 3.1.1. specifically analyses the nature of the θύρα’s intersectional, pedagogical role. 3.1.2. then proceeds to consider the implications of θύρα for the *other* characters of John 10: the *thieves* and *bandits* who enter the fold by other means and *the Jews*, whose questioning provides the

backdrop to John 10. In sum, it asks, how is pedagogical *other* defined by the Fourth Evangelist in John 10? What are the pedagogical implications for those who do not enter and exit via θύρα?

3.1.1. θύρα: means of free and easy interchange

θύρα is variously represented in English translations as door or gate and appears in BDAG as “an opening that permits passage”.⁹⁴ Other uses of the term in the Fourth Gospel are largely unambiguous in their description of physical scenes.⁹⁵ However, its metaphorical uses in John 10 are significant in revealing Jesus’ identity and function. In turn, Hull’s pedagogical interpretation of these details gives rise to several, interconnected questions. How can pedagogical passage through Jesus θύρα be qualified, quantified and located?⁹⁶

2.2.3. offered some initial thoughts on how Hull’s interpretation of John 10 centres on Jesus’ function in connecting not dividing: “Jesus does not describe himself as a wall but as a gate”.⁹⁷ There is no “‘us’ versus ‘them’ in which high walls divide the minority inside from the majority outside”.⁹⁸ However, more specifically, key to the pedagogical significance Hull finds in this passage is his observation that Jesus’ enemies and friends are located on both sides of the θύρα. He argues that the passage’s foundational premise is that “the ‘enemies’ of the mission of Jesus, his critics, are already inside”.⁹⁹ While it must be acknowledged that Hull’s arguments in this regard consciously conflate John 10 and Luke 15 (the parable of the lost sheep), his point is similarly valid in both cases. For both the ninety-nine sheep who do

⁹⁴ BDAG., 462.

⁹⁵ Peter denies Jesus at the city θύρα (18:16), Jesus stands among the disciples and Thomas (20:19; 20:16) despite the θύρα being closed.

⁹⁶ The ubiquity and insufficiency of the metaphorical language of *journeying* in describing CAL progress is fully outlined in 5.2.2.

⁹⁷ Hull, *First Sunday in Lent: I am the Gate for the Sheep*, 11.

⁹⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 130.

⁹⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 130.

not stray from the shepherd and the thieves and bandits who gain illegitimate access to the sheepfold in John 10, at least some of the antagonists are located *inside* the sheepfold.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the identity of John 10's thieves and bandits is not based on their location but *means* of entry. Those who force their way into the sheepfold are found in the same location as those who enter via Jesus. However, their bypassing of the Jesus θύρα significantly impacts the ongoing conditions they experience and their potential for future movement: those who force entrance are without "even ... a gate or a door in the wall of their enclosure, for the Good Shepherd is himself the door".¹⁰¹

Other Fourth Gospel uses of κλέπτης and ληστής, the terms used (10:8) to describe the intruders (bandits and robbers) confirm this point. The only other occurrence of ληστής in the Fourth Gospel describes Barabbas for whose freedom the crowd shouts (18:40). Whereas the only other use of κλέπτης refers to Judas, as his theft from the disciples' common purse is exposed (12:6). This evidence further reinforces the overriding tone of Hull's conviction that, in place of a controlling metaphor of *in* versus *out*, a distinction between those with restricted and free movement is a more appropriate interpretive lens for John 10. Only those entering via Jesus enjoy unrestrained movement on both sides of the θύρα because Jesus' "body is the Way by means of which there is always a free and easy interchange between the inside and the outside".¹⁰²

Using the metaphorical terrain of John 10 as a backdrop by which to contrast freedom of movement rather than location has several, pedagogical implications. Firstly, it draws

¹⁰⁰ Hull argues that the sheep of Luke 15 represent the grumbling Pharisees and scribes to whom Jesus addresses the parable.

¹⁰¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 130.

¹⁰² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 130.

attention to the fact that “There is no explicit identification of the figures in Jesus’ picture of the shepherd, his sheep, and the sheepfold”¹⁰³ and demonstrates how “The walls of partition have been broken down in his body who has reconciled all humanity and made us one”.¹⁰⁴ In turn, these observations also resist counter suggestions that the various *spaces* in John 10 represent separated groups of people, approaches or stages within CAL. In summary, Hull proffers an understanding of John 10 in which Jesus’ followers cannot be uniquely associated with the interior of the sheepfold, but rather with the process of *repeated* movement in and out via the θύρα. According to Hull’s reading, both the capacity to move freely, as well as the safety and protection offered to the sheep, is provided by Jesus himself. As Hull summarises, “this is the work of the good shepherd, who does not close and lock the door, but makes his own mobile, living body the point of entrance and exit”.¹⁰⁵

However, and in further development of the argument that Hull presents a distinctly Christian adult pedagogy whose efficacy simultaneously extends beyond Christianity (2.1.2.), the above is not to claim that Hull’s movement-based interpretation simply conflates Christian and non-Christian worldviews, in fact, quite the opposite. In 2002, he states that as θύρα, Jesus draws a clear line “between the Christian faith and everything that is different from and incomparable with it”.¹⁰⁶ Yet, he also maintains that situations in which the Christian adult learner “has exchanged the world for Christ”, or in which “he is dead to the

¹⁰³ Thompson, *John: a commentary* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 223.

¹⁰⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 130. For example, equating *inside* the sheepfold as the Church, in comparison to *outside* as ‘other’ to the Christian faith becomes much less intuitive (at best requiring a very loose definition of Church). Equally difficult to maintain is an interpretation in which ‘inside’ represents the familiar, i.e., a learner’s own denominational practices and theology, as opposed to unfamiliar branches of the Church, Christian views and practices.

¹⁰⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 67.

¹⁰⁶ Hull, *First Sunday in Lent: I am the Gate for the Sheep*, 10-11.

world” must also be avoided because “Christ loved the world and gave himself for it”.¹⁰⁷ At first glance, this contrast between, on the one hand an insistence on Christian distinctiveness from the world and on the other, engagement with it, seems conflicting. However, the earlier analysis of Hull’s front door creating both a clear distinction *between*, as well as allowing him to cross between *inside* and *outside*, epitomises his ability to hold this seeming paradox as both a desirable and realistic pedagogical goal.

Yet, it is overly simplistic to conclude that Hull’s various interpretations of John 10 result in an entirely straightforward and consistent picture of how the metaphor of legitimate and illegitimate *crossing* between *inside* and *outside* the sheepfold relates to CAL. His ongoing wrestling with the concept is demonstrated in the inconsistent representation of θύρα – at different times translating the term as door, gate, gateway, interchange and boundary.¹⁰⁸ His 2002 Lent reflection on the topic explains, “Jesus offers Christians both the clarity of the boundary and the freedom to cross the boundary”;¹⁰⁹ a quote whose distinct ambiguity highlights the need to clarify exactly what Hull, and in turn, this project claims about the nature of the pedagogical passage Jesus θύρα provides. While assuming a much broader and less specialised audience for the Lent reflection than other academic publications, in one respect, the above quote neatly summarises the earlier discussion of Jesus’ dual function of shepherd and θύρα in John 10.

However, use of the term *boundary*, despite undoubtedly representing some of the semantic elements of θύρα, conveys potentially misleading ideas in relation to the wider

¹⁰⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 140.

¹⁰⁸ To avoid adding extra layers of complication to this debate, I will continue to use θύρα.

¹⁰⁹ Hull, *First Sunday in Lent: I am the Gate for the Sheep*, 11.

pedagogical arguments Hull offers elsewhere.¹¹⁰ Firstly, Hull makes great efforts to confirm the nature of Jesus' role as *θύρα* as neither static nor unchanging. Yet, while general English use of the term *boundary* does not always describe immovable realities, in many regards, it generally refers to fixed, permanent (or at least, very difficult to change) entities. For example, consider the boundaries between sovereign states or boundaries in relationships; while one describes a physical and the other a metaphorical boundary, both concepts are designed to *not* be easily moved. Inversely, their fixedness is a key trait, which makes them effective in their given functions of either facilitating or precluding their crossing. Notice, in this earlier mentioned quote, "This is the work of the good shepherd, who does not close and lock the door, but makes his own mobile, living body the point of entrance and exit",¹¹¹ Hull understands Jesus' body to be *mobile*. Therefore, his description of Jesus' pedagogical *boundary* function does not present Jesus as static. Rather, he is clear that the function of *θύρα* in John 10 depends on its mobility. Hull's conception of *boundary* is not only fluid in terms of location, neither is it fixed in form or function; Jesus *θύρα* transfigures and morphs depending on its approach. Hull continues, "There are correct and incorrect ways to cross boundaries. When a boundary is crossed incorrectly it becomes a barrier, and the result is confusion, but when a boundary is crossed in the right way, it becomes an open gate".¹¹² Therefore, Hull refuses to set any fixed paradigm for learners' passing through Jesus *θύρα* because the nature of such movement is far more dependent on the posture adopted by any who would pass through it, than the nature of the *θύρα* itself.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Another term, *ὄριον*, denotes the marking of a division between two geographic areas in Matthew and Mark. However, it does not appear in the Fourth Gospel.

¹¹¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 67.

¹¹² Hull, *First Sunday in Lent: I am the Gate for the Sheep*, 10.

¹¹³ Divine revelation as dependent on the nature of human approach is not unique to the Gospels. James 4:6 references Proverbs 3:34, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble".

A significant implication of the above focus on learner posture is that every element and stage of life, and particularly transition between them, can either facilitate or impede CAL – a shapeshifting phenomenon Hull explains as similar to how river rapids are both “a source of testing and danger ... [and a] source of power”.¹¹⁴ Hull goes as far as to argue that even Christian faith itself is capable of “Holding the believing adult in the stagnation of infancy or adolescence, but it can also become for him a rainbow bridge linking the various stages of his life together in a power and beauty rarely experienced by non-religious people”.¹¹⁵ Thus, Hull dethrones any specific setting or circumstance as a pivotal determiner of CAL progress (or lack of it), replaced by a dynamic partnership between shepherd, θύρα and sheep. In this partnership, learner progress depends on developing knowledge of, and reliance on, the shepherd’s guiding voice (c.f. John 10:2-4) and following Jesus’ example of optimum entrance and exit.

Once again, in recognition of both the importance and complexity of terminology and to avoid confusion, this project makes no further use of the term *boundary*. Instead, it uses the exact terms of John 10:9, *coming in* and *going out* or refers to *passage via* Jesus θύρα to describe Hull’s conception of CAL progress in John 10:9.¹¹⁶ This underlines the connection between CAL and dynamic movement, rather than suggesting a comprehensive framework for the different stages of CAL, or even sketching a picture of CAL’s overall aim or

¹¹⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 185.

¹¹⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 159. 4.2. thoroughly considers Hull’s comments on re-purposing learning obstacles.

¹¹⁶ The usefulness of the term *threshold* will also be considered later in relation to pedagogical application of Jan Meyer and Ray Land’s *Threshold Concept Framework*. *Threshold* also references Emilie Van Opstall’s work on the ancient architectural and anthropological significance of church doors and doorways in *Sacred Thresholds*. Although most of her discussion is beyond the scope of this project, her references to how John 10:9 is “endlessly exploited in ... medieval portals” and the pivotal importance of “Jesus’ typological self-representation” as quintessential gatekeeper represented architecturally are worthy of further research. Opstall, “Sacred thresholds: the door to the sanctuary in late antiquity,” (vol. 185 of *Religions in the Graeco-Roman world*; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 258-259.

destination. Frustrating as it is for the purposes of this discussion, Hull makes practically no comment on the mechanics of any potential pedagogical passage via Jesus θύρα or the specific occasions that precipitate *coming in* or *going out* to a new learning stage.¹¹⁷ This is epitomised in Hull's vague summary of Levinson's framework for understanding stage development as "broader phases characterised by certain qualities of living or certain rather general and typical experiences which many or most people have at these times".¹¹⁸ Clearly, how Levinson's framework functions and differs from other understandings is (at best) of secondary importance to Hull. Ironically, the most specific comments concerning the nature of CAL in *What Prevents...?* take the form of another multifaceted metaphor:

The placid waters of one great lake may be separated from those of another by a series of rapids and waterfalls. It is in these passages between the lakes that the character of a canoeing expedition will be tested. It is here that the team will give up or triumph. It is also here that the great power stations are built. The source of testing and danger is the same as the source of power. So it is with the changes in the life of an adult. It is during these times that learning is most significant. During these turbulent periods Christian faith will be re-learned or there will be resistance to re-learning it, as the case may be.¹¹⁹

Here again, Hull does not describe nor prescribe any specific pedagogical stage nor transition but focuses on re-framing and recommending the positive function of the "turbulent periods" encountered in CAL more generally.¹²⁰ In short, Hull's central concern is to redefine

¹¹⁷ By *marker events*, Hull refers to a range of occasions including, but not limited to "Personal crises of health or accident, or national and international crises such as wars or famines". Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 173.

¹¹⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 170.

¹¹⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 185-6.

¹²⁰ Hull's water metaphor aligns with repeated musings in *What Prevents...?* as to whether CAL might be imagined very differently had Heraclitus' ideas been as influential as those of Plato and Descartes Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 218. Where Platonic and Cartesian paradigms are driven by division and categorisation, Heraclitus' worldview centred on connectivity and constant change, most famously envisaged as an endlessly flowing river. In contrast to views of a fixed universe waiting to be correctly categorised, Heraclitus "finds permanence in the negation of permanence; being of reality consists in never 'being' but always 'becoming', not in stability but change." Marshall, *A short history of Greek philosophy*. (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 8.

CAL in terms of what might be both included and excluded from the process, rather than offer a fixed framework.¹²¹

3.1.2. *Θύρα and otherness*

Hull's claim that *θύρα* facilitates effective CAL by offering access to, as opposed to denying or rejecting the unknown or unwelcome, intersects with recent educational and theological discussions concerning *otherness*. In its most basic form, *otherness* addresses engaging with pedagogical difference in its many forms. In her analysis of the ethical consequences of the role of *other* in learning, Sharon Todd reflects on negative associations between *otherness* and "social, economic, or political disaffiliation". Thus, she concludes, "to be "Other" signals that which is undesirable by virtue of its formation within oppressive circumstances".¹²²

However, drawing on the work of Emmanuel Lévinas, Alain Badiou and Freud, she specifies the unique pedagogical significance of *otherness* to "introduce [] complexity ... into how and why difference matters".¹²³ For Todd, the pedagogical necessity of interconnectedness between self and *other* is so foundational that it may provoke "an ontological crisis of sorts".¹²⁴ For both Todd and Hull, making space for *other* in CAL is not an advanced, optional extra but an essential trait of effective human learning.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Hull's comments concerning *transition or passage* are exclusively applicable to this pedagogical discussion and do not address others theological issues involving transitioning between stages or states. This is mainly because, in arenas such as child and adolescent development, gender transition, and many others, the discussion largely (but not always) occurs in a single direction and focuses on arrival at a specific, desired destination. For example, the transition from childhood to adulthood is rarely desired to be undone or repeatedly revisited.

¹²² Todd, *Learning from the other: Levinas, psychoanalysis, and ethical possibilities in education* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2003), 2.

¹²³ Todd, *Learning from the other: Levinas, psychoanalysis, and ethical possibilities in education*, 2.

¹²⁴ Todd, *Learning from the other: Levinas, psychoanalysis, and ethical possibilities in education*, 18.

¹²⁵ As 4.2. identifies as a major theme of *What Prevents...?*, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL requires courageous levels of disruptive *self*-inclusion and awareness before true, third-party *others* may be included.

Returning to consider the idea of pedagogical *other* against the backdrop of the Fourth Gospel raises questions of the Evangelist's contentious use of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (literally: the Jews). The term appears frequently throughout the narrative, and it is the fear, blindness and confusion of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι that both introduces and closes the wider discourse of John 9-10 (9:22 and 10:19). On one hand, it is difficult to claim that uses of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι refer to occasions when this group is at enmity with Jesus or that such exclusion arise from their ethnic, social or political status as *other*.¹²⁶ Rather, the Fourth Gospel presents *other* on societal or even spiritual terms. The *other* is often characterised as the sick, outcast and historic enemies of YHWH who repeatedly find themselves included and embraced by Jesus.¹²⁷

On the other hand, arguments for what some perceive as the pejorative tone of the Fourth Evangelist's use of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι are equally difficult to entirely dismiss. At the very least, it must be noted that some claim the Fourth Gospel as evidence of an early distancing of the Christian community from Judaism. For example, in John 8:17-18, Jesus makes a clear distinction between the testimony he offers in unison with his Father and the instructions given concerning testimony in *your* law (presumably belonging to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι). Similarly, in John 10:34, Jesus challenges οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι when they take up stones against him, with questions concerning what it says in *your* law (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ ὑμῶν). However, regardless of whether Nicodemus (3:1) or the Samaritan woman at the well (4:7) is considered the Fourth

¹²⁶ Marianne Meye-Thompson concludes on this issue that, "in light of both the internal and external evidence of John, it is best to take *hoi Ioudaioi* (the Jews) as designating the people whose ancestry, worship, laws and customs identify them as belonging to the people who originated in Judea, even if they no longer dwell there. Thus, in John, *hoi Ioudaioi* are those who worship one God ... their father is Abraham, and they are the people of Israel." Thompson, *John: a commentary*, 201.

¹²⁷ For example, the Samaritan woman with multiple husbands (John 4), the woman caught in adultery (John 7) and the man born blind (John 9).

Evangelist's quintessential *other*, both members of the Jewish ruling council and Judaism's sworn enemy of potentially ill-repute are offered the opportunity to participate in the life Jesus offers.

Before assessing other elements of the imagery in John 10:9, the discussion concerning self and *other* cannot be concluded without mention of the potential, pedagogical implications of the connection it makes between entrance into the sheepfold and salvation (σωθήσεται, he/she will be saved). Firstly, as fully examined later, John 10:9 echoes several aspects of the descriptions of YHWH's relationship with Israel from the Hebrew Scriptures. Specifically, in relation to Israel's salvation, John 10:9 references the Psalter's vision of Israel's salvation as entering through a gate. For example, "Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation" (Ps. 118:19-21). Note how salvation occurs in two separate phases: firstly, via the Psalmist's initial entrance through the gate and then the secondary phase sees the Psalmist's ongoing operation within the salvific gift: YHWH's salvation is embodied as life continues.

Undeniably then, without contesting the soteriological import of σώζω (to save) in John 10:9, the connection between salvation (both how it is initially accessed and continually lived out by God's people) and learning is the crux of our interest in this discussion. In his 1993 essay, *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon?*, Jarvis muses on the pedagogical significance of conversion, drawing particular attention to the dual meaning of μετανοέω. He highlights its use in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts to refer to a change of mind, seeing things differently *and* being converted to Christianity. However, given that μετανοέω does not appear in the Fourth Gospel, it is not included in Jarvis' argument. However, use of the closest equivalent

verb in John 10:9 (σώζω, to save) is frequently associated in the Fourth Gospel with God saving people from themselves. For example, God's son is sent to the world because people have loved darkness more than light (3:17) and Jesus speaks truth so that those listening may be saved, because human testimony concerning him is insufficient (5:34).

This sense of σώζω is consolidated further by its appearance when Jesus' disciples mistakenly understand Lazarus as asleep rather than dead. In their confusion, they attempt to encourage Jesus that if Lazarus is only sleeping, there is no threat to his life, and all will be well when he wakes. The challenge of representing this sense of σώζω in John 11:12b, is demonstrated in the lack of consensus in English translations: Lazarus will, "get well" (CEB), "recover" (ESV), "get better" (NIV), "be all right" (NRSV), "do well" (KJV). Each of these interpretations attempts to represent the disciples' belief that if Lazarus is only sleeping, then no outside intervention will be required to return him to his *normal* state. Thus, I am confident that Jarvis' rejection of salvation viewed in purely transactional terms (i.e., God gives salvation to people), replaced by a wider soteriological vision in which "people can come to themselves, see the world differently and be emancipated from the structures into which they are born",¹²⁸ is equally applicable to John 10:9, as to the Synoptics' views, although admittedly, differently presented.

Thus, importantly for this discussion, Jarvis' argument suggests that CAL be understood as an opportunity to be converted to *self* as to God. As such, it leads to the further suggestion that, rather than uniquely associating salvation with entrance into the sheepfold, followed by the subsequent process of coming in and going out as the means of finding life in Jesus in

¹²⁸ Jarvis, *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon*, 11. There are further connections to explore here between Jarvis' language and the prodigal son's decision to return home is expressed as "he came to himself" (Luke 15:17).

John 10:9, the two should be taken together: the salvific process encompasses coming in, going out *and* finding pasture. This is not to displace Jesus as the salvific figure of John 10 (or any other passage for that matter).¹²⁹ Rather, applying Jarvis' observation to John 10:9 results in a pedagogy in which salvation and CAL are not independent processes, nor is salvation considered a pre-requisite for CAL, but the salvation offered by Jesus and the learning opportunities created are seen (at the very least) as overlapping. Referring back to Niebuhr's language of CAL as a journey to the "far side", salvation is not only a "near side" phenomenon but discovered anew at, and integral to, every stage of CAL.

3.2. Coming in, going out and finding pasture

The final component of Hull's understanding of CAL (as revealed in the imagery of John 10:9) focuses on the phrase εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται (usually rendered "to come/go in and go out). As already explained, this sets the expectation that sheep will not just access θύρα on a single occasion but are encouraged towards a pattern of increased and improved *coming in* and *going out*. However, once again this imagery raises various questions. Firstly, how is a pattern of repeated *coming in* and *going out* and the goal of finding pasture understood pedagogically? Does this address what some consider the major conflict between Jesus' identity as θύρα and his insistence that as shepherd of the sheep, he himself also enters via the θύρα (c.f. John 10:2)? In responding to these questions, the following sections analyse the interpretive connections between John 10 and the Hebrew Bible and examine God's accompaniment of Israel in a redemptive pattern of *in* and *out*. Taking this one step further, 3.2.2. addresses how this pattern of *coming in* and *going out* is best

¹²⁹ Inversely, N.T. Wright refutes any seeming conflict between Christians becoming more like their Saviour and stepping more fully into their own human identity. He states, "to embrace Wisdom is therefore to discover the secret of being truly human, of reflecting God's image", 42. Wright, "Jesus and the Identity of God," 14 (1998).

represented as Christian adult learners simultaneously inhabiting two places at once – in the pedagogical *in between*.

3.2.1. Learning in divine footsteps?

Before any assessment of its implications, it must be recognised that some scholars argue εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται (John 10:9b) “does not refer in particular to sheep going in and out of the sheepfold”.¹³⁰ At the very least, they claim that the phrase is imbued with a symbolism extending its meaning beyond physical movement. In addressing this issue, Meye-Thompson connects ἐξέβαλον (translated “drove out”, John 9:34-35, NRSV) with Jesus’ leading the sheep out of the fold in 10:3 (ἐξάγει) and the sheep’s *coming in and going out* in 10:9. Although prefixed to different verbs, she also suggests that the repetition of ἐξ (out/out of), draws a parallel between John 9’s Pharisaic expulsion of the blind man and Jesus’ leading the sheep out (ἐξάγει) in 10:3. She highlights how in driving the man outside of his community, the Jewish leaders “potentially separated the man from the source of life and light”.¹³¹ This separation then contrasts with Jesus’ act of leading the sheep out of the fold in John 10, connecting them to the light of the world (8:12) and the soon-to-be-revealed resurrection and the life (11:25).

While the Pharisees’ fear and distrust of the man’s testimony and newly-found sight in John 9 lead them to remove him as far as possible from the “social and communal networks of the congregation...of Israel”¹³² (of which they considered themselves the centre), Jesus *leads*

¹³⁰ Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a theological commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997), 358.

¹³¹ Thompson, *John: a commentary*, 220.

¹³² Thompson, *John: a commentary*, 212.

his own sheep out into the unknown – i.e. Jesus first, followed by his sheep.¹³³ Thus, the Pharisees (supposedly the community’s model learners) are exposed as static and unwilling to displace themselves from the centre of their self-constructed learning paradigm, meaning they are unable to follow Jesus’ life-assuring voice (c.f. 10:10). Thus, the pivotal issue at stake in Meye-Thompson’s observation concerning εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται in John 10:9 is not whether the Fourth Evangelist refers to the literal or figurative movement of sheep but its revelation of the fulcrum around which the sheep’s movement occurs.¹³⁴ This approach echoes Hull’s critical determination that “The naturalness of the process of Christian growth lies in ... God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit who draws the adult Christian”.¹³⁵

Herman Ridderbos argues more strongly than Meye-Thompson that εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται in 10:9b does not refer to physical movement of sheep. Basing his view in Moses’ deathbed address of Israel, “I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to *go out and come in*. The LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not go over this Jordan’” (Deut 31:2, ESV), Ridderbos interprets it as a common Semitic turn of phrase for the passage of everyday life, signifying that Moses’ earthly life was about to end, not referring to physical movement.¹³⁶

While the Septuagint uses different verbs to John 10:9 in Deuteronomy 31:2 (εἰσπορεύεσθαι καὶ ἐκπορεύεσθαι), this is not the only biblical reference to *coming and going* that signifies

¹³³ Micah’s promise to the exiles demonstrates the importance of Jesus leading the sheep out. “I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with people. The one who breaks out will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the LORD at their head (Mic 2:12-13). In echoing this language, the Fourth Evangelist makes a bold statement concerning Jesus’ claims to rule over God’s people.

¹³⁴ This resonates strongly with the Christocentric theme running through postliberal theology.

¹³⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 170. This concept of *disruptive-inclusion* as an *inside-out* pedagogy is addressed in 7.3.

¹³⁶ Similarly, in 1 Kings 3:7, in which upon taking his father’s throne, Solomon declares, “I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in”.

something other than physical movement. The clearest example is “The LORD will keep your going out (ἐξοδόν) and your coming in (εἰσοδόν) from this time on and forevermore” (Ps 121:8), primarily addressing Israel’s protection and YHWH’s proactivity in watching over them. Therefore, it is entirely fitting that it should conclude with an encouragement to Israel that YHWH has the whole scope of their existence under control.

Further, it is important to recognise that the natural outcome of the sheep’s *coming in and going out* in John 10:9, is their locating pasture. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, neither metaphorical nor literal pasture is considered a luxury, but a basic necessity intrinsically associated with belonging to YHWH. For example, the Psalter repeatedly expresses Israel’s life in terms of their identity as the sheep of YHWH’s pasture (Pss 73, 78, 94, 99). However, this cannot be consolidated with evidence from the New Testament as John 10:9 is the only use of νομή to convey pasture.¹³⁷ However, overall, the biblical image of pasture is an embedded element of essential progression of life with God.

Ridderbos’ determination to interpret the metaphorical language of John 10 against the backdrop of Israel’s story has wider significance. It is undeniable that John 10, “Draws on the extensive scriptural imagery for both God and the king as Israel’s shepherd. The people of Israel are God’s flock; in his fold they may safely dwell; in verdant pastures they find nourishment for life”.¹³⁸ However, before settling the case in favour of a metaphorical interpretation of εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται, it must also be considered that the pattern of Israel’s life is well-described as *coming in and going out*, in physical as well as metaphorical terms. In fact, arguably, *the* organising motif of the Hebrew Scriptures is that

¹³⁷ The term does occur in 2 Timothy 2:17 where almost all English translations represent its meaning as destructive spreading/dissemination, not a field for animal grazing.

¹³⁸ Thompson, *John: a commentary*, 220.

Israel repeatedly finds her redemption and identity in the repeated process of being led in and out by YHWH. From Abram's departure to an unknown land; safe passage through the Red Sea and crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land; exile from and eventual return to Jerusalem, the metanarrative of Israel's witness to YHWH was fulfilled in a repeated pattern of entrance and exit.

Regardless of whether εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται is taken to represent CAL in terms of repeated, physical entrance and exit or a more general sense of learning occurring in all of life, establishing the fundamental links between the imagery of John 10:9 and the Hebrew Bible results in a pedagogy in which Jesus is centrally and intrinsically involved. Similarly to how Matthew's child Jesus carefully traces Israel's footsteps into and chased back out of Egypt, eventually arriving at the Jordan for baptism via the desert,¹³⁹ in John 10, the sheep's bidirectional movement reflects the nature of a constantly moving shepherd. Thus, as the title of chapter 5 of *What Prevents...?* unapologetically underscores, Hull's conception of CAL sees Jesus Christ, God and humanity as "partners in learning".¹⁴⁰ Considered thus, the apparent conflict some scholars find in John 10:2 of the shepherd θύρα who also *uses* the θύρα, can be seen to represent how the divine not only observes as learners undertake their *coming in and going out*, but participates as both lead and fellow learner.

A corollary of Hull's suggestion that CAL requires Christlikeness is that it also invariably involves suffering and sacrifice. As outlined earlier, *disruptive-inclusion* understands a pattern of learning in which disruption gives way to inclusion, and in turn, inclusion gives way to new life (c.f. John 10:10). Hull's pedagogical conception is based on an example of a

¹³⁹ For example, see Matthew 2:14 and 3:6.

¹⁴⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 199.

selfless shepherd willingly laying his life down for the sheep (10:15 and 17-18). Brüggenmann highlights the ancient nature of this calling for God's people to participate in suffering. "It belongs to Jews and Christians to walk the walk of discontinuity, to move from vulnerability through dread absence on to surprise. Characteristically, we do not want to go. Jews did not want to go, in that ancient world. And Christians with whom we minister do not want to go; nor do we ourselves much want to go".¹⁴¹

Even when it *seems* that God has forgotten God's own and allows them to be defeated or scattered, God does not call to them from a fixed, afar point but accompanies them on their challenging journeys, setting an example of how embracing disruption creates new possibilities for inclusive progression. In the pattern of *coming in and going out* in John 10, the perceived aim of CAL as arriving at a fixed, specific destination or goal is replaced with that of thriving in displacement: becoming familiar with the unfamiliar and comfortable with discomfort. The promise of the fullness of life is a call to fully engage and effectively experience everything that befalls. The aim of repeated passage via Jesus θύρα is that learners might find their sense of belonging in the means, fulcrum and centre of their movement and progress – Jesus – not the specific conditions related to any secure situation of familiar location encountered en route.

The repeated *coming in and going out* as a conceptual framework for practising Christlikeness resonates strongly with a variety of branches of theological thought. Firstly, in an extension of the earlier analysis of θύρα's function in both creating definition between and connecting different *worlds*, Jerome Neyrey reflects on the image of Jesus as broker. He

¹⁴¹ Brüggenmann and Sharp, *Disruptive grace: reflections on God, Scripture, and the church*, 133.

explains, "Successful brokers have a foot in the worlds of both patrons and clients".¹⁴² As such, he argues that Jesus' ability to fairly represent the interests and maintain relationships with both parties is possible because he "belongs to both worlds at the same time".¹⁴³ Putting aside my reluctance to understand Jesus in economic terms, and how Neyrey's focus on Jesus as broker overlooks many of the finer details of John 10, the core concept of Jesus' simultaneous belonging to multiple worlds is helpful to the discussion.

Recall how Hull's front door functioned for him as a blind person and how by simply bringing the existence of home conditions to mind, Hull could partially re-create their conditions wherever he was. The mere cognisance of security and familiarity was a sufficient gateway to the confidence Hull needed to explore more challenging terrain and dare confront the *unknown* world. So too, as the sheep hear and follow the shepherd's voice while *outside*, the sense of orientation, rest and protection associated with *inside* can be transferred to wherever the sheep roam. The shepherd's protective power is available regardless of location, enabling the sheep to access the pasture they need and the ability to orient and navigate either deeper into *unknown* territory or back into the fold.

While no claim is made that Jesus followers are invited to fully participate in his omnipotence and omnipresence, this transfer or *spilling out* of conditions adds a new aspect to the discussion of *disruptive-inclusion* and particularly *optimum distance*. Choosing to embrace disruptive circumstances as conducive rather than resistant to CAL progress does not also necessitate denial of the fear and uncertainty associated with such situations. Rather, the challenge is to tune into the powerful voice of the shepherd, that allows for the

¹⁴² Neyrey, "I Am the Door' (John 10:7,9): Jesus the Broker in the Fourth Gospel," 69, no. 2 (2007), 283.

¹⁴³ Neyrey, "I Am the Door' (John 10:7,9): Jesus the Broker in the Fourth Gospel", 283.

partial re-creation of the conditions associated with more comfortable and familiar situations, without the need for physical changes in the learners' surroundings. In this sense, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL considers being 'at home' more a state of mind than a physical location.¹⁴⁴

Once again, this transfer of conditions is deeply evocative of the pattern of Israel's life in the Hebrew Bible. The Psalmist's pain-filled exhortation in Psalm 137 centres on the paradox of Israel fully engaging with her current situation (sat by the rivers of Babylon, v.1) while not allowing her present physical reality to impede her memories of her real home in Zion. The recurring message to the exiles is that present location does not define identity; Israel working out how to sing God's song in a foreign land (v.4) is an example of a *disruptive-inclusive* learning posture. Just as the Jesus $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha$ provides the sheep in John 10 access to the very best life despite not avoiding the infiltration of the enemy, so too Christian adult learners are invited to draw on all the life that Jesus offers, in every circumstance.

3.2.2. Finding pasture in the betwixt and between

One of the clearest examples of how "At its heart, the liminal experience is about being at a threshold, neither here nor there, crossing into an unknown space of perplexing and often transformative energy",¹⁴⁵ is Bert Roebben's work on *narthical learning*. Despite the primary concern of his 2009 article being with Religious Education as a school curriculum subject, his framework is highly relevant to this discussion. Like Hull, Roebben takes up the image of learning as pilgrimage, identifying the narthex of a church building¹⁴⁶ as symbolic of "The

¹⁴⁴ The use of the metaphorical language of home in CAL is fully analysed in 5.2.2.

¹⁴⁵ Carson, et al., *Crossing thresholds: a practical theology of liminality* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2021), 67.

¹⁴⁶ The narthex is the area of a church building closest to the entrance, often separated from other sections by pillars or a screen.

buffer zone between the outside world and the inner sacred space. The narthex, in its metaphorical sense, is both a pedagogical and theological place of confrontation".¹⁴⁷

Despite making no direct reference to John 10 (or, in fact, Jesus at all), disruption and unpredictability are critical to Roebben's concept of pedagogy. For example, he describes learners as pilgrims who are, "Craving for water and coolness on their journey and who are confronted with something completely different from what they had expected and hoped for in the narthex of the church building".¹⁴⁸ As the initial place of arrival upon entrance to a church, Roebben presents a narthex as the symbolic liminal location of *crossover* between the church and the wider community – a meeting point for those on their way in and way out.¹⁴⁹ Within this discussion, Roebben's central idea consolidates the earlier discussion of *optimum distance* – Hull's pedagogical *buffer zone*, *middle ground* or *passing place* where learners are found in two places at once and able to access characteristics associated with both. Again, in line with Hull's understanding of *optimum distance*, Roebben's narthical space is symbolic of the pedagogical advantage we earlier noted Hull refers to as "multiplicity of vision".¹⁵⁰

Pedagogies with a central stage in which a learner "is neither one thing nor another" are common.¹⁵¹ Many are based on the work of 1970s anthropologist Victor Turner who was the first to translate the research of ethnographers such as Arnold van Gennep into a

¹⁴⁷ Roebben, "Narthical religious learning: redefining religious education in terms of pilgrimage," 31, no. 1 (2009), 23.

¹⁴⁸ Roebben, "Narthical religious learning: redefining religious education in terms of pilgrimage", 23.

¹⁴⁹ Various church and para-church organisations have named ministries narthex to demonstrate their perceived function as connection point between those inside and outside the church. In particular, St. John's Church in Spark Hill, Birmingham, where the Hull family lived for many years, has an outreach centre called Narthex: see <https://www.narthex.org.uk/> and <http://www.sjbcathedral.org.uk/the-narthex/>

¹⁵⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 75.

¹⁵¹ Lee, *From a liminal place: an Asian American theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2010), 15.

comprehensive framework for understanding social change. In broad strokes, Turner presents a three-stage framework. In stage one, learners (in our case) separate (or are separated) from their known world. In stage two, learners enter a *liminal* stage of being neither one thing nor another. Stage three functions as a reconnection point, in which having undergone a period of change, learners are re-oriented to their transformed self and reconnect with the community.¹⁵² Whether knowingly or otherwise, this three-tiered format forms the foundation for a range of frameworks across a variety of disciplines. A good pedagogical example is again offered by Jarvis, “Through the process of maturation human beings have a variety of experiences some of which might integrate creatively with the previous biography but sometimes a process of restructuring occurs It occurs in three stages: alienation from previous perspectives, reframing and reconceptualising and finally, re-integration”.¹⁵³ Yet, most notably in the world of biblical studies, this threefold pattern underpins Brüggenmann’s understanding of how the Psalter moves from orientation to disorientation and then re-orientation.¹⁵⁴

Among the many areas of theological thought that rely on a central, in-between, liminal stage are theologies associated with the identity of marginalised, minority, immigrant and mixed-race groups.¹⁵⁵ In particular, Asian American theology naturally gravitates towards the rhetoric of liminality as second generation Korean and Chinese immigrants seek to make sense of their connection to their parents’ native cultures and their place in North American

¹⁵² Turner, *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1977). A fuller explanation of Turner’s work as the basis for liminal theory is offered in chapter 1 of Carson, et al., *Crossing thresholds: a practical theology of liminality*.

¹⁵³ Jarvis, *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ See Brüggenmann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2002).

¹⁵⁵ This imagery also appears in Hull’s work on children’s religious learning. He suggests the idea of “intermediate space” to explain “that area of a child’s consciousness which is neither entirely subjective nor objective” – a key component, he argues, of children’s ability to engage in religious learning. Hull, *God-talk with young children: notes for parents and teachers* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1991), 41.

society. In his article, *Betwixt and Between: Doing Theology with Memory and Imagination*, Vietnamese-born, Roman Catholic, American theologian Peter Phan explains this connection:

Being neither this nor that allows one to be both this and that. Belonging to both worlds ... persons have the opportunity to fuse them together and out of their respective resources, fashion a new, different world, so that persons at the margins stand not only between these worlds and cultures but also *beyond* them. Thus, being betwixt and between can bring about personal and social transformation and enrichment.¹⁵⁶

Phan's broad sentiment is largely congruent with the case made here for *disruptive-inclusion*: the tension involved in embracing incongruent places, situations or feelings is deeply and uniquely pedagogically transformative.

However, there is one sense in which Phan's (and similar) views of liminality conflicts with *disruptive-inclusion* as demonstrated in the analysis of John 10. Phan understands liminality as a path to greater integration. He perceives being simultaneously *this* and *that* as an opportunity for their fusion into a new, compound entity. So far, this project has carefully avoided describing the combination of *disruption* and *inclusion* in terms of integration, fusion or amalgamation to avoid the suggestion that *disruptive-inclusive* CAL involves the assimilation or synthesis of known and unknown, new and old, *out* and *in*.¹⁵⁷ In short, *disruptive-inclusion* of the unknown is not the same as its integration.

¹⁵⁶ Phan, "Betwixt and Between: Doing Theology with Memory and Imagination," in *Journeys at the margin: toward an autobiographical theology in American-Asian perspective* (eds. Phan and Lee; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 113. Carlton Turner also recognises the challenges created in postcolonial, Bahamian culture of Christians struggling to understand their place in both the Church and wider socio-cultural spheres of life: a situation Turner describes as resulting in "Bahamians fully inhabit[ing] both spaces". Turner, *Overcoming Self-Negation* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2020), 28.

¹⁵⁷ This also evokes Hull's use of the term "mish-mash" in relation to Religious Education and pluralism. "It is now clear what we have to do in order to avoid a mish-mash." Hull, "Editorial: 'Mish-Mash': Religious Education and Pluralism," 12, no. 3 (1990), 123.

Far from being an arbitrary distinction, the difference between integration and inclusion is fundamental. In the first of a variety of musical metaphors, the contrast between Phan's approach to liminality and how disruption and inclusion combine to give access to *optimum distance* might be considered similarly to the difference between vertical and horizontal harmonies. Vertical harmony occurs when, for example, chords are played on a guitar or a song by a barbershop choir – notes are stacked upon one another resulting in one, simple, harmonious sound. However, horizontal harmony (also referred to as counterpoint harmony or polyphony) is created when independent melodic lines, sometimes with implied harmonic incompatibilities (i.e., according to the rules of music, they should not sound good together!) are played or sung simultaneously, creating innumerable more harmonic possibilities than in vertical harmony. Phan understands liminality allows for the fusion of several existing realities à la vertical harmony. On the other hand, *disruptive-inclusion* is more akin to horizontal harmony in which the co-existence of that which, on paper, should not result in a good outcome, creates unexpected possibilities, in perhaps unorthodox ways that defy present conventions.¹⁵⁸

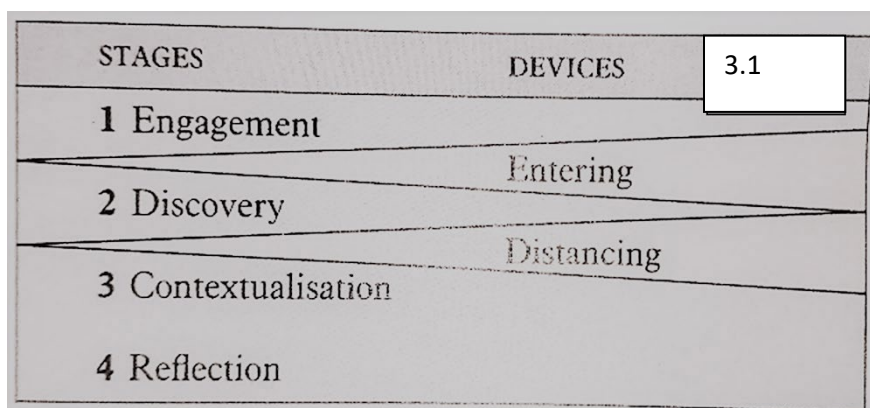
3.3. Boot-strapping and double awareness: a worked example

Before moving onto a comprehensive analysis of *What Prevents...?*, it is important to consolidate understanding of the core CAL characteristics of *coming in and going out* and

¹⁵⁸ As further explored in 7.2.1., horizontal harmony is epitomised by jazz musicians whose aim is to improvise and push the boundaries of both the consonance and dissonance of sound. In her exploration of the imagery of the book of Revelation (as further explored in 8.2.3), Michelle Fletcher makes a similar distinction using the term *pastiche*. Its appropriateness in describing the combination but not integration of various ingredients lies in the fact that "*Pastiche* derives from two terms for two culinary products: *pasticcio* and *pâté*. The Italian *pasticcio* refers to a pasty or stew, where different ingredients are brought together to create something new, but where each is still recognizable, and *pâté* is French for a mixture of different blended elements such as mushrooms, liver and fat, where their original flavours are mixed with each other, but they retain some of their past guise (think Ardennes, not Brussels). Fletcher, *Reading Revelation as pastiche: imitating the past* (London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017), 49-50.

CAL occurring at *optimum distance*. This project has acknowledged from the outset that Hull never espouses a specific CAL methodology. However, there is one place in his work on children’s engagement in the Religious Education curriculum in which Hull outlines a clear pedagogical “strategy” and its resonances with the idea of learners *moving between* stages and its simple, visual format make it a useful vehicle via which to reinforce the central claims of chapter 3.¹⁵⁹

The strategy appears in the 1991 title, created as part of the collaborative project, *A Gift to the Child*, in which Hull and his fellow authors propose a new understanding and practice for Religious Education in UK Primary Schools.¹⁶⁰ The intersection between their “educational philosophy”¹⁶¹ and *disruptive-inclusion* is best demonstrated in the following diagrams (3.1 and 3.2).¹⁶²



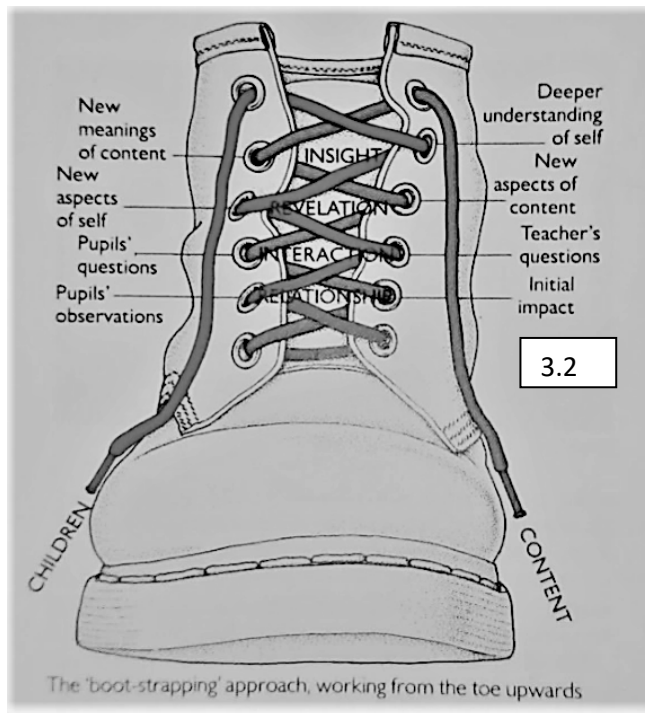
3.1. *The four stages and two devices of learning*

¹⁵⁹ Grimmitt, et al., *Religious education in the primary school: teachers' source book* (Hemel Hempstead: Simon & Schuster Education, 1991), 8.

¹⁶⁰ Grimmitt, et al., *Religious education in the primary school: teachers' source book*.

¹⁶¹ Grimmitt, et al., *Religious education in the primary school: teachers' source book*, 7.

¹⁶² Grimmitt, et al., *Religious education in the primary school: teachers' source book*, 8 and 10 respectively.



3.2. A *boot-strapping* pedagogical approach. (Central words read, “insight, revelation, interaction, relationship.” Bottom reads, “The ‘boot-strapping’ approach, working from the toe upwards”.)

Firstly, the authors present a four-stage pedagogy with a further two pedagogical *devices* intersecting the stages (see diagram 3.1). Once learner attention is gained in stage 1 and learners have had an opportunity to explore the topic for themselves, in stage 2, the “entering” device is a means by which children “enjoy the object [or theme] by entering into a fragment of its meaning”. Such a device “might be used to mark the boundaries between two different kinds of world, or two different aspects of experience” designed to create “an intimacy of appreciation and response” between child and object/topic, regardless of the child’s own religious background or commitments.¹⁶³

After associating with the topic, at stage 3, learners appreciate the topic in wider context, recognising that it exists only as part of a more complex world. This stage lays the foundations for “distancing devices” which encourage children to talk about questions of

¹⁶³ Grimmitt, et al., *Religious education in the primary school: teachers' source book*, 10.

faith in the third person, ensuring that “not only are the religious materials respected but the family backgrounds of the children are also affirmed”.¹⁶⁴ This makes it possible for all students to fully “enter into” the learning process without requiring the denial of personal beliefs but also requires respect to be extended to fellow learners. Finally, having moved into a new learning space and also moved back out again in order to gain an optimal view of the subject, learners are able to reflect on the whole process.

Building on the ideas represented in 3.1., 3.2., envisages engagement with R.E in terms of lacing up a shoe or “boot-strapping”, revealing “the two-way relationship between the children and the material”.¹⁶⁵ Considered this way, learning is neither a student-centred nor content-centred process but rather defined by the reciprocal engagement between them. “The content changes as the children see new and different aspects of it, and the children change as they experience new aspects of the content”.¹⁶⁶ The crossed laces represent four themes: relationship, interaction, revelation and insight and create an overall pedagogy in which the guidance of the educator, learners’ participative engagement, self-understanding and understanding of learning material are presented as inextricably intertwined.

There are many parallels between *bootstrapping* and *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. In the first instance, both frameworks’ reliance on some form of *in* and *out* engagement between learners’ lived reality and the unexpected, unknown or disruptive is clear. However, equally, *bootstrapping* also joins *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in calling for the need for maintaining space between disparate pedagogical elements as well as proximity. While *bootstrapping’s* *entering* phase gives opportunity for the necessary intimacy between subject and learner,

¹⁶⁴ Grimmitt, et al., *Religious education in the primary school: teachers' source book*, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Grimmitt, et al., *Religious education in the primary school: teachers' source book*, 9.

¹⁶⁶ Grimmitt, et al., *Religious education in the primary school: teachers' source book*, 9.

some distance is also needed to ensure “The self will begin to realise its relationship with its world. Meanings which were previously taken for granted, come into the light of conscious choice”.¹⁶⁷ In *What Prevents...?*, Hull refers to this oscillation between intimacy and distance as “dialogical knowing”,¹⁶⁸ while in *A Gift to the Child*, the authors describe it as a “More direct attempt to create a sort of double awareness of both the inside and outside of religious experience, [with which] we could be well on the way towards creating educational methods for coping with the complexities and deceptions of contemporary spirituality”.¹⁶⁹ In 1996, in arguably Hull’s clearest statement on the topic, he claims, “We need educational approaches which combine the inside with the outside. This means that we need to ... both to enter spiritual experience and to leave it; pedagogically speaking, we need both entrance devices and exit devices”.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 177.

¹⁶⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 191.

¹⁶⁹ Hull, "The Ambiguity of Spiritual Values," in *Values in education and education in values* (eds. Halstead and Taylor; London: Falmer Press, 1996), 41-42.

¹⁷⁰ Hull, *The Ambiguity of Spiritual Values*, 42.

Chapter 4: setting out the footprint. *What Prevents...?* as quintessential embodiment and exposition of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL

Taken collectively, chapters 1-3 represent the largely invisible, but entirely essential, pre-construction phase of clarifying the overall parameters and understanding the specific assets and limitations of the chosen project. Now, the build edges towards taking physical shape, but first, the architectural proposals must be *set out*,¹⁷¹ to ascertain that they contain the desired sizes, angles and levels. In terms of building an argument for *disruptive-inclusion*, this project's *setting out* process is a biographical task – plotting the shape and conditions of Hull's experience – particularly at the time he wrote *What Prevents...?* Any claim to create a *disruptive-inclusive* structure that represents Hull's theological pedagogy of CAL must also take into account his embodied example of the same, centred around the years immediately after he lost his last traces of sight in the mid-1980s. To achieve this, chapter 4 presents a detailed examination of both the setting in which *What Prevents...?* was created by Hull and its contents, specifically the development of Hull's reflections from this period. This understanding of *What Prevents...?* as an embodied example of Hull's own learning journey then provides the basis for a close analysis of its major themes.

4.1. examines Hull's own learning identity and experience, particularly during the writing of *What Prevents...?* in the mid-1980s. Firstly, it considers Hull's comments concerning the different phases through which he progressed as he learned to live without use of his eyes. In particular, 4.1.1. addresses the idea that as Hull wrote *What Prevents...?*, he found himself at *optical, optimal distance* – a pedagogical *in-between* in which he simultaneously accessed both sighted and blind worlds. 4.1.2. reflects on Hull's later comments that having *crossed*

¹⁷¹ *Setting out* is construction terminology for transferring plans onto the ground.

over from sight to blindness, he was left in a position where he was actually able to perceive more effectively than sighted people. As someone who had experienced more than one *world*, he was skilled in translation between the two, in a way that is impossible for those either sighted or the blind from birth.

4.2. is built on the observations of 4.1. concerning Hull's developing opinions on its arguments. Beginning in Marilyn Hull's description of her husband carrying his *learning lightly*, 4.2.1. considers a central theme of *What Prevents...?* from several perspectives: the *disruptive-inclusion* of self and others. Specifically, it examines the compartmentalisation of CAL, the challenges associated with comfortable and familiar CAL and the importance of learner awareness. Using Personal Construct Theory, it addresses Hull's argument that optimum CAL is simultaneously *tight* and *loose*, *open* and *closed*, to allow sufficient stability from which to boldly progress but not so much as to inhibit the formation of new learning connections. 4.2.2. addresses the *disruptive-inclusion* of God in CAL, particularly outlining *What Prevents'...?* discussion of the example of CAL presented in Jesus. How can Jesus be the *perfect* teacher and yet also a model for Christian adult learners to follow? In all of these regards, the discourse takes seriously how the content of Hull's argument functions as both exposition and embodiment of the traits of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL.

4.1. Hull's first book as blind author: *disruptive-inclusion* embodied

4.1.1. Learning in an optical narthex

The mid-1980s was a deeply traumatic season for Hull. After emerging from the self-confessed "despairing, nightmare quality of those early days of blindness",¹⁷² apart from

¹⁷² Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 196.

Touching the Rock in 1990, Hull offered few, direct public comments on the period.¹⁷³ In fact, he only reflected on his initial years of blindness when directly requested to evaluate its implications for his life and work on a few occasions in the 1990s, and in the final years before his death.¹⁷⁴ The 1991 preface to the US edition of *What Prevents...?* offers a first glimpse of Hull's evolving views on the period. Then, in 1997, the success of *Touching the Rock* led to the publication of an extended version renamed, *On Sight and Insight* that included some early 1990s diary entries and a postscript.¹⁷⁵ In 2012, Hull offered some further reflections in a conference paper called *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*¹⁷⁶ and in his final full year of work, 2014, he addressed his initial years of blindness in three different settings. Firstly, he introduces his final book *Towards the Prophetic Church* by explaining how he had come to think of the work as "a successor" to *What Prevents...?*¹⁷⁷ Secondly, he made a short video entitled, *The Learning Church*,¹⁷⁸ identifying significant milestones in the development of his pedagogical thinking from 1984 to 2014. Thirdly, the directors of the biopic film *Notes on Blindness* conducted research interviews with Hull and his wife Marilyn, in which they were asked to reflect on the setting and content of the early '80s audio diaries used in its production.¹⁷⁹ The most recent source of evidence as to how Hull considered the significance of his transition into blindness comes

¹⁷³ *In the Beginning There was Darkness* and *The Tactile Heart* address issues of blindness, the Bible and faith. However, they are much more generally instructive, rather than directly biographical.

¹⁷⁴ Particularly on anniversaries or to mark re-prints, Hull was regularly asked by publishers, media outlets, film-makers and charities to reflect back on his experiences from his current standpoint.

¹⁷⁵ Hull, *On sight & insight: a journey into the world of blindness*.

¹⁷⁶ Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*.

¹⁷⁷ Hull, *Towards the Prophetic Church: A Study of Christian Mission* (Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2014), vii.

¹⁷⁸ A video directed by Hull's son, Gabriel for the North West and Mann Learning and Development Network of the Methodist Church. Hull, *North West and Mann Learning and Development Network: The Learning Church*, See also: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/learning/network-regions/north-west-mann-region/what-we-do/>

¹⁷⁹ "The Story Behind 'Notes on Blindness'", <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/01/16/opinion/16OpDoc-NotesOnBlindness.html>

from Marilyn Hull, in a reflection in the epilogue to the 2017 edition of *Touching the Rock* (renamed *Notes on Blindness* in alignment with the film title).

By 1991, Hull could only bring himself to endorse *What Prevents...?* with undeniable hesitancy as “a useful introduction ... as far as it goes”. He summarises that “in five or six years of further study and reflection, I have come to look upon *What Prevents...?* as no more than an introduction”.¹⁸⁰ In particular, he expresses regret at having addressed the challenges associated with CAL as “primarily an individual problem” and how he had become convinced that a “far more radical theory” was required due to the “more serious view of the contaminated state of Christian spirituality” he had identified.¹⁸¹ Overall, in the tone of the 1991 preface, Hull distances himself from what he had come to perceive as the lack of humility and nuance of earlier arguments.

However, considering these comments in context of the arguments in *What Prevents...?*, it is difficult not to consider Hull’s observations as overly self-critical and perhaps even objectively untrue. Firstly, his regret at not having engaged more fully with the social and societal factors shaping learning seems unsupported given that *What Prevents...?* begins with a thorough discussion of how the “Social factors, life-cycle factors and individual factors will be the features of the experience of particular people”.¹⁸² In fact, it is difficult to categorise the entire first chapter as anything other than an exploration of how society-wide structures impact learning.¹⁸³ Secondly, Hull’s self-accusation of minimising the significance

¹⁸⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1991), vii.

¹⁸¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, vii

¹⁸² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 3.

¹⁸³ Although Hull never fully declares the reasoning behind this development, he alludes to the growing importance of themes such as money, capitalism and false consciousness. He planned a sequel called *The Education of Faith and the Pleasures of Capitalism* that never materialised, see Hull, “Karl Marx on Capital: Some Implications for Christian Adult Education” and Hull, “Money, Moderning and Morality: some issues in

of the problems addressed in *What Prevents...?* seems equally unfounded. Particularly because from the book's outset, Hull's arguments are underpinned by an "ever-increasing sense of urgency" to address the challenges of CAL.¹⁸⁴ Ultimately, the boldest pronouncement Hull offers in relation to *What Prevents...?* in 1985 is that its arguments are "probably sound".¹⁸⁵ If anything, it is easier to accuse Hull of being overly cautious than brazen in his claims, introducing the book as "some attempt" at expressing in a "more or less coherent manner the impressions I had so far formed".¹⁸⁶

By 2014, however, although Hull still harboured misgivings about the sufficiency of its arguments, the unforgiving tone of his 1991 critique of *What Prevents...?* had softened into a more forgiving pragmatism. In the preface to *Towards the Prophetic Church*, he summarised his 1984 understanding of CAL as merely "one-sided";¹⁸⁷ a view expounded more fully in *The Learning Church*:

But I had no sooner finished writing this book [*What Prevents...?*] than I began to realise its limits. I began to realise that the problems not only lie with the individual but that each of us is situated in a community, in a society, in a world, and our environment has a huge impact on how we learn and what we learn. I then turned in the next part of my exploration of this problem of adult learning to the society and its impact upon the individuals.¹⁸⁸

In his final years, Hull clearly maintained that *What Prevents...?* only represented a limited discussion of CAL. However, he did not undermine its value per se, but contextualised its

the Christian education of adults," 95, no. 1 (2000). The above themes, however, do appear in seed form in the 1985 work. See Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, vi-viii.

¹⁸⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, xi.

¹⁸⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, xi.

¹⁸⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, xi. The deep irony of Hull's 1991 stance on *What Prevents...?* is that the book overwhelmingly focuses on how pedagogical obstacles can be overcome through heightened awareness. Repeatedly, it argues that 'pushing through' or 'leaning into' seemingly natural pedagogical barriers can create the necessary conditions for learning breakthrough.

¹⁸⁷ Hull, *Towards the Prophetic Church: A Study of Christian Mission*, vii.

¹⁸⁸ Hull, *North West and Mann Learning and Development Network: The Learning Church*.

wider role in providing a catalyst, trajectory and fuel for his career-long interest in the topic. Furthermore, although Hull's growing scepticism in relation to *What Prevents...?* between 1985 and 1991 must be partially attributed to the normal patterns of an academic's changing interests and developing thinking, he clearly also understood a connection between his developing pedagogical views and personal experiences from the early to mid-1980s:

... I was presented with this huge problem and had to learn rapidly all sorts of new things, not only how to make a cup of tea but how to image God because this was a huge challenge to my imagination. This made me wonder whether it is the case that adults only learn (or learn best) when the structures of life are upset; when the crises of life come upon us. Is that the case? Is it the mere stability and perhaps conventionality of much of church life, which prevents Christian adults from learning? ...¹⁸⁹

Apart from highlighting Hull's clearest acknowledgement yet of the connection between disruptive life circumstances and optimal conditions for CAL, by Hull's own admission in 2014, the above reflection offers a transparent recognition that the composition and publication of *What Prevents...?* took place against the backdrop of the most tumultuous and challenging period of his life; the loss of his final traces of light perception and the initial year of his self-identification as a blind person. This is confirmed in Hull's identification of *What Prevents...?* as the "the first book I had attempted to write as a blind author".¹⁹⁰ Hull saw the intense period of forced re-learning, re-adjustment and re-orientation during this period as deeply influential in shaping the content of *What Prevents...?*, commenting in 2014, "It is not surprising that... the problems of interiority and the meaning of the spiritual life pre-occupied me and encouraged me to project these conflicts onto other Christian adults".¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Hull, *North West and Mann Learning and Development Network: The Learning Church*. 8.3. addresses COVID-19 as the biggest disruption to the stability of church life in living memory.

¹⁹⁰ Hull, *Towards the Prophetic Church: A Study of Christian Mission*, vii.

¹⁹¹ Hull, *Towards the Prophetic Church: A Study of Christian Mission*, vii.

Thus, *What Prevents...?* is not only a written record of Hull's 1985, academic understanding of CAL but also of his embodiment of the process during its production. For example, earlier highlighted concepts such as *optimum distance* and *multiplicity of vision* are not just abstract creations of Hull's imagination but narrations of his lived experience. Without diminishing the extent to which Hull's transition into (what he would later refer to as) a "blind life-world" provided innumerable obstacles in every area of his (and his family's) life,¹⁹² it is equally important to recognise that as the first (and arguably, only) substantial work written during this period, *What Prevents...?* is the most significant example of how this period of acute disruption provided Hull unparalleled capacity to *view* CAL in new ways.

In 2014, in preparing their film script for production, Peter Middleton and James Spinney asked Hull to reflect on his journey through the initial years of blindness. His response is particularly insightful for our purposes: "The feelings of panic have long since subsided.¹⁹³ My blind skin has ... has got thicker. I have become less aware of the darkness. As the light has faded and the memory of the light has faded, then the awareness of the darkness has also faded. So, I don't feel as if I'm in the dark. Ah, I don't go round thinking I'm blind. I just live my life and I, I love it".¹⁹⁴

Years of distance from the experience had enabled Hull to understand his transition from sighted to blind person in four stages. Firstly, the fading of light; secondly, the fading of the memory of light; thirdly, growth in awareness of darkness and fourthly and finally, a fading

¹⁹² Hull, "The Body Broken in a Broken World: A Contribution to a Christian Doctrine of the Person from a Disabled Point of View," 7, no. 4 (2003), 198.

¹⁹³ In the early stages of blindness, Hull experienced feelings of panic and claustrophobia he attributed to inescapable darkness.

¹⁹⁴ The Story Behind 'Notes on Blindness'.

awareness of darkness.¹⁹⁵ While I make no claim that Hull meant to present these as discrete, sequential stages of CAL, nor understood them as the basis of any form of CAL methodology, these comments provide an insightful framework by which to assess how Hull's own learning processes may have influenced the production of *What Prevents...?* and his developing views on it thereafter.

According to the above framework, Hull writes *What Prevents...?* from the point at which the first, long process of the physical fading of light to his eyes had concluded and the fading of the *memory* of the light was only just underway.¹⁹⁶ Thus, although his physical eyes were no longer functioning at all, Hull found himself caught between the sighted and blind worlds, in an optical narthex where his sighted memories and imagination were still vivid enough for him to retain "shadowy but mobile visual memories".¹⁹⁷ Thus for a period, Hull existed in a *space* in which he partially identified with his previous sighted life-world while simultaneously being increasingly forced to "reassemble" himself as a blind person in a blind world.¹⁹⁸ He describes this dramatic experience as early as 1985 as "emerging from the embedded self into something which I do not yet recognise as being me. It is the experience of birth and re-birth".¹⁹⁹

Returning to the language of John 10, during this transition in which he could no longer physically see, but his mind still functioned on visual terms, Hull literally found himself with

¹⁹⁵ This resonates strongly with the core concepts of the Johari window: arena, blind spot, façade and unknown. See Luft, *Of human interaction [the Johari model]* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield, 1969).

¹⁹⁶ Hull's eyesight began to fail at age 13 due to cataracts and he fully lost sight in his left eye at 17. He was registered blind in 1980 but retained limited light perception until 1982/3. In the intervening period, he categorised himself as "a sighted person who couldn't see". Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*.

¹⁹⁷ Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 200.

¹⁹⁸ Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*.

¹⁹⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 179.

access to a *multiplicity of vision*; able to “go in and out, in and out” with ease and clarity.²⁰⁰

However, by the occasion of his writing the US preface for *What Prevents...?* in 1991, Hull’s memories of the light had also almost completely disappeared. In fact, “the category that people looked like something at all ... [had] began to fade”.²⁰¹ Once both physical light and memories of light were inaccessible to Hull, awareness of the darkness began to grow.

Marilyn Hull recalls with sadness how her husband became unable to bring to mind the physical attributes of loved places and people (her included): “Like colours and trees ... we slipped away”.²⁰²

Against this backdrop, the tone of Hull’s 1991’s appraisal of *What Prevents...?* as insufficient is re-contextualised. It becomes clear that Hull’s self-assessment of his own identity and achievements was overwhelmingly dominated in the early stages by a deep awareness of the visual world that was now inaccessible to him. This connection between Hull’s loss of sight and growth in awareness of both his physical and metaphorical inability to see is reinforced by the overarching theme of the additional contributions to *On Sight and Insight* (from 1991/92), well-summarised by Hull’s statement that “losing sight has meant a fall into consciousness”.²⁰³ By the early 1990s, Hull was hyper-aware of that to which his blindness denied him access and the resulting isolation from not sharing visual experiences with sighted family, friends and colleagues. Unlike the initial stage of blindness in 1985, by the early 1990s, Hull could no longer access a sighted imagination nor did he feel fully ‘at home’ in his blind identity; speaking of himself as a “stranger” and an “extraneous factor” in an

²⁰⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 67.

²⁰¹ Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*.

²⁰² Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 200.

²⁰³ Hull, *On sight & insight: a journey into the world of blindness*, 198.

otherwise “intact system”.²⁰⁴ He had fallen into consciousness, but specifically into a consciousness of that which he could no longer see and an identity he could no longer inhabit, a process he summarises in deeply evocative terms: “The birth of that new being is so slow and painful, intermittent, perhaps never realised except in a few brief moments of revelation. In the meantime, one senses ... how great and terrible is the power of darkness”.²⁰⁵

4.1.2. Learning as trans-world interpretation

The infrequency with which Hull reflected on his transition from sight to blindness makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly when his awareness of darkness peaked and subsequently began to subside. Thus, we are left to make deductions based on the tone of his comments in other respects between the mid-1990s and 2014. In this regard, Hull’s most instructive publication is a 2004 article called *Teaching as a Trans-World Activity*.²⁰⁶ Although the short piece does not primarily carry a biographical tone, the connection between its argument and Hull’s personal experiences are clear. Even the title suggests that Hull had reached a stage of actively applying his experiences of blindness to pedagogy more generally, giving the distinct impression that Hull had found “something solid and permanent on the far side of despair and a change in the character of consciousness”.²⁰⁷

However, *Teaching as a Trans-World Activity* also betrays Hull’s ongoing struggle with blindness – his continuing experience of loss remains clear. In fact, in several regards, he

²⁰⁴ Hull, *On sight & insight: a journey into the world of blindness*, 209.

²⁰⁵ Hull, *On sight & insight: a journey into the world of blindness*, 211.

²⁰⁶ Hull, “Teaching as a trans-world activity,” 19, no. 3 (2004). Later reproduced in Hull, *Tactile heart: studies in blindness and faith* (Auckland, N.Z.: Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind, 2014).

²⁰⁷ Hull, *On sight & insight: a journey into the world of blindness*, 232. Note the re-emergence of the *far side* language of *What Prevents...?*, chapter 1.

never seems to fully come to terms with his lack of access to the visual world. In particular, the loss of the ability to read people's facial expressions that he fondly recalls as "the charisma of eye glances" caused him great sadness.²⁰⁸ However, by 2004, Hull was firmly focused on the lessons that could be learned from his ability to act "as an interpreter" between sighted and blind worlds.²⁰⁹ While Hull recognises the rarity of his situation, he universalises its process in the insistence that "we all go blind in our own personal ways"²¹⁰ and therefore through "experience, familiarity and imagination [we] can enter adequately into the lives of another human being".²¹¹ Hull paints a picture in which, in line with the earlier analysis of John 10, it is not the physically blind who need pity, but rather those who, whether sighted or blind, have never *seen* a world other than their own. He reflects on the irony of how some sighted people think that "the sighted world is *the* world, therefore people who don't live in their world must be without a world".²¹² Inversely, Hull's message is that the loss of his sight has taught him that effective teaching and learning only occurs when those involved *really* see themselves, others and their wider environment, and that in turn, this often requires active movement into 'blind' spaces. He suggests that any form of absolutism impoverishes learning to the extent that it makes it practically impossible.

These reflections contribute much to our understanding of the trajectory of Hull's engagement with his transition into blindness. By 2004, he had arrived at a stage where he could retrospectively analyse his transition into blindness. He states that effective CAL

²⁰⁸ Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*. In their analysis of paediatrician and psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott's contribution to liminal theory, Carson, et al., *Crossing thresholds: a practical theology of liminality* refer to the developmental potential of *The Space between the Mutual Gaze*. In particular, they reference how the function of "mirroring" and "beholding" that "can help us into sacred transitional spaces", 31.

²⁰⁹ Hull, *Touching the rock: an experience of blindness* (London: SPCK, 2013), xx.

²¹⁰ Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*.

²¹¹ Hull, "Teaching as a trans-world activity", 105-6.

²¹² Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*.

“Involves having insight into a different world, a world in which ... that which is regarded as being important ... may be different from the one in which the teacher lives”.²¹³ Thus, it is clear from Hull’s evolving self-assessment from his new, well-established position in his blind *life-world*, that he had arrived at a point at which he was no longer actively aware of his blindness. The sense in which Hull’s awareness of the darkness had long since peaked and faded away again by the early 2000s is beautifully represented in Marilyn’s comment that Hull “eventually joked about blindness being ‘just a hobby’”.²¹⁴ By this point, blindness no longer represented the paralysing, disruptive *unknown* world it once had for Hull. His journey through it had transformed his engagement with and within this particular learning *world* to the extent that conditions which had once caused him such overwhelming disruption had since become second nature; such a “taken-for-granted sense of day-by-day reality that [he] ... never stop[ped] to reflect upon them”.²¹⁵

Thus, seen through the lens of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, it is important to recognise that having passed through these four, key stages and arrived at a new *normal*, Hull moved out of *optimum distance* and back into a relative level of learning comfort.²¹⁶ However, Hull’s comments to this end reveal that he did not understand himself as *ever* having returned to a similar place to where he began in the early 1980s. Even if were somehow able to regain his sight (a suggestion he found increasingly offensive), Hull rejected the suggestion that he could, or would even want to return to his previous *sighted* life. Rather, he argued that his transition into blindness had shaped him to the extent that his approach to any similarly

²¹³ Hull, "Teaching as a trans-world activity", 105.

²¹⁴ Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 199.

²¹⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 54.

²¹⁶ The pedagogical challenges associated with reaching a *new normal* are addressed in relation to COVID-19 in 8.3.2.

disorienting future experiences was irreversibly changed. This is epitomised in the titular diary entry of *Touching the Rock* in which Hull explains, “There is something urgent and intense about trying to touch a rock when you are being swept away, but from that safer place it is possible to survey the experience from a wider perspective”.²¹⁷

At first, this comment seems to underscore the contrast between the urgency and intensity of Hull’s initial, vulnerable stages of blindness with a later, safer, broader space from which he perceived things differently. However, it is critical to notice that the *safer* place Hull speaks of *is* the vulnerable, disruptive place and not the later, re-oriented position in his blind life-world. The above quote describes a deeply visceral event which occurred on 22nd August 1986 in which Hull discovered the main altar at Iona Abbey; an experience during which Hull was still experiencing a developing awareness of the darkness, confusion, frustration and deep sense of isolation. Eventually, Hull had come to understand the very place where he felt most vulnerable as the place from which he could most powerfully and effectively perceive and assess his situation. Hull’s *disruptive-inclusive* learning experience had not merely taken him on an adventure and then returned him to its starting point; it forced him to reassess his entire theological ontology, leading to the declaration: “I have learned that darkness and light are both alike to God”.²¹⁸

Before progressing further, it is important to consider this striking statement in relation to the earlier differentiation between integration and inclusion. In declaring the equality of light and dark to God, Hull is not merely downplaying the differences between sightedness and blindness; darkness and light, nor is he attempting to fuse before and after, light and

²¹⁷ Hull, *On sight & insight: a journey into the world of blindness*, 232.

²¹⁸ Hull, *Touching the rock: an experience of blindness*, xx.

dark, in and out. Rather, he acknowledges that his learning experience has entirely reordered his consciousness resulting in the ability to interpret the world from a standpoint at which “our humanity rests upon our ability to unite across different worlds of experience”.²¹⁹ There is a variety of ways to imagine Hull’s learning progression here. In the simplest sense, we might say that Hull has moved *beyond* his earlier understanding of himself as straddling blind and sighted worlds, progressing in his journey to consider himself as a “Whole-Body-Seer”.²²⁰ Yet, it is also helpful to understand his transition in terms of a vertical trajectory, by the end of which Hull is able to appreciate the world and himself in it, from a more lofted perspective.

Interestingly, however, Hull speaks of his own progress in terms of descent towards “the one human world which lies beneath all the worlds and ties them all together”.²²¹ By his final season of life, he had reached a conscious understanding of how embracing disruption had allowed him to enter into *deeper* relationship with self, others, the world and God, or again as Marilyn Hull reflected in 2016, “he was able to come back, restored to himself and to me”.²²² To contextualise this according to the terms of John 10, Hull had come to understand that learning is not a process aimed at perpetually remaining either in or out of the sheepfold. Rather, by actively and repeatedly passing between life-worlds, the limitations of any learning situation can be transcended (or in Hull’s terms, *underscended*) because the guidance and protection of the Shepherd and Rock is accessible at *every* stage and in *every* location (and perhaps most powerfully in the most disorienting stages) of learning.

²¹⁹ Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 202.

²²⁰ Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 192.

²²¹ Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*.

²²² Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 196.

Thus, while the above discussion goes a long way in demonstrating how Hull's transition into blindness embodies *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, a final task is required to complete this stage of the argument. This project claims that learning transformation is not just a resulting bi-product of *disruptive-inclusion* but that particularly, its early stages create the optimum conditions for effective CAL progress. If true, it ought to follow that the core elements of Hull's understanding of CAL would not only emerge in later life, but that at least some of the foundational elements would be present (at least prototypically) in what this project presents as Hull's quintessential book from optimum distance: *What Prevents...?*

4.2. *What Prevents...?: disruptively-including* who and what?

Building on the following, three summary observations from 4.1., this section offers a detailed analysis of the arguments of *What Prevents...?* In particular, what and whom does Hull suggest ought to be included in CAL and why? Firstly, using his own arguments to interpret his experience, contrary to his own 1991 assessment, the early 1980s provided Hull an unparalleled opportunity to produce his most cogent, incisive and unique insights into CAL methodology. Secondly, it is unsurprising that by 1991, having only just moved out of acute crisis and away from the apex of disruption, Hull's accurate assessment of the true contribution of *What Prevents...?* to the wider dialogue on CAL was impeded by the dominant awareness of what was now inaccessible to him. Thirdly, in terms of Hull's developing views on CAL, some of the ideas, connections and questions largely associated with his work on blindness, are carefully and insightfully expounded in *What Prevents...?* and as such, are meritorious of further investigation and development in their own right. Thus, the following sections aim to highlight some perspectives on CAL that have been overlooked

or misunderstood as crucial contributions to CAL methodology and practice – both by Hull himself and others.

4.2.1. Disruptively-including self and others in CAL: learning lightly

In Marilyn Hull's 2016 epilogue for the newly-titled edition of *Notes on Blindness* (formerly *Touching the Rock*), she describes her late-husband's lifelong approach to learning: "He was a teacher with more than fifty-five years' experience, a successful academic, a leading thinker in Religious Education and latterly a respected theologian, *but he carried his learning lightly* and always positioned himself as a learner rather than expert".²²³ *Learning lightly* aptly describes a pedagogical posture that treats every stage of CAL as a steppingstone to the next, and which considers continuing progress as dependent on each discovery, conviction and emotion remaining open to further changes. As outlined in 2.1., Hull presents connected engagement between self, others, the wider learning environment and God in all of life as the basis for healthy CAL progression. His determination to adopt this learning posture in all settings and circumstances reveals a significant and recurring theme in *What Prevents...?* of why and how Christians have become excluded, separated and alienated in CAL and suggests how this can be remedied. In particular, 4.2.1. addresses Hull's argument that compartmentalisation has seen churches come to function as learning havens that protect from the potential challenges of life. Furthermore, it considers Hull's use of George Kelly's work on *Personal Construct Theory* as a means of retaining openness to learning and why many Christian adult learners work hard to eliminate rather than embrace doubt and error.

²²³ Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 199. Italics mine.

1. The Problem with Learning Havens

A close analysis of the arguments in *What Prevents...?* must begin with a consideration of *learning havens*. For Hull, as the name suggests, *learning havens* are environments that prioritise learner comfort and protection from potential disruptions. They exist and function, Hull argues, due to the ubiquitous and insidious power of ideologies in shaping “what human beings are capable of knowing”.²²⁴ Specifically, Hull holds modernist ideological thought responsible for compartmentalising reality into a range of disassociated silos or “multiple life-worlds”²²⁵ governed by different sets of rules: ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres, learning and non-learning spaces and roles in society. In this framework, the religious realm is designated as a non-learning “haven” that functions as an ideal foil to the “problems and demands” offered by the “real world”.²²⁶ Hull argues that, as a result, Christianity has become associated with childhood – considered “something you grow out of”.²²⁷ Thus, learning (and especially any form of disruptive learning) has no place in Christianity because “it would violate the simplicity of the haven”.²²⁸

Understanding the argument that Christian faith functions as a *haven* brings the wider conflict between modernity and *disruptive-inclusive* CAL into clearer focus. Hull argues that the church has been co-opted by modernity to provide respite from challenging, unexpected, unpredictable and painful learning experiences ‘out there’ and subsequently that the practice of rational, analytical and critical faculties is not only discouraged but deemed unnecessary in many ecclesial settings. This point is illustrated by the example of

²²⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 35.

²²⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 15. The seven sub-themes are: bureaucracy, rationality, individualism, futurity, liberation, plurality and knowledge.

²²⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 6-7.

²²⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 7.

²²⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 10.

preaching. Sermons which “give a cosy feeling of being in a familiar, warm cocoon of accepted beliefs” are generally “admired and appreciated” while those which “tackle” contemporary issues of faith or make “demands upon ... listeners” are deemed as out of place and are the subject of complaints.²²⁹ This, Hull argues, is just one example of a trend within a range of contemporary, ecclesial settings that skill Christian adults in locating certain patterns of belief in places where they become unavailable for criticism or questioning. “It seems pretty clear that in their church life many adults are taking part in an activity from which they do not learn, do not expect to learn, and do not want to learn”.²³⁰

Hull recognises the disassociation of the religious self and learning self as a (perhaps, the most) significant challenge to CAL because without being subject to criticism and reflection, belief “remains at rather a tacit level of understanding, we cannot speak of it because we are barely aware of it”.²³¹ Where learners are “largely unconscious of their own faith this unconsciousness is itself part of a defensive network”.²³² Or, as Hull probes more practically, “Why is it that our churches contain so many adults who show resourcefulness, creativity and flexibility in their ordinary working lives but who, in their church life, seem to be quite unable to express a point of view about their faith”?²³³ Thus, Hull argues, effective CAL must actively engage Christian adults in conversation about their own learning with the aim of re-

²²⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 65. A fuller analysis of Hull’s pedagogical views on teaching sermons and potential *disruptive-inclusive* sermons is offered in 8.2.2.

²³⁰ Hull, *What Stops Christian Adults from Learning* (ed. City; Salford: The Sacred Trinity Centre, 1982), 3.

²³¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 33-34.

²³² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 55. The role of sermons in *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is addressed in chapter 8.

²³³ Hull, *What Stops Christian Adults from Learning*, 2.

imagining the role of Christian adult learner from “passive patient to active participant”;²³⁴ from victim of learning to active agent within it.²³⁵

Thus, Hull considers learner cognisance a principal gateway to effective CAL. He claims that without it, pedagogical coherence, integration, suppleness, and relatedness to the present reality will remain significantly limited.²³⁶ Central to Hull’s claims in *What Prevents...?* is a process by which learners increasingly move “out of the obscurity of unconscious or semi-conscious influence ... into the conscious reflection of faith”.²³⁷ Parallel to this, Hull measures (or at least judges) pedagogical awareness in terms of articulation: learners’ inability or unwillingness to express the nature of their learning raises questions concerning the value of the learning taking place. In a theme addressed at length in 8.1.2., Hull observes the strength of the positive correlation between learner awareness and articulation in relation to biblical CAL. He claims that one of the main reasons why much biblical teaching and learning makes even minimal or temporary distance from learners’ existing, static “world of meaning” impossible, is the lack of terminology available to express alternative, unsettling approaches to it.²³⁸ By 1991, despite some significant developments in his thinking, especially regarding the role of *false consciousness*, Hull maintained that the basic, core trajectory of CAL is well-understood as a learner’s “sleeping consciousness ... awakened to life”.²³⁹

²³⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 55.

²³⁵ Hull refers to the opposite of ideological enclosure as *re-ideologisation*. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 80. Both this concept and the discussion as to whether learners *must* be conscious of, and able to articulate, their own learning in order for it to be effective is fully undertaken in 7.1 and 8.1.2 respectively.

²³⁶ See Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 82.

²³⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 119.

²³⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 177 and 118.

²³⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, viii. In particular see, Hull, *The Ambiguity of Spiritual Values* and Hull, "Spiritual Development: Interpretations and Applications," 24, no. 3 (2002).

Hull summarises his views on why learning consciousness seems so lacking in his church experience in the idea, “fish are not aware of water”.²⁴⁰ Ubiquitous conditions or that which is ever-present in a learner’s immediate reality remains unavailable for critical reflection, leading to a “totalitarianism of consciousness”.²⁴¹ To illustrate this via the earlier example of preaching, when congregants only ever hear sermons which consolidate and confirm their existing beliefs about God, themselves and the world, they are not presented with the opportunity for either critical self-reflection nor to “dare to include”²⁴² that which lies beyond their present beliefs or experience. Hull argues that, over time, this repeated process of exclusively engaging with such messages results in “ideological closure”.²⁴³ Such a paradigm, he explains, aligns with interpretations of John 10 that encourage Christians to perpetually benefit from the safety and protection provided by the “womb-like enclosure” of the sheepfold,²⁴⁴ in contrast to the dangerous and unknown world beyond its confines.²⁴⁵

Thus, a foundational argument of *What Prevents...?* is that CAL must actively resist compartmentalisation designed to distance learners from disruption. The first step of this process is to resist the disassociation of the Christian faith and the rest of life. For *disruptive-inclusion* to be truly understood as a process by which learners dare to include that which had been previously categorised as unsuitable learning tools, it must begin with self and not be limited to the strange, exotic or distant. As Ann Ulanov observes in relation to

²⁴⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 177. Hull borrows this metaphorical language from Heraclitus, famous for his belief that although humans can only see one perspective at a time, this does not necessitate denial of all others. For example, one can accept that the sea is the perfect living environment for fish and simultaneously a hostile living environment for humans.

²⁴¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* p33-34.

²⁴² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 18.

²⁴³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 68.

²⁴⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 77.

²⁴⁵ This argument evokes Hull’s reflections on his transition from sightedness to blindness – specifically his observation on the ‘blindness’ of sighted people who have never conceived of any other reality. See 4.1.

psychotherapy, “Value comes in and to and through one’s relation to others and to otherness through one’s relation to self ... inability to see the other is linked to an inability to see [] self”.²⁴⁶ The compartmentalisation of society means that many have pedagogically disqualified themselves as *other* and thus, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL requires courageous levels of disruptive *self*-inclusion and awareness before the inclusion of *others* can be considered.

However, Hull does not just merely demonstrate the need for a more self-inclusive CAL process, he also analyses its implications: “Since part of the task of Christian education is to bring faith to the level of consciousness, thus increasing the responsibility and integrity of the self, one must expect that Christian education will encounter resistance”.²⁴⁷ In this sense, Hull conceives that effective learning engagement cannot avoid disruption, because its very nature puts learners in direct ideological conflict with the modern trajectory towards compartmentalisation and self-protection. Hull considers modernity’s influence so potent that it has become the basic pattern governing human behaviour, meaning that daring to engage faith with learning (or even assume that such a task is possible) is experienced as a form of self-betrayal.

For example, Hull considers the generally-held understanding that natural curiosity reduces with age. Most societies (and in my experience, most church communities) expect the passage of time and experience to result in older people questioning less, not more. Any attempt to resist this trajectory will require older people (and institutions) to actively reject the socially embedded and purportedly natural definition of human (potentially even

²⁴⁶ Ulanov, "The Self as Other," 12, no. 2 (1973), 142.

²⁴⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 55.

Christian) wisdom. Thus, Hull's pedagogical approach expects not only theological and pedagogical disruption, but also ontological disruption. Just as Hull entered a new *life-world* in the disruption caused by the "dark, paradoxical gift" of his blindness,²⁴⁸ so too CAL requires the inclusion and re-purposing of many aspects of the Modern world, in order to access new avenues of learning.

Returning to the claims in 2.1.2. that *disruptive-inclusion's* distinctive Christian character is based in the witness of the Church, Hull grounds the above claims historically, arguing that that even when the most seemingly destructive theories have engaged with Christian faith, repeated patterns of "mutual learning"²⁴⁹ and "cognitive bargaining"²⁵⁰ have successfully co-opted their potentially obstructive impact on CAL, transforming them into clarifying and illuminating counterpoints and resulting in the Church's ability to explore new levels of self-consciousness. Specifically relating to learning *havens*, despite acknowledging their natural tendency to distract, dislocate and confuse CAL, Hull recognises that havens not only act as an "urgent reason for" but also provide "the strongest resistance against" bafflement, and as such constitute a deeply necessary component of CAL.²⁵¹

2. The fear of being wrong

Another way in which *What Prevents...?* argues that potential obstacles to CAL progress can be re-purposed as tools of pedagogical openness and responsiveness relates to doubt and the fear of error. Hull argues that the world of social psychology offers insight into how

²⁴⁸ "How my husband saw blindness as a 'dark, paradoxical gift'", <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/feb/11/john-hull-notes-on-blindness-wife-marilyn>

²⁴⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 12.

²⁵⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 11.

²⁵¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 57-59. Hull defines bafflement according to awareness of the differences between lived reality and expectations of how things ought to be. Inversely, confusion is a lack of awareness, understanding or the ability to articulate.

Christian adult learners might not avoid, suppress, or otherwise overcome barriers to learning but rather co-opt them to their advantage. His argument is underpinned by the observation that by adulthood, significant time and energy have been invested in being right and the losses associated with being wrong also increase. Hull identifies this pattern as intrinsic to formal learning processes. Regardless of the academic success attained by any given person, “They have passed through the school system in which they have learned that to be right is not only to be sane but to be good and to be entitled to reward”.²⁵² Even if not conscious to learners, the majority of Western, formal educational structures repeatedly affirm that successful learning looks like linear, constantly consolidated progress towards a fixed goal and encourages learners in developing “subterfuges and avoidance techniques”.²⁵³ Techniques, which in turn, help avoid distractions or detours in the pursuit of correct answers. Therefore, being wrong, ignorant or inaccurate becomes associated with that which learners ought to avoid: what Hull refers to as “direct cognitive conflict”.²⁵⁴

What Prevents’...? discussion of the pedagogical implications of being right and wrong relies heavily on Personal construct theory.²⁵⁵ According to Kelly, as humans experience dynamic reality (i.e., go about everyday life) collections of “mental representations” are created “that we use to interpret events”,²⁵⁶ what Kelly calls sets of personal constructs. As learning continues, new ideas and experiences become associated with pre-existing constructs, forming an increasingly inter-connected system, which at any point represents the “sum

²⁵² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 101.

²⁵³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 101.

²⁵⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 99. While this is a term of Hull’s invention, he recognises that its concepts are derived from and deeply similar to the work of Piaget and Kohlberg.

²⁵⁵ Kelly, *The psychology of personal constructs* (New York, N.Y.: Norton, 1955).

²⁵⁶ “Personal Construct Theory Overview”, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-personal-construct-theory-2795957>

total of everything a person has learned so far”.²⁵⁷ By adulthood, learners have elaborate, multi-layered systems comprising “subordinate” and “superordinate”²⁵⁸ constructs: web-like networks that bring the pedagogical challenges associated with being proved wrong into finer focus.

As is common in all forms of hierarchical structure, higher level, (superordinate) constructs govern other areas of an individual’s construct system. These are more commonly found in highly connected areas such as those relating to religious thinking and experience. When superordinate personal constructs are challenged, the disruption to the whole system is difficult to bear. It is “painful and unsettling to question the things which are the source and ground for the rest of our life and its activities”.²⁵⁹ For example, for many Christians, an example of a central, superordinate construct governing religious beliefs and experiences would generally be “the belief in a merciful and forgiving God”.²⁶⁰ If a new experience or piece of information threatens to influence or displace such a construct, everything connected to and dependent on it (i.e. practically every other religious belief) is threatened and the overall integrity of the construct system is potentially undermined. Thus, “there may well be times when a person cannot afford to be wrong, for the damage to the system as a whole would be unacceptable”.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 107. This reflects the initial outline of CAL occurring in all of life, not just formal education settings.

²⁵⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 107.

²⁵⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 55. This pattern is akin to how changes in senior management in a company are often felt right through the culture of an organisation very quickly, even when the outgoing person(s) had seemingly little or nothing to do with the day-to-day running of the business.

²⁶⁰ Huber, "Are Religious Beliefs Relevant in Daily Life?," in *Religion inside and outside traditional institutions* (eds. Streib and Theology; *Empirical studies in theology*; v. 15; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 213.

²⁶¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 108. Hull’s references to both *ideological closure* and *premature closure* resonate strongly with Erikson’s work as further developed by James Marcia. “The foreclosed adult has developed a personality structure that resists disequilibrium. If life events do destabilize the foreclosed adult, identity restructuring is likely to be a shattering experience”. Croger, "Identity Development Through Adulthood: The Move Toward "Wholeness", in *The Oxford handbook of identity development* (ed. McLean and Syed; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 68.

While the above example is extreme, it exposes the underlying motivation of error and doubt avoidance in CAL. Where “tightly construed”²⁶² or *enclosed* personal construct systems are perceived as under threat from new information or experiences, Hull recognises the general tendency in CAL for remove the potential for error by detaching or compartmentalising construct systems pertaining to God, the world and themselves and others in it.²⁶³ By detaching certain areas in this way, the risk of detrimental change to the whole system is vastly reduced. As a result, “the area open to enquiry and playful curiosity steadily diminishes” and learners undergo the process of “crystallisation ossification” and “sedimentation”.²⁶⁴

As outlined in 2.1., Hull’s fundamental conception of learning is not measured according to possession of increasing subject information or even more wide-ranging skills, but according to learner ability and willingness to continually re-assess and reorganise new information and experiences in relation to current circumstances. Hull summarises why he understands this idea of connectedness as so essential to CAL: “Relatedness not only frees adults from a totalitarian interpretation, but it opens the way for the postulation of a large number of relationships between ... meanings”.²⁶⁵ However, it also functions as a double-edged sword in that “it holds greater possibilities for both creation and destruction”,²⁶⁶ and thus just as Hull stopped short of calling for total self-reflection in learning,²⁶⁷ neither does he suggest that learners aim for *complete* openness and flexibility in personal constructs. In what will

²⁶² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 110.

²⁶³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 109.

²⁶⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 126, 62. and 68.

²⁶⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 34. At Hull’s funeral, his daughter Lizzie articulated her lasting gratitude that her father had given her “the courage to think critically and not settle comfortably into any single perspective of the world”. Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 205.

²⁶⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 159.

²⁶⁷ Hull agrees with Paul Ricœur that not only is total self-reflection impossible, but unnecessary and potentially undesirable. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 67.

become a recurring theme as this project progresses, Hull rejects an either-or approach in favour of a both-and framework: the ideal personal construct system for CAL is neither construed “so loose as to be virtually meaningless and useless [nor] ... so tight as to be unable to tolerate ambiguity at all”.²⁶⁸ “Room should be left for a commitment which is sincere and deep but at the same time sufficiently exploratory and tentative”.²⁶⁹

In summary, Hull suggests that “oscillation between tight and loose construing is necessary if the construct system as a whole is to be flexible enough and yet relevant enough to undergo development”.²⁷⁰ He concludes that a pedagogical posture is required that simultaneously benefits from a sufficiently robust sense of self within wider reality to launch into new learning spaces with confidence *as well as* enough *lightness* to be able to recognise and forge connections with new information and experiences as they present themselves.²⁷¹ This need for combining grounded centredness and openness is so critical to Hull that he presents it as akin to a form of pedagogical re-birth or resurrection which will “free the believer from naïve absolutist assumptions and will enable him to live again”.²⁷²

However, Hull’s call for learners to avoid absolutism does not only address the “inner-fragmentation²⁷³ caused by modernity but also the fragmentation caused within

²⁶⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 108.

²⁶⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 155-156. Hull explains this parallel solid commitment and determination to explore as “introduc[ing] an element of spiritual play”. In a topic fully explored in 7.4.2., just as imaginative play creates opportunities for exercising real-life skills in make-believe settings, so too learners can *try on* situations other than their own and use their experiences of this new perspective to further progress.

²⁷⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 108. This also evokes Erikson’s cyclical developmental stages – in particular, stage 7, Generativity Versus Stagnation. See 5.2.3. for more on this.

²⁷¹ Hull mentions a range of these techniques including compartmentalisation, thought-stopping and distraction.

²⁷² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 81. This idea of combining the best of two extremes will form the basis for a *re-casting* of biblical pedagogy in chapter 7.

²⁷³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 27.

communities and at societal levels. Ultimately, he insists that CAL “is an inter-personal activity ... something which people do for and with each other”,²⁷⁴ and that therefore the “best learning ... is almost always in groups”.²⁷⁵ Again, rather than denying this conflict, Hull suggests that relational distance is pedagogically useful in so far as actively pulling away from some relationships is the only means by which intimacy can be achieved and maintained in others.²⁷⁶

Hull considers how this pattern contributes to experience of the *other* as a learning distraction. While the exact nature of learning distractions differs according to the individual, Hull argues that individual learners’ distractions reveal that “which has been ruled illegitimate by the form of spirituality into which the worshipper has been domesticated”.²⁷⁷ Reminiscent of Ignatian spirituality, Hull suggests that any attempts to force out, ignore or resist potential distractions serves only to feed them. Rather than banishing or crowding them out, the learner should aim to include them in worship and meditation and employ them as aids to self-understanding.²⁷⁸ Thus, rather than categorising the *other* and associated difference as learning distractions, once again Hull argues for their re-imagining and inclusion.

In summary, *disruptive-inclusion* highlights how “one of the most important outcomes of Christian adult education” for Hull is “creating an awareness of relativity”.²⁷⁹ Returning to

²⁷⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 17.

²⁷⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 17.

²⁷⁶ Research on the so-called Dunbar number observes “The relationship between the maximum size of cohesive groups of primates, as indicated by stable relationships over time.” Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 136.

²⁷⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 19.

²⁷⁸ This pedagogical trait is instrumental in the reflective focus of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm.

²⁷⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 34.

the terms of John 10, *relativity* represents how, having experienced both inside and outside the sheepfold, the sheep can clearly differentiate between and exercise a “certain detachment” from the challenges associated with different contours of the various landscape.²⁸⁰ Thus, Hull understands CAL requires the “faithful knowing and thus faithful listening to the other. But this involves ... seeing the world from the point of view of the other, and so it also involves a temporary suspension of one’s own beliefs”.²⁸¹ A *disruptive-inclusive* posture to CAL requires a learner to exercise their “Partial, temporary and limited abilities ... to step outside of their experience” sufficiently to offer “glimpses into another world”,²⁸² so as to “Give attention to that which is to be known without seeking to impose her/his own rational structures upon it”.²⁸³

4.2.2. Disruptively-including God in CAL: dynamism and emergence

Having considered *What Prevents’...?* vision for the *disruptive-inclusion* of self and other in CAL, this final section of chapter 4 focuses on the importance Hull places on the inclusion of God in CAL. As argued in 2.1.2., Hull’s presentation in *What Prevents ...?* is based on the premise of a distinctly Christian conception of CAL whose implications extend across religious boundaries. However, its final chapter opens by acknowledging some of the reasons why many Christians deem the kind of vulnerably open, participative CAL Hull calls for, not only unappealing but also deeply incompatible with Christian faith. Hull summarises the basic conflict he observes as between “A theology of adult experience which seeks to

²⁸⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 191.

²⁸¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 78. Interestingly, Erikson (to whom Hull refers with great frequency), refers to God as the “‘Ultimate Other’, in relationship to one’s vital inner core”. Dowling, et al., “Encyclopedia of religious and spiritual development,” (*The Sage program on applied developmental science*; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2006), 148.

²⁸² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 78.

²⁸³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 191.

promote Christian maturity and responsibility” and a wider Christian culture driven by ideas of “Uniform orthodoxy, ... a content-based revelation, ... an instructional and a non-learning Jesus”.²⁸⁴ It is not surprising, Hull argues, that the church struggles to encourage healthy, lifelong learning when, it suggests that Christian adult learners aspire to the character of “a God-man who was himself not a learner”,²⁸⁵ leading to a “theology of ineducability”.²⁸⁶

To address this, Hull undermines each of the elements in the above quote. He claims that true orthodoxy need not be static; revelation need not be merely information driven and most importantly, for Christians, Jesus provides a model of engagement in rich, life-giving patterns of learning. Fundamentally, Hull does not understand a binary choice between a rigorous, inter-disciplinary (and therefore also likely disruptive) approach to adult learning and Christian faith. Inversely, he argues that any path to a Christian theology of learning finds its shape and reason in “The image of Christ, the God-man in whom the opposites are overcome and the self-reunited”.²⁸⁷ The title Hull chooses for the final chapter, “Jesus Christ, God and Humanity: Partners in Learning”,²⁸⁸ reveals its central claim: Christian adults do not just learn *for* God or *from* God but *with* God. He explains that not only is learning an appropriate divine action and character trait, but that learning actively confirms (rather than subverts) the divine nature. As a result, any effective lens for Hull’s theology pedagogy must equally apply to divine learning, as well as to CAL. Hull’s argument that Jesus reveals the nature of divine learning means that rather than Christian adults *disruptively-including* God

²⁸⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 211.

²⁸⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 207.

²⁸⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 205.

²⁸⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 161.

²⁸⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 199.

in *their* learning process, by adopting a *disruptively-inclusive* posture to learning, Christian adults participate in divine learning character and practices.

Hull begins his case for Jesus as learner by acknowledging that, despite the gospels' wide-ranging examples of Jesus' engagement in both teaching and learning, "Jesus as the Teacher rather than Jesus as the Learner [has] made the greatest impression upon the Christian mind".²⁸⁹ For example, Hull contrasts the domination of Jesus' supernatural insight in his Fourth Gospel's exchange with the Samaritan woman (John 4:9) with the seeming surprise and challenge created by the Syro-Phoenician woman's comments (Mark 15:34). Equally, Hull compares how "the Markan Christ dies with a question on his lips" while the Johannine Christ dies with a sense of "finality and composure".²⁹⁰ He also draws attention to numerous occasions in the wider New Testament in which Jesus is presented as a figure of bafflement. Paul, for example, is unapologetic in stating that Jesus' incarnation constituted "a stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Greeks" (1 Cor 1:23). Despite this lack of consensus in the scriptural evidence, Hull concludes that the meek, lowly "questioning learner" of Matthew 11 has been swallowed up an "authoritative and all-knowing teacher".²⁹¹

Moreover, Hull demonstrates how intrinsic the conception of a didactic expert Jesus is to a range of theological convictions and thus acknowledges the unavoidably controversial nature of his views on divine learning. As Hull identifies, Jesus' divine inability to learn is based in the claim that learning must imply ignorance and lack and therefore ultimately undermines divine power, immutability and omniscience. Based in Hull's reflections on this topic, Mark Chater succinctly assesses that this issue goes right to the heart of the "power

²⁸⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 204.

²⁹⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 203.

²⁹¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 204.

relationship between theology and pedagogy". He continues, "In the case of Christology, the assumptions about Jesus as a master teacher or omniscient being will need to be re-evaluated, while for pedagogy, superficial parallels between teachers and Christ need to be left behind".²⁹²

Embedded in Hull's proposal for divine learning and subsequently also this project's argument for divine participation in *disruptive-inclusive* learning, is the fundamental contention that, as discussed throughout, Hull understands *learning* in terms of quality of engagement and connection and not in terms of cognitive retention of information. Because Hull posits an Epistemology in which the sum of all knowledge is not static or fixed, so too divine learning is necessarily a dynamic rather than a pre-determined activity.²⁹³ "The world which is there available for knowledge, is continually expanding, and God, whose omniscience continually embraces and perfectly keeps pace with this expanding and continually more detailed universe, is continually learning from it".²⁹⁴

Thus, Hull's claim is that God's *perfect* learning manifests as the ability to *perfectly* respond to creation. Neither the Church, nor the God she follows, nor the divinely designed and created Universe are "timeless and unchangeable"²⁹⁵ but all possess "a potential for genuine novelty and exhibit[] real creativity" in their evolving relationship with their creator.²⁹⁶ As Carter Heyward explains, "God is *in* the dynamic, sparking movement among and between us, within and beyond us, beneath and above us".²⁹⁷ Hull uses Matthew 5:48 to summarise

²⁹² Chater, *Jesus Christ, learning teacher: where theology and pedagogy meet*, 23.

²⁹³ This discussion concerning the nature of knowledge will be re-visited in 8.1.2. In particular, it considers the pedagogical implications of apophatic and cataphatic knowing.

²⁹⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 224.

²⁹⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 81.

²⁹⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 221.

²⁹⁷ Heyward, *Saving Jesus from those who are right: rethinking what it means to be Christian* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1999), 61.

the dynamic pattern into which Christian learners are invited: “When we seek to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect, we do not seek less change but more, so that we may become more receptive towards the creative freedom of the world”.²⁹⁸

Hull is aware that his conception of Jesus as model of dynamically perfect, divine learning in which “God is fully open because he perfectly loves and perfectly knows”²⁹⁹ is in diametric opposition to the all-pervasive Platonic understanding of perfection as closed completion, which has shaped the history of Christian doctrine.³⁰⁰ In contrast, Hull highlights that alternatives to Platonic thought have always existed, citing Heraclitus’ conception of reality centred in connectivity and constant change. In comparison to his contemporaries’ understanding of the universe as a fixed reality, waiting to be correctly categorised, Heraclitus “finds permanence in the negation of permanence; being of reality consists in never ‘being’ but always ‘becoming’, not in stability but change”.³⁰¹ Brüggenmann agrees that the universe reflects the nature of its creator in its state of constant change and flux: “The God of the Bible is endlessly irascible – capable of coming and going, judging and forgiving, speaking and remaining silent – in ways that make the next time endlessly uncertain”.³⁰² Like Brüggenmann, Hull does not find conflict in declaring God faithful, trustworthy, *and* endlessly changing in response to creation but rather demonstrative of the unity found between God, Jesus and humanity as they learn together to respond to creation’s constant flux.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 227.

²⁹⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 226.

³⁰⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 218.

³⁰¹ Marshall, *A short history of Greek philosophy*, 8.

³⁰² Brüggenmann and Miller, *Deep memory, exuberant hope: contested truth in a post-Christian world* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2000), 4.

³⁰³ In yet another example of the bi-directional movement of the sheep from chapter 3, Hull recognises that “When we ask whether God can learn we are not trying to reconstruct the divine life upon the model of our human experience and more than we are trying to reconstruct what our human experience should be like upon the model of what God is life. We are, in fact, doing both. The movement of our thought is in both directions”. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 219.

Hull thus dethrones permanence and stasis as the ultimate goals of divine design, replaced by an invitation to participate in and emulate the spontaneous novelty and freedom (or perhaps even *disruptive-inclusion!*) built into the created order. In the developing nature of creation itself and ongoing divine engagement with it, Hull perceives a creative and participative pedagogical model for Christian adults. “So God, being surprised, learns from ... creation, and this is a feature of *God’s* perfection, for surprise is a feature of the relationship between free entities, and the absence of surprise is a feature of the relationship between ... a master and ... slaves, between a performer and ... puppets”.³⁰⁴

In a reprise of the patterns of the pedagogical *beyond* and door imagery from 2.2.2. and 2.2.3., God’s openness to the novel developments of dynamic creation makes a way for a pedagogy beyond information transfer and recall. Hull describes divine learning in terms of joy and delight, love and intimate relationship; a causal relationship beautifully outlined in the following example: “‘The morning stars sang together for joy.’ And God, who made it possible for them to sing but did not write the score, is delighted”.³⁰⁵ So then, just as “Human beings are not merely capable of remarkable learning, they are dependent upon this learning for the effective living of their lives”,³⁰⁶ so too divine learning is not an optional activity or an act of condescension towards creation, but an essential expression of a core element of relational divine character and identity.

However, Hull is also careful to claim that divine learning and CAL are not identical. The reasons for this are summarised in his claim that learning is not only a dynamic but

³⁰⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 223-224. Hull generally uses male pronouns for God. Here, and in subsequent examples, I have replaced them with gender-neutral references to God’s self.

³⁰⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 223. The idea of enjoying learning is raised again in chapter 8.

³⁰⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 56.

emergent process. In the field of theological anthropology, “The concept of emergence (also known as dynamical systems theory) references the possibility that complex entities (like organisms) can have properties that do not exist within the elements (such as molecules) that make up the complex entity”.³⁰⁷ In pedagogical terms, emergence is the means by which learning bestows characteristics upon a learner that are greater than the sum of the pre-existing knowledge, personality and skills and information ‘deposited’ into or transferred to the learner. Repeated patterns of emergent learning result in self-sustaining and perpetuating progress in which each new level acts as the basis for the next and the only basis from which genuinely ‘new’ or transcendent learning is possible.³⁰⁸

Although he recognises emergent traits in both human and divine learning, it is here that Hull imagines the paths of CAL and divine learning diverge. Ultimately, divine learning does not address lack or need. God learns as an expression of perfectly dynamic character and consequently, the divine need never search for fresh learning motivation or fuel. Put simply, whereas human learning might be described as a process of change “from darkness to light, God changes from light to greater light”³⁰⁹ and therefore divine learning is perfectly emergent because its source is its own perfect, joy-fuelled momentum.

The divine,

Learns without ever having to overcome ignorance. *God’s* learning is never frustrated by distraction or apathy, never imperfect because of inadequate intelligence or insufficient sympathy, never spoiled by failing to remember, never fractured by isolation from the rest of knowledge. *God* expresses *God’s* perfect wisdom by being the perfect learner just

³⁰⁷ Jeeves and Brown, *Neuroscience, psychology, and religion: illusions, delusions, and realities about human nature* (West Conshohocken, Pa.: Templeton Foundation Press, 2009), 112.

³⁰⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 168.

³⁰⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 226.

as *God* expresses *God's* perfect love by being the perfect friend ... *God* is continually renewed through learning, and so is both the ancient of day and the eternal child.³¹⁰

Whereas, on the other hand human learning cannot escape being, at least partially, motivated by lack, need, insecurity and selfishness. CAL will always serve to 'fill gaps' in partial knowledge or skills; meaning that once any particular need is fulfilled, the learner must search for fresh motivation. Or, as Hull puts it, a reaction between new wine and old wine skin is inevitable.³¹¹ Christian adults can never entirely recreate the divine's perfect response in and to learning opportunities by keeping in perfect pace with the development of self, *other* and the universe. However, *disruptive-inclusion* claims that Christian learners can emulate elements of divine, perfectly dynamic and emergent learning in increasing measure. *Disruptive-inclusive* is an opportunity to practise embracing the unexpected as learning opportunities and becoming familiar with the discomfort of never *arriving*.

³¹⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 224. Perhaps a taste of perfect emergence is what Paul imagined when urging the Corinthian church to aspire to function in the Spirit's ability to transform them "from one degree of glory to another" in 2 Corinthians 3:18?

³¹¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 77.

PART B: DISRUPTIVE-INCLUSION AS TOUCHSTONE FOR WIDER
CONTEXTUALISATION OF HULL'S THEOLOGICAL PEDAGOGY.

**Chapter 5: pouring the foundations. Contextualising *disruptive-inclusive*
CAL.**

Having completed the planning and pre-construction phases, prepared the ground accordingly and then checked the proposed plan by setting it out on the site, work on the forthcoming *disruptive-inclusive* structure can finally begin in earnest. Thus, chapter 5 represents the stage in the building process which results in the first permanent, physical changes to the site – providing the foundations for *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. As has been made clear from the outset, *disruptive-inclusion* has its foundations in Hull's intersecting academic interests and personal experiences. However, its roots can be more specifically located in particular scholarly conversations contemporary to the creation of *What Prevents...?* but they also resonate strongly with several, significant themes from within wider CAL discourse: both those contemporary to the original release of *What Prevents...?* and developed since. In short, if *What Prevents...?* provides the shape of a *disruptive-inclusive* structure, the following sections define the breadth and depth of its foundations.

To this end, 5.1. contextualises *disruptive-inclusive* CAL within three, increasingly wide geographic spheres. Firstly, in relation to its initial, UK setting, secondly, the wider European debate concerning the relationship between theology and learning and thirdly, as it resonates with academic conversations taking place in North America. Following this, 5.2. offers a thematic contextualisation of *disruptive-inclusion* – clarifying it through the lenses of three themes from broader, academic discourse at the intersection of theology and learning: individual and community learning, learning understood as *journeying* and the transition between learning phases. Even if digging and pouring foundations still *feels* like the

preparation stage, it is a key, initial phase of construction that defines a building's potential scope and eventual, physical presence. Thus, the overarching aim of this chapter is to offer a sufficiently wide and deep contextualised analysis of *disruptive-inclusion* so as to provide adequate support for subsequent chapters' claims concerning its development and practical outworkings.

5.1. Widening circles: roots and contemporary resonances of Hull's theological pedagogy

The principal function of this section is to contextualise some of the key principles of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in three, increasingly wide spheres. The previous chapter demonstrated how the themes of *What Prevents...?* are illustrative of both Hull's academic interests and personal circumstances in the mid-1980s and argued consequently that *What Prevents...?* ought to be considered a pivotal example of *disruptive-inclusion*. However, despite undoubtedly being Hull's most concentrated and thorough treatment of CAL, *What Prevents...?* was not his first, nor does it constitute the entirety of his interest in the subject. Rather, Marilyn Hull recalls that *What Prevents...?* became her husband's first academic project as a blind author primarily out of practical necessity.³¹² As a topic already 'in him', CAL was the perfect subject on which Hull could write with freedom and integrity without easy access to large quantities of printed research materials.³¹³ Thus, if *What Prevents...?* represents the fulcrum, and not the totality, of Hull's work on CAL, the case for *disruptive-inclusion* requires a far wider and deeper contextualisation of his theological pedagogy than has yet been offered. In this pursuit, the following three sections identify how the

³¹² Before fully losing his sight, Hull had planned to write a comprehensive history of the Sunday school movement. However, he was forced to abandon this and never returned to such a research-heavy project.

³¹³ As he gained confidence as a blind person, Hull developed wide-ranging coping mechanisms and employed a range of tools enabling him to write, publish, lecture, teach and supervise students. However, during his initial years of complete blindness, Hull's *specialist equipment* constituted a white stick and tape recorder.

foundations of Hull's approach to CAL were internalised during his sighted years; developed through his ISREV engagement and whether (and if so where) central themes and ideas of *disruptive-inclusion* appear in the wider 1980s pedagogical literature.

5.1.1. begins by recognising that the core ideas of Hull's theological pedagogy of CAL appear in seed form in his dialogue with Paul Hirst, beginning in the late 1970s. At its heart, their responses to each other's work address whether and why faith and learning should be actively related and unpack the implications of their relative conclusions on this issue. 5.1.2. addresses how Hull's founding of ISREV offered him opportunities to develop his ideas on the engagement of religious faith and learning. In particular, this section considers the example of Hull's engagement with Karl-Ernst Nipkow's idea of *dialectical convergence*. Finally, 5.1.3. demonstrates how at the same time as UK and European conversations were still primarily addressing the foundational questions of *if* Christian faith and learning could or should be in dialogue, North American conversations has moved onto address the nature of their relationship in more detail and as such, the themes addressed there resonated more strongly with the arguments outlined in *What Prevents...?* and *disruptive-inclusion*.

5.1.1. Setting the UK stage for the debate: Hull v. Hirst

Although rarely, consciously referenced, Hull's early working life as a teacher looms large over each phase of his academic, theological engagement.³¹⁴ While completing his Doctorate in the late 1960s,³¹⁵ Hull was already engaged in academic dialogue concerning *Christian Education*, publishing articles such as *Training the Non-Specialist Teacher of Divinity* and

³¹⁴ Hull's Festschrift details how after "John Hull taught for three years (1956-59) in a Melbourne Church of England grammar school ... he resumed his teaching career for four years, teaching religious education in a London grammar school". Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 6.

³¹⁵ See Hull, *Hellenistic magic and the synoptic tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1974).

Making Student Teachers of Divinity Think.³¹⁶ In the early 1970s, Hull became fully embroiled in an international debate articulating significant changes in both the academic field and practical outworking of faith (particularly, but not exclusively Christian) engagement in Religious Education in schools *as well as* learning in churches and other religious settings.³¹⁷

Hull's obituaries largely (and correctly) cite his work on Religious Education in schools as the primary legacy of his early career.³¹⁸ Yet, this interest was situated within a wider goal of understanding "the total relationship between religion and education"³¹⁹ or what Hull otherwise articulated as a desire to spark "a renewal of interest in the theology of education".³²⁰ More specifically, for the purposes of this discussion, evidence from even the earliest days of Hull's career suggests that he considered any conclusions reached in relation to Religious Education as a curriculum subject to be equally pertinent (if differently outworked) as a response to the question: "then what should we do in the churches"?³²¹ Thus, *What Prevents'...?* central concern "with those adults in the churches who find religious learning difficult"³²² does not signal a move into a new area of interest for Hull.

³¹⁶ See Hull, "Training the Non-Specialist Teacher of Divinity," 73 (1967) and Hull, "Making Student Teachers of Divinity Think," 77 (1968).

³¹⁷ As early as 1956, Rupert Davies raised significant questions concerning the nature of *Christian Education* Davies and Bielby, *An approach to Christian education: a symposium by Leonard Bielby [and others]. Edited by Rupert E. Davies* (New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1956). In 1970, the Methodist conference referenced "the Education Explosion" "Christian Commitment in Education," (ed. Press; London, 1970), 22 and in 1976, Westerhoff declared, "I am convinced that the very foundations upon which we engage in Christian education are shaking" Westerhoff, *Will our children have faith?* (New York, N.Y.: Seabury Press, 1976), 5. During the 1970s and early 1980s, theologians' overall level of interest in education did not match the level of educationalists' interest in theology. Yet, neither does Hull engage directly with anything more than a passing interest in the few pedagogical treatments of biblical scholars (see particularly Brüggemann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*), nor the work of Practical Theologians (see particularly Seymour and Miller, *Contemporary approaches to Christian education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1982).

³¹⁸ The undoubted pinnacle was his participation in the conference that produced the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus of 1975), widely recognised as the first fully inclusive R.E syllabus in the UK. For more see, Hull, *Studies in Religion and Education* (London: Falmer Press, 1984), 113-117.

³¹⁹ Hull, "Recent Developments in the Philosophy of Religious Education," 23, no. 1 (1970), 60.

³²⁰ Hull, "Recent Developments in the Philosophy of Religious Education", 67.

³²¹ Hull, "Recent Developments in the Philosophy of Religious Education", 62.

³²² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, ix.

Rather, it is further analysis of the same core issue that had occupied him for most of the 1970s, just addressed from a different perspective.

The outworking of Hull's conviction that "Christians are concerned for the whole of the educational process and for the conditions in which it takes place"³²³ is most consistently demonstrated via his 25 year-long editorship of *Learning for Living* (known since 1978 as *British Journal for Religious Education*). Early editorials illustrate that one of Hull's principal, early challenges centred around the view held by many of his colleagues that "The chances of [Theology and Education] speaking the same language or of having anything of interest to say to each other may appear remote".³²⁴ Beyond this, Hull also encountered a growing scepticism as to whether such a conversation would be valuable, even if possible. Therefore, before turning his attentions to the potential implications of serious theological-educational dialogue, Hull first expounds his belief that any perceived chasm between the two disciplines was not too great to breach and moreover, demonstrates why he believes the premise of the activity is deeply worthwhile.

Hull's long-running exchange with Professor Paul Hirst provides the earliest and clearest window onto his arguments for the nature of the connection between Christian Theology and Education.³²⁵ While a detailed analysis of Hirst's position is beyond the scope of this discussion, beginning in a conference paper delivered on February 6th 1971 with the

³²³ Hull, "Editorial," 10, no. 4 (1971), 2.

³²⁴ Felderhof, *Religious education in a pluralistic society: papers from a consultation on theology and education held at Westhill College, Selly Oak* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 1. Interestingly, Hull found this particularly true of British colleagues, even those seemingly pre-disposed to engage positively with attempts to place Theology and Education in dialogue.

³²⁵ By the early 1970s, Hirst was a widely celebrated social theorist based at Birkbeck College, London and then Cambridge University. Andrew Wright summarises Hirst's place within the debate: "a leading representative of the analytical school of educational philosophy operating with the broad tradition of linguistic philosophy associated with Russell, Wittgenstein, Moor and Broad." Wright, *Religious education and critical realism: knowledge, reality and religious literacy* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2016), 148.

provocative title, "*Christian education: A contradiction in terms?*",³²⁶ his central contention is well summarised by the comment, "one simply cannot produce anything that is in any significant sense a distinctive Christian view of education". He reasons this on a variety of grounds but in particular notes the lack of "clearly recognizable objective grounds for judging claims" and the "inconclusive debate about biblical interpretation" as key reasons for his unwillingness to endorse any form of Christian influence in education.³²⁷ Further than this, Hirst claims that not only do Christianity and educational theory have nothing in common, but that any attempt to force their interaction disregards the intrinsic nature and function of both entities. In Whittle's words, Hirst simply insists that "education is a domain independent of theology".³²⁸

Beginning the contextualisation of Hull's theological pedagogy with a conceptual analysis of his responses to Hirst reveals that Hull did not advocate for just *any* form of theological-educational dialogue. Rather, even at the early stages of his career, he endorsed a particular conception of the collaboration of Christian theology and education. Importantly, Hull does not disagree with Hirst's insistence that navigating the theological-educational relationship is a deeply challenging process and describes it as "a tension within a unity ... a creative

³²⁶ First published in the BJRE in 1972 Hirst, "Christian education: A contradiction in terms?," 11, no. 4 (1972) and later formed the basis for a chapter in the 1974 book, *Moral Education in a Secular Society*. Hirst, *Moral education in a secular society* (London: University of London Press for the National Children's Home, 1974). The 1970 book, *The Logic of Education* is Hirst's most lauded education-focused publication. It argues for "a mode of reconciliation between the traditional subject-centred and the progressive child-centred approaches to education." Prvulovich, "The Logic of Education," 22, no. 87 (1972). The titles of both Hull and Hirst's publications during this period are excellent examples of the issue raised in the introduction concerning the difficulties of terminology. For example, Hull's 1997 *What is a Theology of Education?* pertains to far more than Christian theology but, does so by delving into the particulars of a Christian approach and as such, probably might be more clearly titled, *What is a Christian Theology of Education?* However, the opposite is true of Professor Paul Hirst's 1972 article, *Christian education: A contradiction in terms?* Which references religious belief in much broader terms.

³²⁷ Hirst, "Christian education: A contradiction in terms?," 7-9.

³²⁸ Whittle, "Some Theological Reservations Surrounding One Contemporary Christian Approach to Teaching and Learning", 192.

tension, not an absolute antagonism".³²⁹ As already outlined, Hull rarely considered ideological tensions or conflicts arising from multidisciplinary work as areas to be avoided or downplayed, but rather acknowledged and co-opted for their ability to facilitate richer dialogue and ultimately lead to more nuanced and inclusive responses. Thus, in direct response to Hirst's argument that collaboration between Christian theology and education is impossible because they speak different languages, Hull presents himself as a skilled interpreter, acknowledging and re-imagining the language-barrier as creating "a tension, but not a breaking point".³³⁰

A cornerstone of the Hirst-Hull disagreement is Hull's belief that Hirst belongs to a group who have entirely misconstrued the function of theology for educationalists who profess religious faith, and have limited it to a vehicle for the transfer of moral values. Hull insists that theology is not a means by which people of faith avoid critical thinking but "that theology *is* a form of thinking, a kind of rationality".³³¹ Simply put, Hull's argument is that theological thinking must not become disconnected from other academic disciplines as a means of maintaining the status quo but considered a critical and rational discipline capable of opening doors to new areas of educational awareness within a connected worldview. For example, Hull claims, "When he [Hirst] says that intelligent Christians ought to accept the critical, rational view of education, he means that Christians should accept it in so far as they are intelligent, and not in so far as they are Christian as such".³³² Ultimately, the *disruptive* power of theological-educational dialogue in encouraging deeper and more *inclusive*

³²⁹ Hull, "Editorial," 13, no. 5 (1974), 171.

³³⁰ Hull, "Editorial", 171.

³³¹ Hull, "What is Theology of Education?," 30, no. 01 (1977), 6.

³³² Hull, "Christian theology and educational theory: Can there be connections?," 24, no. 2 (1976), 139.

discussion and practice is not only clear in the content of Hull's argument on the topic but also embedded in its foundational structures and premise.

However, Hull's call for theological-educational collaboration goes further than merely acknowledging its fundamental necessity. He continues to carefully outline how any form of competition or defensive posture between the two disciplines will not allow for the "relationship of mutual support and intermingling"³³³ he urges. Firstly, he acknowledges the concern that education may become a "mere handmaiden of theology".³³⁴ In response, Hull rejects what he refers to as the *convergence* of theology and education; the process in which education is "interpreted and appraised by the norms and concepts of theology"³³⁵ or in which either discipline becomes the controlling metaphor and sees the other's contribution as "an attack mounted from a hostile sphere".³³⁶ Rather, Hull posits a relationship of bi-directional *divergence* (terms fully explored in 5.1.2.) in which,

Theology cannot seek to absorb education; it cannot seek to establish a view of education such that the principles of education flow necessarily and exclusively from theology. This would mean that only theists, or believers in whatever kind of theology was being set forth, could take part in education. On the other hand theology cannot admit that it has no right to an influence upon education; for then no theologian could be engaged in education and still preserve his integrity.³³⁷

Critically, Hull understands that theological-educational collaboration cannot be forced or contrived, but by their very natures, both disciplines have something to contribute to the other. In 2009, Kevin O'Grady summarised Hull's participation in this debate as an attempt to "move dialectical relationships into the place of non-dialectical forms of thinking".³³⁸ Hull

³³³ Hull, "What is Theology of Education?", 10.

³³⁴ Hull, "A Response to Karl-Ernst Nipkow," in *Religious Education in a Pluralistic Society* (ed. Felderhof; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 49.

³³⁵ Hull, "What is Theology of Education?", 12.

³³⁶ Hull, "What is Theology of Education?", 12.

³³⁷ Hull, "What is Theology of Education?", 17.

³³⁸ ter Avest, *Dialogue and conflict on religion: studies of classroom interaction in European countries* (Münster: Waxmann, 2009), 54.

explains, “There is therefore a place for allowing insights and experiences drawn from both the natural and the social sciences to affect our judgments about what is theologically significant, in so far as these new, initially non-theological materials show themselves to relate meaningfully to previous theological formulations, so contributing to the ongoing theological task”.³³⁹

Therefore, Hull’s overall claim is that, contrary to some educationalists’ fears, theology’s intrinsic character does not naturally lend itself to demonstrating the inadequacy of educational theory (or other disciplines), but ought to be employed by confessing educationalists in a “dialogue in which theology is ... seeking to appraise itself and to reformulate itself”.³⁴⁰ He continues that attempts to separate and compartmentalise the disciplines only further reveal their natural inclination towards mutual and open collaboration: “We may observe in passing that because of the emergence of secular education in our century, education has become an urgent theological problem”.³⁴¹ Just as he later encourages readers of *What Prevents...?* that the path to better understanding and practice in CAL requires aiming for “the *far side* not ... in falling back from it”,³⁴² in 1977, Hull was already convinced that embracing the unavoidable theological nature of education and the educational nature of theology was the only effective way forward.

Hull’s disagreement with Hirst reveals some first glimpses of the fundamental ideas upon which Hull’s “theology of learning” would be built in the mid-1980s. Specifically, that his approach included both ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ elements deeply resonant with *disruptive-*

³³⁹ Hull, “What is Theology of Education?”, 5.

³⁴⁰ Hull, “What is Theology of Education?”, 12.

³⁴¹ Hull, “What is Theology of Education?”, 16-17.

³⁴² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 39.

inclusion from the outset.³⁴³ As regards inner *disruptive-inclusion*, Hull's views assume a holistic and non-compartmentalised anthropology in which the theological engagement of a person of faith is an embodied process, unavoidably influencing all of life. He summarises, "Anyone engaged in education must, in preserving his integrity, seek to make sense of his work in terms of the rest of his outlook on life".³⁴⁴ As regards *disruptive-inclusion* beyond the self, as well as Hull's insistence on the active and mutual collaboration of theology with other academic disciplines, it is critical to Hull that his logic extend beyond confessional educationalists and is universally applicable. Hull distinguishes between those who *study* theology from outside a religious community and theology *done* by those within faith communities, perceiving no conflict in endorsing both as legitimate ways to participate in the theological-educational dialogue because theology is "Related to the problems and possibilities of human life both inside and outside the community of faith".³⁴⁵

Alongside the conceptual and structural resonances between Hull's early work and *disruptive-inclusion*, Hull's 1970s and early 1980s publications also introduce many of the topics addressed in *What Prevents...?* For example, in making the case for theological-educational collaboration in 1981, Hull turns directly to issues of theological *perfection* and *finality* (addressed at length in 4.2.2. as a key theme of *What Prevents...?*) asking, "If Christian faith is complete and perfect, how can there be room for the exercise of critical openness upon it and within it?"³⁴⁶ Also, the 1977 article, *What is a Theology of Education?*, closes with a 10 page list of areas of theological-educational enquiry he believes worthy of

³⁴³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 212.

³⁴⁴ Hull, "What is Theology of Education?", 18.

³⁴⁵ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness," 34, no. 01 (1981), 208.

³⁴⁶ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 23.

further investigation.³⁴⁷ In the midst of these musings, Hull also demonstrates the growing influence in his thinking of voices which figure to a greater extent in *What Prevents...?* such as Freud, Piaget, Marx and Freire. Finally, in closing the same article with considerations of pedagogical method, Hull demonstrates that from the outset of his career, his interest was not only in the theoretical permutations of the theological-educational debate for their own sake but in that which “comes most immediately to the pupil”.³⁴⁸ Hull’s foundational concern that Christian theology and education engage in effective, collaborative discourse was that there might be positive, practical implications for teachers and learners of all faiths and none.

5.1.2. European discussions and ISREV

The early stage of Hull’s career, particularly his dialogue with Hirst, betrays some of the initial ideas that would later form the basis of some of the arguments in *What Prevents...?* However, it is also important to acknowledge that just as this exchange was ending, another more significant and enduring source of dialogue in Hull’s career was just beginning: the establishment of what is now known as the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV). Hull recognised that if the burgeoning disciplines he championed at the intersection of religion and education were to grow, they would require an international and interdisciplinary forum in which to truly flourish. Therefore, in collaboration with character education specialist John Peatling from New York, Hull founded ISREV with the aim to “bring together a group of religious educators from ... the USA, the UK, Canada, Scandinavia and

³⁴⁷ These include “theological epistemologies” and anthropologies; “what is a person”; questions arising from Church history and historical theology; “what are the implications of the doctrine of the trinity for education?”; questions of Christology and the mission of the Church; Eschatology and Hermeneutics; considerations regarding the nature of God and “the implications of the incarnation and the atonement”. Hull, “What is Theology of Education?”.

³⁴⁸ Hull, “What is Theology of Education?”, 29.

other parts of the World".³⁴⁹ Hull hosted the Seminar's inaugural meeting in Birmingham in 1978 (and it has met bi-annually ever since, apart from a break in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic) to create opportunities for scholars from different, intersecting academic disciplines, faith-settings and geographic locations to participate in both richer and broader dialogues than would otherwise be possible.³⁵⁰

One early, specific example of such an opportunity for Hull and other ISREV members to further develop theological-educational dialogue was the "Consultation on Theology and Education"³⁵¹ in April 1983. The conference and subsequent edited-volume drew together a range of mostly British and German scholars, with Hull responding, on this occasion, to Tübingen University Professor and ISREV member, Karl Ernst Nipkow's paper "Can Theology have an Educational Role?"³⁵² The title gives a sense that Nipkow's position was fundamentally more open towards the endeavour than Hirst's and while Nipkow does not downplay the debate's complexity, he does basically agree with Hull that an ongoing dialogue between Christian theology and education *is* both possible and helpful. However, in his presentation, it becomes clear that Nipkow's specific, German setting and experience led

³⁴⁹ "The History of ISREV", <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/isrev/history>

³⁵⁰ For example, in response to the question, *What do you personally value most about the ... seminar?*, then senior figure in the Religious Education world, Edwin Cox, commented in 1978: "What I found most helpful was the opportunity of meeting scholars who are wrestling with the same sort of problems I deal with, but doing so from different assumptions and in different cultures. This throws into relief issues that one does not notice working on one's own.... (I also found helpful) the realization of how different the British and the American approaches are and the suspicion that my own recent thinking is closer to the American than the British". ISREV, "Religious Education and Values," in *Character Research Press*(ed. ISREV; vol. 1 of; New York, N.Y.: Character Research Press, 1979).

³⁵¹ Felderhof, *Religious education in a pluralistic society: papers from a consultation on theology and education held at Westhill College, Selly Oak*.

³⁵² Nipkow, "Can Theology have an Educational Role," in *Religious Education in a Pluralistic Society* (ed. Felderhof; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985). The title of Reinhold Boschki and Claudia Schlenker's 2001 book on Nipkow, *Brücken zwischen Pädagogik und Theologie* (bridges between pedagogy and theology) summarises his life's work well. After completing his PhD at the University of Marburg, Nipkow taught pedagogy in Hannover, followed by Practical Theology at Tübingen University. He first attended ISREV in the Netherlands in 1982.

him to approach and delineate the challenges of theological-educational collaboration differently.³⁵³ This alternative perspective provided a springboard from which Hull was able to further unpack his vision for the collaboration of the two disciplines with a specificity and nuance not seen in the dialogue with Hirst. In particular, Nipkow's essay led Hull to re-consider (or at least, more carefully nuance) his stance on the earlier mentioned concepts of *divergence* and *convergence*.

Firstly, Nipkow's views resonate strongly with some of the concepts seen in the previous discussion. He begins by outlining the key challenge of the debate as finding a "new balance" between theology and education focused on mutuality; a balance that neither requires theology "giving up" on education nor vice versa.³⁵⁴ He traces the twentieth-century history of German religious education from the birth of *modern* religious education to the acceptance and subsequent rejection of *Dialectical Theology*, its replacement with (what he terms) Evangelical Instruction and eventual arrival at a mode of contemporary theological-educational engagement marked by 'problematizing' rather than 'integrating'.³⁵⁵ It is important for Nipkow that the discussion maintains a sense of "liberating differentiation",³⁵⁶ by which he means that theology and education should not be considered even dual or

³⁵³ Nipkow explains that the development of the German situation is predominantly framed by the fact that, "Since the sixteenth century (the Reformation), the transmission of Christian faith to the younger generation ha[d] been institutionalised in Germany in two main forms: *Church Education* in the local congregations for about two years (ages 13-14 for Protestant children) and *Religious Education* in the public (state) school system for all years (6-18)." Nipkow, *Can Theology have an Educational Role*, 23. Whereas, in England the responsibility for religious education had undergone far more recent, polarising and unclear developments. The Education Act of 1944 marked the "reconstruction" of the framework of responsibility for delivering Religious Education in England and Wales, "In which the Church of England gave up control of some of its schools in return for increased help with the rest and an extension of religious education throughout the whole system." Earl, "The 1944 Education Act - Forty Years On," 6, no. 2 (1984), 88.

³⁵⁴ Nipkow, *Can Theology have an Educational Role*, 26.

³⁵⁵ Nipkow, *Can Theology have an Educational Role*, 27.

³⁵⁶ Nipkow, "Theological and Educational Concepts-Problems of Integration and Differentiation," 1, no. 1 (1978), 6.

parallel disciplines for fear of “a simple doubling of arguments”,³⁵⁷ but rather operate in a sense of “deductive integration”³⁵⁸ in which, “A two-fold question must always be posed. On the one hand can theology, by its own strictly theological reasons, demand that educational criteria be valid for religious education? And vice versa, can education, by its own strictly educational reasons, support the claim that theological criteria be observed in religious education?”³⁵⁹

Similarly to Hull, Nipkow insists that neither a controlling discipline nor lowest common denominator is necessary (which would lead to the creation of the sub-discipline of educational theology or theological education). Otherwise, Nipkow’s ultimate argument is for an approach he coins *dialectical convergence*; a process in which, similarly to how magnets both attract and repel, he envisages a mutual engagement in which “the two questions simultaneously make visible the abiding differences between education and theology”.³⁶⁰

Interestingly, for the purposes of identifying potential resonances with a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL, in describing the collaborative mutuality Hull determinedly argued for against Hirst, Nipkow uses bi-partite terminology such as *liberating differentiation*, *deductive integration* and *dialectical convergence* to encapsulate both the inner tension and dynamism

³⁵⁷ Felderhof, *Religious education in a pluralistic society: papers from a consultation on theology and education held at Westhill College, Selly Oak*, 27.

³⁵⁸ Nipkow, "Theological and Educational Concepts-Problems of Integration and Differentiation", 8.

³⁵⁹ Felderhof, *Religious education in a pluralistic society: papers from a consultation on theology and education held at Westhill College, Selly Oak*, 27.

³⁶⁰ Felderhof, *Religious education in a pluralistic society: papers from a consultation on theology and education held at Westhill College, Selly Oak*, 28. In an idea that will become increasingly significant in later chapters, based in Johnson, *Polarity management: identifying and managing unsolvable problems* (Amherst, Mass.: HRD Press, 1992), Carson, et al., *Crossing thresholds: a practical theology of liminality* explain, “polarities are not “problems to be solved” as an either/or, rather they need to be managed ... as a both/and”, 24. Overall, such a framework runs according to the idea of a “creative tension” that exists between extremes, expressed in the form of “dynamic flow”, 25.

created in theological-educational dialogue. Despite earlier rejecting the concept of *convergence* in response to Hirst, Hull embraces Nipkow's description of *dialectical convergence* based on the fact that "this 'convergence' ... is created by the fact that in theology there is an inside and an outside"³⁶¹ – language with undeniable connections to Hull's pedagogical interpretations of John 10 and his front door.

Nipkow's explanation of his exact understanding of *inside* and *outside* of theology draws a distinction between a "positional identity" otherwise referred to as a "kneeling theology ... characterised as a 'praying faith'" that functions as "immediate cognitive articulation of living piety in which theology becomes a way of proclaiming faith"³⁶² and a "sitting theology" that is understood in terms of "systematically objectivising knowledge about faith"³⁶³ and functions as "critical dissociation".³⁶⁴ Although Hull does not apply his own language in this way, it bears strong resemblance to his differentiation between confessional theologians *doing* theology and non-confessional theologians *studying* theology.³⁶⁵ Hull's basic response to Nipkow's categorisation is to refuse the sufficiency of either position and insist that effective learning happens neither uniquely *inside* nor *outside*. To make his point, he draws on Fowler's *Stages of Faith* language (a topic revisited in 5.2.3.) who argues for, "Neither 'dwelling in' a specific religion nor the attitude of objectifying and demythologising aloofness are characteristic, but a 'conjunctive faith' as a synthesis of a specific religious commitment with, and at the same time, a deep understanding of, and even personal affection towards, other religions".³⁶⁶

³⁶¹ Hull, *A Response to Karl-Ernst Nipkow*, 43.

³⁶² Nipkow, *Can Theology have an Educational Role*, 31.

³⁶³ Nipkow, *Can Theology have an Educational Role*, 31.

³⁶⁴ Nipkow, *Can Theology have an Educational Role*, 30-31.

³⁶⁵ Hull, "What is Theology of Education?", 8.

³⁶⁶ Nipkow, *Can Theology have an Educational Role*, 34.

In summary, Hull's response to Nipkow resonates with a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL in three, key regards. Firstly, in acknowledging that confessional educationalists approach the discussion and practice of education differently to their non-confessing colleagues and that this difference need not result in their non-critical, non-rational engagement that, in turn, it can add value to all learners' experiences. As Hull explains, "Human development may be advanced by means of a learning encounter with religion ... in a form other than Christian nurture".³⁶⁷ Secondly, that no single understanding, neither an *inside* nor *outside* perspective of the theological-educational debate is sufficient and the aim of the Christian learner ought always to be to "take a step aside, as it were, now standing beside him or herself, giving up the former identity, at least to a certain degree".³⁶⁸ Thirdly, in Hull's understanding of CAL, success is not measured by learner *location* at any given point, but rather he understands commitment to the Christian God, pedagogically expressed, as demonstrated in the nature of learners' responses to others and their surroundings. His response to Nipkow demonstrates that, for Hull, a Christian pedagogical posture includes the freedom and security to venture out and engage with the unfamiliar and unexpected without prioritising self-protection or promotion.

Against this backdrop, *What Prevents...?* appears far less like a departure from Hull's early work and more like an intuitive next step in his exploration of the implications of the theological-educational relationship. Hull closes his response to Nipkow with a commitment to, and an invitation for, others to join him in continuing the conversation: "The dialogue can only go on if there continues to be a further educationalisation of theology and a further

³⁶⁷ Hull, *A Response to Karl-Ernst Nipkow*, 52.

³⁶⁸ Nipkow, *Can Theology have an Educational Role*, 31.

theologisation of education".³⁶⁹ Just a few years later, *What Prevents...?* became Hull's fullest exploration yet of how he envisaged its future. Years before *What Prevents...?*, the very premise of Hull's approach to these early discussions is based on the expectation that participating in the theological-educational debate requires educators and learners from a range of standpoints to embrace and include, rather than ignore or futilely resist unavoidable disruptions to views of self, God and others.

5.1.3. North American conversations

Having considered the influence of Hull's early engagement in the UK debate concerning theological pedagogy and dialogue with European ISREV colleagues in steering the course towards *What Prevents...?*, this section now concentrates on the relationship between 1970s and early 1980s North American scholarship and Hull's views on CAL. ISREV included North American scholars from its inaugural meeting in 1978 and Hull actively acknowledged the influence of key, US and Canadian voices on his work even before this point.³⁷⁰ Overall, however, evidence of his direct engagement and response to particular North American ideas or themes is sparse, despite the stage and tone of the North American conversations on Christian pedagogy being far more closely aligned with *disruptive-inclusion* than many closer to home.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Hull, *A Response to Karl-Ernst Nipkow*, 52. Although Hull does not explain *educationalisation* and *theologisation*, I take it as a shorthand for the open, non-hierarchical influencing between the disciplines. Mark Chater summarises *educationalisation* as an invitation to invert the general pattern of taking Jesus' "methodology uncritically and apply[ing] his approaches more or less directly to modern classrooms" and "apply an educator's questions and perspective to the Gospel text and to the figure of Jesus as teacher", Chater, *Jesus Christ, learning teacher: where theology and pedagogy meet*, xxi.

³⁷⁰ As demonstrated in 5.2., Hull makes specific mention of Gabriel Moran's work on CAL in both Hull, "What is Theology of Education?" and Hull, *New directions in religious education* (Lewes, Sussex: Falmer Press, 1982).

³⁷¹ See the earlier comment from Edwin Cox after the first ISREV meeting in 1978, (5.1.2.).

One example of the 1970s, North American theological-educational debate that epitomises the strong resonance between it and Hull's later pedagogical approach is the 1972, Westerhoff edited volume, *A Colloquy on Christian Education*.³⁷² Despite its various contributors approaching the issue of *Christian Education* (they refer to it) from a wide range of perspectives, its initial chapters share an overriding similarity: they demonstrate how, by 1972, the North American discussion had already progressed beyond *whether* theology and education might be considered mutually informative, to discuss the urgent implications of that reality. Westerhoff sees the connection as so crucial he claims that "to be able to answer and act upon these questions is to discern how Christian we are".³⁷³ Moreover, many of the other contributors' approaches as to how a theological-educational dialogue might be most effectively outworked are based on a paradigm shift from either/or dichotomies towards both/and frameworks.

The volume's opening chapter, for example, discusses how Christian Education cannot exclusively focus on planned, formal learning opportunities but must also take into account "unplanned adventures".³⁷⁴ In the following chapter, Sara Little refuses to define Christian Education as either an exclusively cognitive or affective process.³⁷⁵ Rather, she joins the

³⁷² See Westerhoff, *A Colloquy on Christian Education* The title of this publication reveals another level of complexity to the opening discussion concerning lack of consistent use of terminology. Westerhoff opens with a recognition that in the early 1970s, US scholars and learners alike were "asking painful questions about the meaning of the words Christian and education", 11, as in the UK and Europe. However, he does not offer a concise, starting definition *Christian Education*. Although almost impossible to prove, the overarching impression of *Christian Education* represented in this particular volume does seem to have a broader application than its UK, contemporary equivalents. Many of the authors use it to describe theologically-informed learning occurring in a range of settings, not just institutionally organised learning such as Christian schools or learning in Church settings. To avoid misrepresenting their arguments, I have remained as close to the terminology used by the original authors as possible, including referring to *Christian Education*.

³⁷³ Westerhoff, "Toward a Definition of Christian Education," in *A Colloquy on Christian Education* (ed. Westerhoff; Philadelphia, Pa.: United Church Press, 1972), 69-70.

³⁷⁴ Shinn, "Education is a Mystery," in *A Colloquy on Christian Education* (ed. Westerhoff; Philadelphia, Pa.: United Church Press, 1972), 19.

³⁷⁵ Little, "On the End of an Era," in *A Colloquy on Christian Education* (ed. Westerhoff; Philadelphia, Pa.: United Church Press, 1972).

author of the following chapter in arguing that any “pedagogy for Christians”³⁷⁶ must implicate the physical as well as the psychological and cerebral. Similarly, for Philip H. Phenix, Christian education engages both hope *and* reason; love *and* action,³⁷⁷ whereas Edward A. Powers argues that it need not choose between learning from the past, orienting to the future and focusing on the present: it can, and must do all three.³⁷⁸ Westerhoff’s contribution goes further than many of his contemporaries in pushing “toward a definition of Christian Education”³⁷⁹ and contains some of the strongest resonances yet with what this project presents as Hull’s *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL.

Interestingly, in light of the earlier focus on John 10:9, Westerhoff’s argument focuses on what it means to be saved. “It would be difficult to make a case against salvation as one central aim of Christian education” he begins.³⁸⁰ However, as he continues, it becomes clear that he has a particular vision of salvation in mind:

For me, salvation means to be set free to wander the world as a pilgrim ... the one who has no worldly home and yet is at home in the world, the one whose hope does not reside in his own efforts and yet believes her/his efforts can serve her/his God, who acts in the world through women/men. The result of such freedom is the ability to venture in the world as a stranger and alien with a vision of a new world.³⁸¹

The most obvious parallel between Westerhoff’s imagery here and *What Prevents...?* is the use of pilgrimage as a metaphor for CAL. In a pivotal quote, Hull concludes chapter 4: “This is why in learning Christ, one does not simply take on board an orthodoxy of received belief.

³⁷⁶ Williamson, “A Pedagogy for Christians,” in *A Colloquy on Christian Education* (ed. Westerhoff; Philadelphia, Pa.: United Church Press, 1972).

³⁷⁷ Phenix, “Education for Faith,” in *A Colloquy on Christian Education* (ed. Westerhoff; Philadelphia, Pa.: United Church Press, 1972). Philip Phenix was due to deliver a paper at ISREV in 1982 but was prevented from attending due to ill health.

³⁷⁸ Powers, “On Keeping one’s Balance,” in *A Colloquy on Christian Education* (ed. Westerhoff; Philadelphia, Pa.: United Church Press, 1972).

³⁷⁹ Westerhoff, *Toward a Definition of Christian Education*.

³⁸⁰ Westerhoff, *Toward a Definition of Christian Education*, 61.

³⁸¹ Westerhoff, *Toward a Definition of Christian Education*, 61. Gender inclusive language added.

One becomes a pilgrim on a way. He is the true and living way, and he is always before us, disrupting our present equilibrium, and calling us through the pain and transition into the maturity which is our Christian calling".³⁸² For both Westerhoff and Hull, pilgrimage marks out CAL as a means of ongoing partnership with God that maintains a sense of overall direction but whose very nature is defined by how and why progress is made, not necessarily by an eventual goal or destination. In connecting the concepts of pedagogical pilgrimage and *home* (a concept fully evaluated in 5.2.2.) via the image of a homeless yet simultaneously always-at-home learning pilgrim, Westerhoff's description closely aligns with Hull's discussion of his front door and associated claim that *home* conditions are accessible even in unfamiliar environments. As is true of Hull's vision of learners in John 10, Westerhoff's conception of the pilgrim learner demonstrates how the Christian God provides the freedom and security to enable movement in *and* out of familiar learning spaces *and* simultaneously providing orientation towards a greater vision.

Westerhoff and Hull's approaches to CAL also share in not only arguing for effective theological-educational collaboration but also beginning to tease out theological explanations of *how* this might happen. Westerhoff unpacks his holistic pedagogical vision:

The Christian is called to feel and act as a whole person. Christian education which does not take man's total behaviour—life style—seriously is simply not Christian. For too long we have neglected the realm of the affections. For example, one important theme in the Bible is wonder or awe. I would argue that when people experience wonder or are in a state of awe they are very close to a biblical view of life, very close to understanding our world and ourselves through the eyes of faith.³⁸³

Where Hull's New Testament proclivities see him gravitate towards the Gospels to demonstrate his points, Westerhoff begins in the Torah and the God of Israel revealed as a

³⁸² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 195.

³⁸³ Westerhoff, *Toward a Definition of Christian Education*, 70.

wonder-worker (c.f. Exod 15:11). To conflate Westerhoff's language here with Hull's, wonder is a theological mechanism by which learners can actively move into an experience of *optimum distance*. Wonder is the means by which learners can experience maximum benefit from both the disruption of breaking away from previous, static, unquestioned patterns of thought and the introduction of new awareness, in which both old and new information is re-contextualised. In his book, *Sacred Sense*, Old Testament scholar William P. Brown beautifully captures the sense in which awe and wonder correspond with a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL: "Wonder is ... a potent mix of curiosity and perplexity. On the one hand wonder carries the unsettling element of bewilderment. On the other hand there is the element of insatiable curiosity or passionate desire to know. Wonder, thus, bears an inner tension".³⁸⁴

Wonder allows learners to embrace tension but also provides the motivation to not linger there unnecessarily. While wonder is undoubtedly an emotional response, it also has another side: "far from ignorance, blissful or otherwise... [it is] the very basis of deep inquiry".³⁸⁵ Considered pedagogically, wonder describes the moment at which learners (as rational and affective wholes) are simultaneously faced with "experiences of disorientation in which the unknown rudely backs into the world of the familiar" and "a sense of order that invites enthusiastic affirmation, a 'yes!' alongside the 'wow!'"³⁸⁶ In short, "Wonder, thus, freely traverses between experience of order and disorientation, self-critique and

³⁸⁴ Brown, *Sacred sense: discovering the wonder of God's word and world* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2015), 5.

³⁸⁵ Brown, *Sacred sense: discovering the wonder of God's word and world*, 8.

³⁸⁶ Brown, *Sacred sense: discovering the wonder of God's word and world*, 6.

celebration, fear and fascination".³⁸⁷ It could be said then, that in highlighting the connection between *Christian Education* and wonder, Westerhoff offers *disruptive-inclusion* a theological understanding of its mediating hyphen. For Christians, he argues, learning is about holding together the order and the disorder; celebrating progress without dulling the drive to press on. Awe and wonder, Westerhoff suggests, is an invitation offered by the Christian God to learners, which holds its seeming opposite extremes together.

More than a decade before Hull presented his "inter-disciplinary approach together with ... theological interpretation"³⁸⁸ of CAL, Westerhoff's both/and imagery of *home* and understanding of the function of wonder and awe are key examples of how 1970s, US scholarship was already seriously determined to endorse and encourage the seeming paradoxes of a Christian theological pedagogy. Whether expressed via Gloria Durka's references to the pursuit of "learned uncertainty"³⁸⁹ or Harris' call that CAL "affirm [] both the particular and the universal at the same time",³⁹⁰ North American scholarship had progressed much further than its British and European counterparts in embracing both the fact of, and how the inherent mysteries of Christian faith function in relation to the practicalities of learner agency and responsibility.

5.2. Specific resonances: the thematic mise-en-scène of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL

Having considered the wider contextualisation of Hull's *disruptive-inclusive* theological pedagogy from UK, European and North-American perspectives, it is equally pertinent to

³⁸⁷ Brown, *Sacred sense: discovering the wonder of God's word and world*, 6. This is deeply reminiscent of Hull's description of "oscillation between tight and loose construing" Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 108. This issue is further addressed in chapter 8 in relation to biblical CAL.

³⁸⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, xi.

³⁸⁹ Durka, *The Teacher's Calling: a spirituality for those who teach* (New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 2002), 1.

³⁹⁰ Harris, "Isms and Religious Education," in *Emerging Issues in Religious Education* (eds. Durka and Smith; New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1976), 43.

evaluate how his views (particularly as exemplified in *What Prevents...?*) resonate with key themes of other 1980s proposals as well as those developed since. 5.2.1. analyses the relationship between individual and corporate learning in *disruptive-inclusion* in comparison with other approaches contemporary to *What Prevents...?* In particular, it considers the pedagogical roles of *koinonia*, Personalism, and *becoming*. Then, and in development of earlier suggestions, 5.2.2. closely examines how pedagogical applications of the metaphors *horizon* and *home* clarify Hull's understanding of CAL methodology and practice. Finally, despite earlier concluding that Hull had no interest in concretely defining or locating learner passage between stages or seasons of learning, it is clear that *What Prevents'...?* overall theological conviction holds that learners progress *in* and *out* of various pedagogical phases or modes. Therefore, any thorough contextualisation of Hull's work on CAL must consider it light of Fowler's, *Stages of Faith*.

5.2.1. Humanising CAL: connecting individual and community

The earlier explanation of why *What Prevents...?* ought to be considered the quintessential example of Hull's *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL noted the repeated insistence that "Learning breakthrough happens when someone dares to include something they had formerly considered unable to find God in or through".³⁹¹ 4.2.1., in particular argued that this, in turn, shifts the pivotal definition of CAL from a focus on individual information retention to self-awareness and understanding, making a case that one of Hull's principal, pedagogical convictions is that CAL progress results from *inclusion* of *self* as well as *other*. However, to fully appreciate how Hull's "deeper understanding of the nature of the human person"³⁹² functions within his work on CAL, these principles must be considered in wider

³⁹¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 18.

³⁹² Hull, *A Response to Karl-Ernst Nipkow*, 52.

conversation by analysing the nuances of other pedagogical approaches to self and personhood. For example, almost a decade before *What Prevents...?*, Harris asked whether “Possibly the reason we are separated from one another in wider society is that we have not yet overcome the separations within ourselves”?³⁹³

Harris’ work provides a useful starting point because it functions as a representative example of the widely recurring theme in 1970s and ‘80s scholarship echoing Hull’s assertion that a principal function of CAL was to affirm “both the particular and the universal at the same time”.³⁹⁴ In practical terms, it draws attention to the perception that the benefit of any given learner coming “into self-possession”³⁹⁵ extends far beyond that particular individual and makes an essential contribution to learning relationships and *communities*. In another example of this claim, Thomas Groome outlines the inextricable correlation between the Christian faith, self-knowledge and corporate learning: “... If self-identity is shaped by interaction with a collectivity, then to become Christian selves requires that we have socializing interaction with a Christian faith community which is capable of forming us in such faith All of our educational efforts will bear little fruit unless they take place within a Christian faith community”.³⁹⁶

Put simply, Groome’s claim is that the concept of Christian selfhood finds its source, identity and goal in a corporate setting. Similarly, a few years later, in the process of explaining what

³⁹³ Harris, *Isms and Religious Education*, 56.

³⁹⁴ Harris, *Isms and Religious Education*, 43.

³⁹⁵ Harris, *Women and teaching: themes for a spirituality of pedagogy* (New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1988), 3-4.

³⁹⁶ Groome, *Christian Religious Education: sharing our story and vision* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1981), 115.

he refers to as *Relational Learning*, Leon McKenzie further claimed that Christian community plays such an intrinsic role in CAL that it shapes its definition, not just its delivery:

The medium *is* the message, regarding the religious education of adults, the community of learners *is* the kerygma. The social process *is* the proclamation. The context *is* the communication. We do not acquire meaning, explore and expand meaning structures, and learn how to express meaning primarily on the basis of the study of religious abstractions ... but rather on the basis of lived experiences in a community of shared values ... delineated by the New Testament concept *koinonia*.³⁹⁷

This definition of CAL according to community engagement, as opposed to ability to express abstract, theoretical knowledge parallels *disruptive-inclusion's* assertion of CAL as a life posture, not measured in terms of academic goals or disciplines mastered. In associating CAL so closely with *koinonia*, McKenzie's work suggests that there is a third category missing from Hull's earlier distinction between *outsiders* who *study* theology and *insiders* who *do* theology (see 5.1.1.) For McKenzie and others, participation in Christian community is not best described in terms of *doing* or *studying* CAL, but as an *embodying* of learning in community life, both inside and outside the Church.

In her 1989 book, *Fashion me a People*, Harris develops the connection between *koinonia* and CAL significantly further than McKenzie. She argues that the term *curriculum* ought not just refer to a specific course of study delivered in a formal learning environment but "the entire course of the church's life, found in the fundamental forms of that life",³⁹⁸ further defining it as "the priestly, prophetic, and political work of *didache*, *leiturgia*, *koinonia*,

³⁹⁷ McKenzie, "The Purpose and Scope of Adult Religious Education," in *Handbook of Adult Religious Education* (ed. Foltz; Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1986), 15.

³⁹⁸ Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 63.

kerygma and diakonia".³⁹⁹ From within this framework, she carefully delineates the role of *koinonia* into three, specific functions: governing, convicting and not-yet-realised reality.⁴⁰⁰

In the first instance, Harris' focus on "community as governing reality"⁴⁰¹ identifies *koinonia* as a specifically Christian concept, distinct from how other groups might live and learn together. She highlights how "The truth of the Christian community is that whenever we acknowledge our relatedness ... we contribute our share to the building up of the present, living body of Christ".⁴⁰² In other words, she claims that community-based CAL is unique in that it naturally faces outwards, automatically reaches beyond (rather than into itself) and cultivates relational connections across both geography and time. As the "community of saints",⁴⁰³ today's Church not only draws together contemporary Christian individuals and communities from around the globe but also finds her identity in connection with the beliefs, practices and legacy of the historic Church, as well as being called to continue the trend "by recognizing our communion with those yet to be born".⁴⁰⁴

Therefore, and although admittedly not an exact science, Harris argues that the *koinonia* provided by the historical Church community often provides its contemporary counterpart with significant interpretational and doctrinal guidance.⁴⁰⁵ In this way, present and historical

³⁹⁹ Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 63-64.

⁴⁰⁰ Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 77-80.

⁴⁰¹ Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 77.

⁴⁰² Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 77.

⁴⁰³ Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 77.

⁴⁰⁴ Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 78. Harris envisages future-oriented connectivity achieved by creating space for subsequent generations to participate in community life and benefit from its heritage. Likely, Harris had Westerhoff's seminal work on this topic in mind. Westerhoff and Neville, *Generation to generation; conversations on religious education and culture* (Philadelphia, Pa.: United Church Press, 1974), and Westerhoff, *Will our children have faith?*

⁴⁰⁵ In the introduction to his edited volume, *Educating People of Faith*, John Van Engen makes the following, broad claim: "Appeals to the past never cease, not for any of us, not in our personal lives, not in our social experience. They still shape political rhetoric, as they do legal decision-making and these days, personal therapy. This is no less true for religious pasts, collective and individual". Van Engen, *Educating people of faith:*

Christian learning communities partner (both in collaboration or apposition) to “create an environment where one can first come to know limits and boundaries”.⁴⁰⁶ As previously discussed in several respects, limits and boundaries are essential to Hull’s pedagogy. Firstly, they create, “Havens of meaningfulness and safety within the context of a diverse and frequently changing world: to engage with it, interpret it, and transform it otherwise would be difficult, if not impossible”.⁴⁰⁷

However, as reflected in Hull’s interpretation of Jesus’ role in John 10, boundaries are not necessarily fixed. Therefore, “in the lifelong enterprise where the boundaries and limits are constantly being widened outward toward all realizable reality”,⁴⁰⁸ there exists a dynamic relationship between the learning community of the Church universal and particular historically and geographically located learning communities. By her sheer, continuing existence, the Church’s learning communities, both *universal* and *particular*, contribute to her state of ongoing flux and guarantee her continuation as a growing, morphing entity in which the concept of orthodoxy is defined by constant change, not stasis. Or as Dorothy C. Bass explains, “Teaching and learning have been woven into the fabric of Jewish and Christian communal life across the centuries and in countless social and cultural contexts ... Adherents have educated and formed one another in the tradition’s wisdom and way of life through numerous, diverse, and historically changing practices”.⁴⁰⁹

exploring the history of Jewish and Christian communities (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 6.

⁴⁰⁶ Harris, *Isms and Religious Education*, 42. The Bible’s role in this is demonstrated in 7.3.

⁴⁰⁷ Fleming and Lovat, "Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom," 18, no. 3 (2015), 211.

⁴⁰⁸ Harris, *Isms and Religious Education*, 42.

⁴⁰⁹ Bass, "Foreword," in *Educating people of faith: exploring the history of Jewish and Christian communities* (ed. Van Engen; Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), ix. Many elements of this theme are revisited in 7.3. in relation to biblical CAL.

The second and third connections Harris makes between *koinonia* and CAL are themselves inter-connected. She presents the function of *koinonia* as both a “convicting” and “not-yet-realized reality”.⁴¹⁰ In what is now a familiar pattern (similar to Hull’s learning *havens* discussed in 4.2.1.), Harris argues that *koinonia* is not only the *answer* to human loneliness, disconnectedness and estrangement, but that it also exacerbates, or at the very least, draws attention to its inability to address all the problems of human condition. “In our conviction, we are brought up short. At the same time, we are drawn to community, we find ourselves surrounded by bruised and broken community or by the absence of any community at all”.⁴¹¹ In other words, rather than addressing the issues it purports to solve, *koinonia* does not find itself on just one side of the argument but functioning as both a symptom of the underlying problem *and* its means of potential resolution. It is a reminder to Christian learners that all of creation (“nonhuman creation” included),⁴¹² is united in the same aim for communion and community and the Church’s role is to model CAL as an act of “reconciliation with the world”.⁴¹³ *Koinonia* embodies both the *disruption* that points learners to their need for growth and the *inclusion* that is their opportunity to experience that same growth.

However, Harris and Mckenzie’s observations concerning the depth of connection between self and community raise a secondary level of enquiry concerning individual and corporate collaboration in CAL. While there is a range of opinions on the matter, many 1970s and ‘80s presentations addressing the link between individual and corporate CAL find common ground (sometimes unknowingly) in a strand of philosophical theology known as

⁴¹⁰ Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 79-80.

⁴¹¹ Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 80.

⁴¹² Harris, *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*, 80.

⁴¹³ Moran, *Education toward adulthood* (New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1979), 56.

Personalism. Despite being first coined in eighteenth century Germany,⁴¹⁴ Personalism is mostly closely associated with a group of French, twentieth-century Roman Catholic Theologians (most notably Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier and Teilhard de Chardin). Primarily responding to the rise of bourgeois individualism after the Second World War,⁴¹⁵ they employed the term Personalism to express a concern for “The cultivation of the human capacity to love God and other human beings in accordance with their divine nature”.⁴¹⁶ The scope of Personalism’s influence stretches far beyond the parameters of CAL, and as such, this project does not propose a comprehensive analysis of its claims nor consequences. However, its pedagogical implications are invaluable to this discussion in that they bring into fine relief the details of exactly how *disruptive-inclusive* CAL could conceivably be considered a process by which each, individual learner discovers the fullness of self via increasingly deeper and richer connection with others.⁴¹⁷

In a similar vein to Westerhoff’s pedagogy based in the divine self-revelation of the Hebrew Bible, James Carroll encapsulates a Personalist understanding of how knowledge of self, others and God connects: “The I AM of God, of Jesus, is the “I am” of every person, and it consists in every person being aware of herself or himself. And that awareness points beyond itself “I know” leads to “I know that I know” leads to “I know that I am known.” Here is what we mean by the images of God in which humans are created”.⁴¹⁸ Therefore, a

⁴¹⁴ *Personalismus* first appeared in Schleiermacher and Meckenstock, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern (1799)* (Berlin: Water de Gruyter, 2001), 141.

⁴¹⁵ In this sense, individualism is best understood in terms of self-reliance and lack of trust of state and institutional regulation.

⁴¹⁶ Leopando, *A pedagogy of faith: the theological vision of Paulo Freire* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 105-106.

⁴¹⁷ Although Hull does not mention Personalism in *What Prevents...?*, he makes numerous references to leading Personalist thinker Teilhard de Chardin: Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 20, 103, 135 and 218.

⁴¹⁸ Carroll, *Christ actually: the son of God for the secular age* (New York, N.Y.: Viking, 2014), 273.

central tenet of a Personalist pedagogy (especially that of Maritain and Mounier), claims that because learners are made in God's image, "The highest achievement of education is ... the formation of a 'true human person' who can exercise moral intelligence and practice self-giving love".⁴¹⁹ However, it simultaneously holds that "authentic bonds are necessary for growing into one's full personhood, and to live solely for one's self is antithetical to becoming fully human".⁴²⁰ Thus, the pedagogical goals of individual and community benefit are not in competition but inextricably interlinked in mutual advantage.

Personalism's refusal to endorse learning as a purely solo activity resonates with Hull's determination that "Learning is an inter-personal activity. It is something which people do for and with each other ... the best learning, especially in the case of adults, is almost always in groups".⁴²¹ He gives short shrift to an attitude to church-based learning that suggests, "You have come to worship God in the privacy of your own heart, and you must be allowed to get on with it".⁴²² And while there is insufficient space here to address the range of epistemological and anthropological questions raised by such ideas (similar to those Hull raises in *What is Theology of Education?*), for our purposes, Personalism fundamentally draws attention to the fact that *disruptive-inclusive* CAL ought not be understood as an optional extra available to the few, but is an essentially *humanising* process. It demonstrates that actively including self and others in learning is such a primordial process that it could be explained in terms of "the awakening of a person to living activity"⁴²³ or as Hull puts it, the "process of becoming".⁴²⁴

⁴¹⁹ Leopando, *A pedagogy of faith: the theological vision of Paulo Freire*, 106.

⁴²⁰ Leopando, *A pedagogy of faith: the theological vision of Paulo Freire*, 109.

⁴²¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 17.

⁴²² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 17-18.

⁴²³ Mounier, *A Personalist Manifesto* (London: Longmans, Green & co., 1938), 114.

⁴²⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 218-219.

The language of *becoming* must acknowledge a final influence on the wider discussion concerning the connections between self and community in CAL: Paulo Freire. In his magnum opus, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argues that learners are, “Beings in the process of becoming – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality ... in this incompleteness and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation”.⁴²⁵ Freire’s primary identity as a liberationist pedagogue rejecting traditional understandings of learning as a tool of oppression and *dehumanisation* is clear.⁴²⁶ However, a closer look at the arguments underpinning this and his other foundational claims also reveals that “Maritain, Mounier, and Teilhard were decisive influences on Brazil’s progressive Catholic elites during the period in which Freire grew to maturity as an educator, activist, and thinker”.⁴²⁷ Peter Roberts unpacks how, in particular, Personalism’s relationally connected, future-oriented, hopeful view of learning sits within Freire’s overall pedagogy:

He is adamant that we cannot think, speak, read, write, learn, or be alone. To be human is to be a social being. Humans are beings of relationships: beings whose very existence cannot be comprehended without reference to others. Freire explicitly rejects the Cartesian notion of self-identical, self-knowing ‘I’ and replaces it with the dialogical, socially constituted ‘we’.⁴²⁸

The function of conscious self-awareness for Freire can be summarised as being equipped for relational connection; a trait at the heart of human nature that brings into clearer focus

⁴²⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, N.Y.: Continuum, 1990), 72. The language of *becoming* also evokes the work of John Dewey whose pedagogy asserts, “The “self” is always a self in the making. It is rooted in a temporally evolving process shaped by stabilized habits, but it is also changing as new habits are formed in response to changes in one’s environment” Johnson, “Dewey’s Radical Conception of Moral Cognition,” in *The Oxford handbook of Dewey* (ed. Fesmire; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2020), 189. In comparison to Freire, however, Dewey does not draw as clear a link between the developing self and others.

⁴²⁶ Hull acknowledges Freire’s influence on his thinking as early as 1977. Hull, “What is Theology of Education?”, 23.

⁴²⁷ Leopando, *A pedagogy of faith: the theological vision of Paulo Freire*, 96.

⁴²⁸ Roberts, *Education, literacy, and humanization: exploring the work of Paulo Freire* (Westport, Conn: Bergin & Garvey, 2000), 151.

some of the implications of a Personalist pedagogy for educators and students. For example, Freire's well-known dismissal of education as the depositing of information or 'banking' model⁴²⁹ turns the educator's role into "Structur[ing] the environment in such a way that persons can get in touch with their own resources and the resources around them, toward a future".⁴³⁰ Thus, teaching becomes a form of pedagogical networking, bringing learners face-to-face with their true selves and others. Or, as according to Harris, as learners, we "Must come to know first our primary community, then ourselves, our religious tradition, our "people" and our nation, if we would come to community with our planet, our universe, our God".⁴³¹

5.2.2. Imaging the process: journeying from home to horizon and back again

So far, in its exploration of CAL, this project has engaged with imagery as diverse as grazing sheep, homeless pilgrims, door furniture and musical harmonies. A wide range of metaphorical language is used in this discipline to circumvent the terminological ambiguities already addressed and avoid unhelpful, unwanted or at least inconsistently applied correlations and associations. However, as we have also seen regarding John 10, unless used extremely carefully, symbolic language has as much potential to confuse as to particularise any given argument. Therefore, to further pinpoint the fundamental elements of this project's case for *disruptive-inclusion* and join Gabriel Moran in attempting to find "a starting point that is almost beyond debate",⁴³² this section closely analyses several instances of Hull and others' use of metaphorical language in describing CAL.

⁴²⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 58-59.

⁴³⁰ Durka and Smith, *Emerging issues in religious education* (New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1976), Harris, *Isms and Religious Education*, 46-47.

⁴³¹ Harris, *Isms and Religious Education*, 42. Chapters 7 and 8 address different ways in which this *connectedness* can be achieved. 8.3. considers the specific challenges raised by virtual or online connectivity.

⁴³² Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 57.

One common metaphorical “starting point” employs the word field associated with physical journeying or travelling, as a way of helping Christians “See both where we have been and where we are heading as well as where others may be along the way”.⁴³³ From the Psalmist’s identification of YHWH’s people as those “in whose heart are the highways to Zion” (Ps 84:5, NRSV) to references to followers of the way (Acts 9:2). From Gregory the Great’s view of a Christian as “a wayfarer en route between the city of this world and the celestial city”⁴³⁴ to John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in 1678. From Søren Kierkegaard’s 1845 *Stages on Life’s Way*⁴³⁵ to David Smith and Susan Felch’s presentation of learning as “walking the path”,⁴³⁶ the association between learning and journeying has found fresh expression through the centuries. Smith and Felch also draw attention to the many unconscious ways in which use of such vocabulary defines multiple elements of educational practice. For example, “‘curriculum’ is a Latin reference to either the act of running or a racetrack. More colloquially, we refer to a ‘course’ of study, ‘covering a lot of ground’, and to learners ‘falling behind’”.⁴³⁷ Such is the extent of this connection that in her research into the use of metaphor in educational discourse, Lynne Cameron found that “About 14 percent of ... the classroom set of linguistic metaphors could be seen as relating to the system of journey metaphors”.⁴³⁸

⁴³³ Dykstra and Parks, *Faith development and Fowler* (Birmingham, Ala: Religious Education Press, 1986), 2.

⁴³⁴ Bartholomew, *"Behind" the text: history and biblical interpretation* (Carlisle, Cumbria; Grand Rapids, Mich: Paternoster Press; Zondervan, 2003), 376.

⁴³⁵ Kierkegaard, et al., *Stages on life's way: studies by various persons* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁴³⁶ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2016), 42.

⁴³⁷ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 17.

⁴³⁸ Cameron, "Metaphor in educational discourse," (*Advances in applied linguistics*; London: Continuum, 2003), 246-247. This pattern also extends into the contemporary Church. So pervasive is its influence in Christian literature and practice that avoiding references to “pathways” or “uphill struggles” or “taking ground” can be quite difficult. For examples of this, see <http://www.takingground.org.uk> and <http://www.pilgrimcourse.org>. Terms such as *Taking Ground* also highlight the potential overlap between metaphor relating to journeying, violence and war. While some of this is likely unconscious, this should not be used as an excuse to clumsily perpetuate narratives suggesting that Christian journeying is defined by the protection of existing power

1. Pursuit of the pedagogical horizon

The first specific image considered here is *horizon*, a term Harris uses to undermine the idea that in CAL “it is only the knowledge that travels from one place to another”,⁴³⁹ suggesting in its place that *horizon* evokes a simultaneously grounded, yet open-ended learner journey:

One partakes in an ever-widening horizon; but does so while rooted in a particular time, a particular race, a particular culture ... One cannot create a new world if there are good people and bad people, where some of these persons are disaffirmed. One can attempt to create a new world only if all of us are affirmed. For this reason, education might do far better to use “horizon” rather than “content” or “process” as their central metaphor.⁴⁴⁰

This full affirmation of every learner’s present reality as a necessary, first step towards learning participation is strongly reminiscent of the earlier observation that the fulcrum of Hull’s pedagogy lies in learning connectedness not content. Hull’s references to *horizon* in *What Prevents...?* reinforce this, particular describing the dual function of the biblical text in connecting the interpretational past and future, as well as embedding the learner in the present. He summarises: “The text, in other words, is the horizon, the point at which the world behind and the world in front are fused”.⁴⁴¹ For both Harris and Hull, horizon is symbolic of the simultaneously fixed and yet constantly changing reality that is the backdrop to all learning. It highlights the importance that learners remain sufficiently oriented to their surroundings so as not to be entirely overwhelmed but equally not so comfortable to impede progress. In light of earlier discussions concerning the similar dual function of *boundaries* in Hull’s pedagogy,⁴⁴² it is not unreasonable to suggest that Hull and Harris

imbalances at all costs and its success marked by subdual or destruction of (rather than collaboration with) “other”.

⁴³⁹ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 16.

⁴⁴⁰ Durka and Smith, *Emerging issues in religious education*, Harris, *Isms and Religious Education*, 42-43.

⁴⁴¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 23. The pedagogical role of the biblical text will be directly addressed in part 7.

⁴⁴² See 2.2.1. and 3.1.1.

understand horizon as representing a kind of ‘super-boundary’, whose fluid characteristics make it ideally suited as a means of helping learners arrive at (and maintain) *optimum distance*.

In his book *Crossing and Dwelling*, Thomas Tweed highlights a major connection between the imagery of horizon and *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. He explains, “I can’t see everything. Culturally mediated objects enter and leave my sensorial and conceptual horizon. The horizon shifts as I do ... obscur[ing] some things as it illumines others”.⁴⁴³ Or, as Berger expressed 40 years earlier, “Identity is objectively defined as location in a certain world ... put differently, all identifications take place within horizons that imply a specific social world”.⁴⁴⁴ Considered this way, the idea of horizon takes seriously the unique vista of every learner and therefore, functions to “map[] out the contours of the journey”⁴⁴⁵ and encourage further navigation, rather than presenting successful CAL as culminating in arrival at an ultimate, static goal or even outlining a specific means of travel.

On the other hand, however, a potentially misleading corollary of presenting CAL as travelling towards the horizon (or even using it for guidance), is that horizon cannot avoid conveying CAL in linear terms with a definable beginning and end. There is an obvious conflict between the case made in this project for an ongoing, oscillating pedagogy in which “exam success, mastery of a field, graduation, or career ... are dethroned as ultimate destinations”⁴⁴⁶ and posture and motivation are centrally important. A vision of CAL whose

⁴⁴³ Tweed, *Crossing and dwelling: a theory of religion* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 18.

⁴⁴⁴ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 152.

⁴⁴⁵ Dykstra and Parks, *Faith development and Fowler*, 2.

⁴⁴⁶ Berger and Luckmann, *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, 41.

primary understanding of progress is a “single line”⁴⁴⁷ is replaced with a view in which a learner’s “eventual destination” is focused less on the *where* and more about the *state* of their arrival, i.e., “as a different person from the one who set out”.⁴⁴⁸

In general, it is almost impossible to disconnect learning from the idea of ‘getting somewhere’ or making progress towards an articulated goal, even taking into account ancient understandings of learning journeys that posit “God as its destination”.⁴⁴⁹ The popular saying, “it is the journey, not the destination that matters”,⁴⁵⁰ is held as somewhat naïve and unrealistic by many in contemporary society. Ultimately, *paths* function in guiding travellers to a destination; their value and identity inextricably connected to the locations to which they lead. As Tim Ingold explains in his “comparative anthropology of the line”,⁴⁵¹ this devaluing of the journey or path has occurred because, for human beings, “life is lived authentically on the spot, in places rather than along paths”.⁴⁵² However, he finds this observation insufficient in fully describing how paths and lines contribute to human understanding of self and the world, and so continues:

How could there be places ... if people did not come and go? Life on the spot surely cannot yield an experience of place, of being *somewhere*. To be a place, every somewhere must lie on one or several paths of movement to and from places elsewhere. Life is lived, I reasoned, along paths, not just in places, and paths are lines of a sort. It is along paths, too, that people grow into a knowledge of the world around them, and describe this world in the stories they tell.⁴⁵³

Thus, Ingold refuses an assumed functional disparity between path and destination and re-defines paths as locations where life is lived, and human connection grows rather than just a

⁴⁴⁷ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 58.

⁴⁴⁸ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 29.

⁴⁴⁹ Berger and Luckmann, *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, 17.

⁴⁵⁰ The exact attribution of this quote is disputed. Although widely associated with T.S. Eliot, some believe it to originally belong to sixteenth century, French Philosopher Michel de Montaigne.

⁴⁵¹ Ingold, *Lines: a brief history* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 1.

⁴⁵² Ingold, *Lines: a brief history*, 2.

⁴⁵³ Ingold, *Lines: a brief history*, 3.

means of getting to the starting (or end) point. Similar to the paradigm shift required to interpret “life in all its fullness” (John 10:10) as experienced by the sheep’s perpetual adventuring, rather than their settling in the safety of the fold, Ingold exchanges a static, one-dimensional lens for one governed by multiple layers of movement and connection. Thus, the above quote represents many fundamental tenets of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL seen from another perspective: learners are always coming and going without needing to have ‘arrived’ for learning to be fully realised. Learners’ ongoing, dynamic movement facilitates better connections with others and the wider learning environment, validating and qualifying paths as places of learning in their own right.

This element of Ingold’s argument demonstrates how describing CAL in terms of journeying towards, or being guided by, a horizon need not perpetuate the functional gap between path and destination and put it in conflict with core *disruptive-inclusive* principles. However, it does not address the equally incompatible suggestion that CAL ought to be considered in singular, linear terms. In this regard, his analysis argues that to be fully understood, linear function must be considered in wider context. For example, it is only when torn out of its everyday setting that the image of a horizon symbolises a straightforward, unobscured view of the way ahead. For the vast majority of humans, access to the horizon is rarely uninterrupted (either in a literal or metaphorical sense). Our only connection to it is via a range of additional, intersecting lines which form the edges of buildings, structures and landscapes; far more complex and dynamic entities than single, perpendicular lines alone can create.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁴ This is particularly true for learners whose physical settings obscure their view beyond the immediate – whether city-dwellers or prisoners. Hull would also surely have included the visually impaired in the category of those whose only access to the horizon is mediated to them via physical contact with their immediate environment.

In his explanation of this multi-layered, expanded vision of horizon, Ingold continues, “Whether encountered as a woven thread or as a written trace,⁴⁵⁵ the line is still perceived as one of movement and growth”.⁴⁵⁶ Thus, he proposes that for lines to function as helpful anthropological imagery for human progress, the achievement of *any* goal cannot be represented by one, disconnected, unimpeded, linear journey with a singular, fixed destination but a variety of interlinked, non-linear excursions towards a potentially, largely obscured (and likely temporary) end point. In essence, while today alone may not offer any given learner a view of a traditional, perpendicular horizon, “the patient rhythm of connecting each day’s walk to the bigger purposes of travelling through God’s world can change everything, however mundane the steps might seem”.⁴⁵⁷

Equally, in their rebuttal against linear conceptions of CAL (and a quote returned to in regard to *home* in the next section), Smith and Felch describe a process which again resonates with Hull’s interpretation of John 10 and descriptions of CAL in terms of pilgrimage:

Pilgrimage ... is a life lesson in revision ... pilgrims make [] small, repetitive patterns ... To be a pilgrim is not just to move forward in a straight line, but also to enter into a circular motion of journeying forth and returning home, perhaps multiple times ... in a culture deeply permeated with ideals of linear progress ..., it is well to remember the contrasting circular rhythm of pilgrim journeying.⁴⁵⁸

Returning to Ingold’s argument a final time, there is a significant respect in which his discussion of the metaphor of a line consolidates the connection between *horizon* and a

⁴⁵⁵ The language of *trace* is strongly associated with the work of Emmanuel Lévinas. For Lévinas, “There are moments in human existence when the divine encounters the human and yet ‘departs’ at the same instant, and in departing, the divine leaves behind a ‘trace’ of itself”. Morgan, “The Cambridge introduction to Emmanuel Levinas,” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 153.

⁴⁵⁶ Ingold, *Lines: a brief history*, 2.

⁴⁵⁷ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 35.

⁴⁵⁸ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 56.

disruptive-inclusive approach to CAL. He suggests that it is not only a misunderstanding to consider linearity as uniquely correlated with straightness and stasis, but also permanence. “Finally, I wondered what it means to go straight to the point. On the whole, this is not something we do, either in everyday life or in ordinary discourse. We are drawn to certain topics, and meander around them, but by the time we reach them they seem to have disappeared – like a hill we climb that no longer looks like a hill once we have reached the top”.⁴⁵⁹

Lines, therefore, Ingold highlights, have no physical substance of their own, but are simply the edges and contours of that which does, revealing that their principal function is to demonstrate where other substantive parts of the landscape converge. As such, we ought not consider them in geometrical terms but as “the taut warp-thread of the weaver’s loom”.⁴⁶⁰ The pedagogical invitation of horizon is not just for learners to follow where the ground meets the sky but focus their attention on the various ways and places where present reality intersects and interrelates. Ingold summarises, “As the certainties of modernity give way to doubt and confusion, lines that once went straight to the point have become fragmented, and the task of life is once more to find a way through the cracks”.⁴⁶¹ In this way, *horizon* represents fluid and temporary learning *destinations* and pathways to them, which are anything but straightforward. In this way, a *disruptive-inclusive* horizon is an image able to encapsulate Harris’ ever-expanding vision of CAL, Hull’s vital tethering of learners to chronological connection points and Ingold’s constantly transfiguring concept of destinations.

⁴⁵⁹ Ingold, *Lines: a brief history*, 4.

⁴⁶⁰ Ingold, *Lines: a brief history*, 4.

⁴⁶¹ Ingold, *Lines: a brief history*, 4.

2. Learning to be at home on the road

The earlier Smith and Felch quote that CAL is a “circular motion of journeying forth and returning home”,⁴⁶² draws attention to another use of metaphor whose impact on CAL requires fuller analysis: any form of *journeying* requires that a learner first *leave home*. In Hull’s distinction between *home* and *unknown* learning conditions and Westerhoff’s vision of a learner as a perpetually homeless, yet simultaneously always-at-home, pilgrim, this image has already been connected with *disruptive-inclusion* in various ways. Both of these discussions focused on how, rather than being an arbitrary phase which learners simply happen upon at specific times in their lives (according to circumstances beyond their control), the ideal learning conditions associated with *disruptive-inclusion* (what Hull calls *optimum distance*) can be recreated by a specific attitude of mind and posture to surroundings. Building on this, the question addressed here is whether, and if so how, the connection between *disruptive-inclusive* CAL and *home* is instructive in understanding *disruptive-inclusive* learning progression.

Fundamentally, the image of “leaving home”⁴⁶³ and entering an unfamiliar environment naturally highlights many of the challenges and opportunities of CAL and therefore draws on several of the themes already discussed in this project: in particular, self and other. “Leaving behind the safe, predictable, and comfortable home world and confronting the “other”, which is perceived as dangerous and unpredictable, we may well be able to rediscover the self and understand it more deeply and fully”.⁴⁶⁴ In particular, many scholars’ thoughts in this regard are underpinned by Jewish scholar, Emmanuel Lévinas’ understanding of the

⁴⁶² Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 56.

⁴⁶³ Fleming and Lovat, "Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom" fully unpacks this idea.

⁴⁶⁴ Phillips, "Learning by Going," (Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 2019), 165.

pivotal pedagogical influence of “the other”. For Lévinas, “The stranger, particularly the destitute stranger, calls me to ‘leave home’ in a profound sense...for I can no longer be content with an existence closed in on the self”.⁴⁶⁵

Daniel Fleming and Terrence Lovat’s 2015 article, *Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom* provides a good example of the fundamental connections between leaving home and CAL. They begin their case for the pedagogical benefits of unfamiliarity with the following quote from Albert Camus:

What gives value to travel is fear. It is the fact that, at a certain moment, when we are so far from our own country ... we are seized by a vague fear, and the instinctive desire to go back to the protection of old habits. This is the most obvious benefit of travel. At that moment we are feverish but also porous, so that the slightest touch makes us quiver to the depths of our being.⁴⁶⁶

Camus’ catalytic understanding of fear summarises the challenge of leaving home: “Being asked to leave home is no small matter ... and the perception of threat ... is always lurking nearby”.⁴⁶⁷ Venturing beyond the boundaries of current knowledge and experience (what many of us would more colloquially refer to as learners moving “out of their own comfort zones”)⁴⁶⁸ is unavoidably fraught with jeopardy. However, after establishing the inevitability of risk, the rest of Fleming and Lovat’s article focuses on the opportunities resulting from journeying far from home. In particular, they note Camus’ use of the terms *feverish* and *porous* to describe the impact of the unknown territory on the traveller, highlighting how the

⁴⁶⁵ Harris, “Toward an understanding of home: Levinas and the New Testament,” 90, no. 3/4 (1995), 440 and Lévinas and Lingis, [*Totalité et infini.*] *Totality and infinity. An essay on exteriority.* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 39. Lévinas refers to *le chez soi* or “living at home with oneself”.

⁴⁶⁶ Camus and Thody, *Notebooks, 1935-1942* (New York, N.Y.: Paragon House, 1991), 13. See also Phillips, *Learning by Going*, 87, Eilers, “Hermeneutical Empathy: Receiving Global Texts in Local Classrooms,” 17, no. 2 (2014), 165 and Fleming and Lovat, “Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom”, 210.

⁴⁶⁷ Fleming and Lovat, “Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom”, 216.

⁴⁶⁸ Fleming and Lovat, “Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom”, 209.

combination of a particular nervous energy and openness creates opportunities “that might stretch consciousness beyond itself”.⁴⁶⁹ Such language resonates strongly with the earlier discussion of how awe and wonder are able to bring together an “unsettling element of bewilderment” and “an insatiable curiosity to know”.⁴⁷⁰ Further, they outline how trepidation and passion are optimally combined with empathy and hospitality.⁴⁷¹

Although at first glance, empathy (a psychological posture) and hospitality (a practical action of welcoming) may be considered to belong to very different categories, they share a common sense of mutuality or reciprocity. Both require at least temporarily *stepping into* someone else’s space or shoes (to push the travelling imagery further still). On one hand empathy requires the temporary self-suspension (referred to by Hull as *multiplicity of vision*) that cannot be achieved by simply re-asserting existing views. For example, Fleming and Lovat describe empathy as “an intellectual and affective capacity to “think with/as” an “other”.⁴⁷² On the other hand, hospitality is the practical outworking of empathy that requires “welcoming the other *and* being a guest in their presence”:⁴⁷³ it must be both offered and received to be effective. Hospitality is neither the provision of refuge or sanctuary to an otherwise destitute refugee, nor the process of an *insider* demonstrating to

⁴⁶⁹ Fleming and Lovat, "Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom", 210. Part 8 will delve further into the relationship between consciousness and learning.

⁴⁷⁰ Brown, *Sacred sense: discovering the wonder of God's word and world*, 5.

⁴⁷¹ The intersection between hospitality and pedagogy is more fully unpacked in Nouwen, "Education to the ministry," 9, no. 1 (1972) and Smith and Carvill, *The gift of the stranger: faith, hospitality, and foreign language learning* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2000).

⁴⁷² Based on Decety and Ickes, "The social neuroscience of empathy," (*Social neuroscience series*; Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009).

⁴⁷³ Fleming and Lovat, "Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom", 209.

an *outsider* how things work differently in an unfamiliar place. Rather, it is an opportunity for both parties to participate in and contribute to a “communal imagination”.⁴⁷⁴

Communal imagination creates shared access to sufficient *disruption* and *inclusion* to create the ideal conditions for CAL.⁴⁷⁵ As Susanne Johnson explains, “Hospitality ... is a willingness not only to receive the stranger, but also to be changed and affected by the presence of the other”.⁴⁷⁶ In this way, true empathy and hospitality require the pooling of resources and experiences: the reciprocal sharing of pain, confusion, excitement, energy, drive as well as knowledge and skills will allow for *disruptive-inclusive* learning to occur. Palmer summarises, “Hospitality is not an end in itself. It is offered for the sake of what it can allow, permit, encourage and yield. A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible”.⁴⁷⁷

However, as also true of *horizon*, there are points beyond which metaphorical language can mislead. In the case of *home*, if the claim is that empathy and hospitality can recreate *home* conditions regardless of a learner’s physical location, the question must also be posed whether referring to *home* in the traditional sense of place is at all useful? Further, associated scholarship repeatedly raises how even if learners’ journeys see them revisit the location (either literal or metaphorical) where their journey began, transformations occurring on the journey mean that it is impossible to “go back home” because the learner

⁴⁷⁴ Narvaez, “Neurobiology and Moral Mindset,” in *Handbook of moral motivation: theories, models, applications* (eds. Heinrichs, et al.; *Moral development and citizenship education*; Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2013), 328.

⁴⁷⁵ This idea of *communal imagination* is re-visited in 8.2.2. in relation to sermons.

⁴⁷⁶ Johnson, “Reshaping Religious and Theological Education in the ‘90s: Toward a Critical Pluralism,” 88, no. 3 (1993), 348.

⁴⁷⁷ Palmer, *To know as we are known: education as a spiritual journey* ([San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 74.

“finds that neither [s]he nor his[/her] home are the same as when [s]he left”.⁴⁷⁸ However, it is also true that given “the rapidly shifting neighbourhood in which ... students’ religious ‘homes’ are built” (again, both literal and metaphorically-speaking), reconnecting with what learners once knew as *home* may be as disorienting an experience as initially leaving.⁴⁷⁹ Just as Hull asserts in *What Prevents...?*, things are “never the same again once one has learned how to go in and out”.⁴⁸⁰ Home as a static, suspended setting waiting for the proverbial prodigal’s return, is revealed as an illusion.

In light of this, Westerhoff’s earlier reference to the Christian adult learner as a perpetually homeless, yet simultaneously always-at-home, pilgrim takes on new significance. The metaphor of *home* is not completely undermined as a vehicle to describe how learners experience *disruptive-inclusive* conditions, but it does require re-definition. The original desire for a static sense of *home* as the motivating and encouraging vision is replaced with a dynamic, richer experience of *home* that is available in both familiar and unfamiliar settings; in the company of strangers and family alike. Fleming and Mudge describe a process in which, “The “four walls of their house” begin to break down as, at the same time, new worlds begin to open up ... a new house is being rebuilt from the ashes of the old – one more appropriate and sufficiently flexible for the next stage of the journey”.⁴⁸¹ Korean-American theologian Kwok Pui Lan explains it in these terms, “Home is not a fixed and stable location but a traveling adventure, which entails seeking refuge in strange lands ... Such a destabilized

⁴⁷⁸ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 57. Fleming and Mudge draw a parallel here with T.S. Eliot’s poem, *Little Gidding*, which explains this concept as “know[ing] the place for the first time” Fleming and Mudge, *Leaving Home: A Pedagogy for Theological Education*, 79.

⁴⁷⁹ Fleming and Lovat, “Learning as Leaving Home: Fear, Empathy, and Hospitality in the Theology and Religion Classroom”, 212.

⁴⁸⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 66.

⁴⁸¹ Fleming and Mudge, *Leaving Home: A Pedagogy for Theological Education*, 78.

and contingent construction of home dislodges it from its familiar domestic territory and questions the conditions through which the cozy connotation of home have been made possible and sustained".⁴⁸²

Hull's reflections in *Touching the Rock* reveal how the darkness that once threatened to entirely overwhelm him was not replaced by a more comforting location but actually transformed into the "safer place" towards which he gravitated for orientation.⁴⁸³ Similarly, the transformation of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL manifests itself in that learners no longer yearn to either escape from, or return to, what was. Inversely, their "hope of returning"⁴⁸⁴ morphs into a desire of "finding one's relationship to home transformed, of finding one's self renewed by the journey, of seeing the familiar with a fresh perspective",⁴⁸⁵ or as Charles Winquist puts it, "Homecoming is not a return to the past, but it is a becoming into the future".⁴⁸⁶ Thus, it becomes more accurate to speak of CAL as a perpetual process not just of *leaving* home but also leaving behind the idea of home as a permanent, static, concept, and simultaneously adopting and arriving at a new and evolving experience of *home* conditions re-discovered on every stage of their journey.⁴⁸⁷ A learning journey towards *home* is "not

⁴⁸² Kwok, *Postcolonial imagination and feminist theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), p102. Kwok also references James Clifford's language of "travelling-in-dwelling" and "dwelling-in-travelling" to capture this image. See Kwok, *Postcolonial imagination and feminist theology*, 44. This definition of home also resonates strongly with Jenny Morgan's use of the term *home-ing* in her research on women's experiences at University: "Home is neither static nor permanent. Rather, *home-ing* involves the fluid and dynamic processes of both leaving and making home. It includes crafting physical and emotional spaces that are *home enough* and *home-like*. Such homes are temporary, and connected to both past and future homes". Morgans, "Home-ing Emerging Christian Women's Transitions at University," (2020), 14-15.

⁴⁸³ Hull, *On sight & insight: a journey into the world of blindness*, 232. See 4.1.2.

⁴⁸⁴ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 57.

⁴⁸⁵ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 57.

⁴⁸⁶ Winquist, *Homecoming: interpretation, transformation, and individuation* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 9 quoted in Fleming and Mudge, *Leaving Home: A Pedagogy for Theological Education*.

⁴⁸⁷ Highton summarises his vision of how theological education can be deemed simultaneously religious and secular by employing a similarly *both-and* approach to home metaphors. He presents the vision of theological education for which he argues is "on the cusp between tradition and critique, between religion and secularity, between familiarity and exile ... between homecoming and an 'ascetic code of willed homelessness'". Highton, "Criticism, obedience and exile Theological education as religious and secular," 112, no. 869 (2009), 351.

towards spring break ... or employment”⁴⁸⁸ but towards “a vision of wholeness that we sense is our true home and that beckons us”.⁴⁸⁹

5.2.3. The crux of the issue: transitioning between learning phases

Moving beyond the pedagogical implications of horizon and home imagery, this section addresses one further element of the pedagogical language of journeying that is likely both its most critical and elusive. Is it helpful to speak of learning consisting of various stages or phases? If so, what function does it serve for learners to pass between such phases? The basic concept that learning progress comprises a variety of steps or stages according to changes in learner’s life conditions, and that such transitions correlate with (or at the very least, are the key markers of) some of the most fertile conditions for CAL, is common to a range of pedagogies.

However, unlike many other discussion areas, it is not possible to build on Hull’s view of the exact circumstances in which any potential passages occur, because as repeatedly explained, he does not address such questions in any level of detail. That said, while Hull demonstrates no interest in identifying or locating specific ages or life conditions associated with points of passage between learning phases, this project has sought to demonstrate that helping his readers understand *how* CAL happens *is* Hull’s central goal. Therefore, analysing where *disruptive-inclusion* both resonates with and diverges from other approaches to describing the various stages of learning in CAL remains a key task in consolidating a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL.

⁴⁸⁸ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 26.

⁴⁸⁹ Büchner, *The longing for home: recollections and reflections* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper, 1996), 140.

The areas of crossover between Hull's pedagogical convictions and the concept of adult learners passing from one delineated phase of learning into another are brought into relief by Moran's aforementioned call for "a starting point that is almost beyond debate".⁴⁹⁰ His 1979 work, *Education Toward Adulthood* (referred to by Hull as a source of "valuable reflections about the nature and place of adulthood in modern societies"⁴⁹¹) explains CAL progress in terms of navigating the intersection of "*ordinary* and *non-ordinary*".⁴⁹² Moran continues, "*Ordinary* and *non-ordinary* do not describe objects but are instead aspects of a relational matrix".⁴⁹³ They do not represent unrelated, disparate entities but *ordinary* and *non-ordinary* co-exist and are experienced side-by-side. They intermingle in the normal progression of life and Moran identifies the points at which the two come together as pivotal to the healthy, sustainable and ongoing CAL progress. Furthermore, the approach is universally applicable and appropriate because "Every group has a sense of what is ordinary, habitual, and expected, long before scientific laws were invented or discovered".⁴⁹⁴

The *non-ordinary*, Moran argues, is most closely associated with life events such as birth and death, which "place humans "in touch with" some greater power than do the habitual processes of everyday life".⁴⁹⁵ In other words, circumstances, which even atheists have the tendency to describe in terms of moments when "the sacred, holy, or divine" cross over into the realm of "ordinary human affairs".⁴⁹⁶ However, the imperative of Moran's framework is not only the fact *that* the *ordinary* and *non-ordinary* converge but *how* they converge.

⁴⁹⁰ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 57.

⁴⁹¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 41.

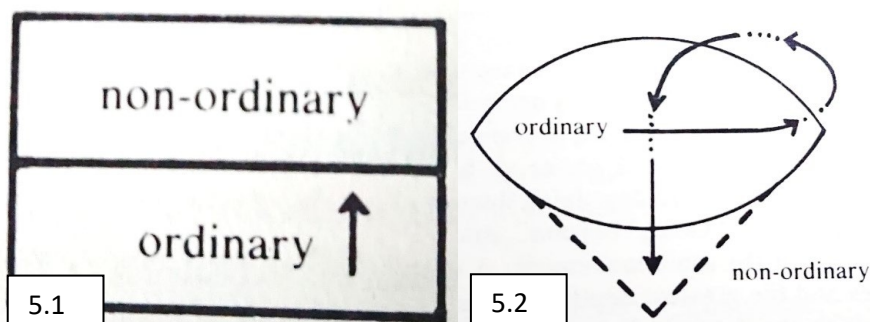
⁴⁹² Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 57.

⁴⁹³ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 59.

⁴⁹⁴ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 57.

⁴⁹⁵ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 58.

⁴⁹⁶ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 59.



- 5.1: Moran's imagining of how the passage between *ordinary* and *non-ordinary* does not occur.
 5.2 Moran's understanding of pedagogical progression in terms of *out, over, back and down*.

Firstly, Moran rejects the structure of diagram 5.1. as an insufficient imagining of how the passage between *ordinary* and *non-ordinary* occurs. This is primarily because he believes that such a straightforward coming together cannot avoid putting the *ordinary* and the *non-ordinary* in diametric opposition. Moran cannot support an understanding of their engagement in terms of "single and clear direction"⁴⁹⁷ because it must follow that as one increases, the other must necessarily decrease. Imperative for Moran is that the *non-ordinary* and *ordinary*, or as he otherwise refers them, the "'transcendent' and 'immanent' are not played off against each other ... if God is to be found, it is in the transcending-immanentizing journey".⁴⁹⁸ Moran believes that diagram 5.2. avoids these problems, showing how, "The movement is not simply up and down but rather, out, over, back, down. The movement returns to where one began but at a deeper level. A person doesn't pass once in a lifetime to a *non-ordinary* world; instead the person moves constantly toward some center that always eludes a clear location".⁴⁹⁹

Moran's seemingly abstract discussion offers the most concrete suggestions yet as to how a pattern for *disruptive-inclusive* CAL progress may be constructed. Firstly, it points to a (by

⁴⁹⁷ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 58.

⁴⁹⁸ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 60.

⁴⁹⁹ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 59-60.

now, familiar) repetitive/ circular pattern which revisits locations on multiple occasions. Secondly, it retains an overall trajectory with a distinct direction, but any destination reached is neither clearly identifiable nor static. Thirdly, despite the pattern of repeated re-visiting of the same location, the learner is not caught in a perpetual cycle but is able to engage on a “deeper” level. In other words, Moran defines CAL as the process of moving “Towards a unity of rational/non-rational, dependent/independent, human/non-human”, not a reinforcement of distinctions between them.⁵⁰⁰ He continues, “religious [learning] is not coextensive⁵⁰¹ with *non-ordinary* or exclusive of the *ordinary*. Moving “beyond the *ordinary*” is intrinsic to the religious journey, but one never actually leaves behind or leaves out the *ordinary*”.⁵⁰²

This concept of going “deeper” in CAL ought not to be understood as a transcendent process, in the sense of becoming more disconnected with self, other and the wider created reality but rather the exact opposite, resonating strongly with several strands of the discussion to this point. Whether Hull’s own description of his progress as a descent, towards “the one human world which lies beneath all the worlds and ties them all together”⁵⁰³ or the lack of conflict noted between reflecting God’s image and expressing full humanity, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is an embodied and deeply humanising process. Thus, for Moran, going *beyond the ordinary* is not a rising above or separation from, but a process of becoming more deeply related to, and connected within lived reality. Moran presents a pedagogical vision in which learners dare to consider that the mysterious and the rational do

⁵⁰⁰ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 61.

⁵⁰¹ Co-extensive refers to extension over the same area, extent or time.

⁵⁰² Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 60.

⁵⁰³ Hull, *Blindness and memory: being reborn into a different world*.

not belong to separate realms but combine regularly to create opportunities for CAL progress.

Finally, any discussion of passage between different phases of CAL cannot ignore the significant influence of Fowler's 1981, seminal but widely disputed work on the topic: *Stages of Faith*.⁵⁰⁴ Famously, Fowler's pedagogical framework understands learners *transitioning* between six distinct learning *Stages* during their lifetime: *intuitive-projective, mythic-literal, synthetic-conventional, individuative-reflective, conjunctive (or in some places, paradoxical-consolidative) and universalizing*.⁵⁰⁵ While Fowler goes further than either Hull or Moran in loosely associating the conditions of these Stages to specific ages, for example, claiming that Stage 5 is "unusual before mid-life",⁵⁰⁶ it is the learning modes or postures he associates with the various Stages that allow us to align Fowler's work with Hull's pedagogical approach.

Regarding *disruptive-inclusion*, the most pertinent component of Fowler's framework is his explanation of the transition between Stages 4 and 5, described as: "Going beyond the explicit ideological system and clear boundaries of identity that Stage 4 worked so hard to construct and to adhere to. Whereas Stage 4 could afford to equate self pretty much with its own conscious awareness of self ..., Stage 5 recognizes the task of integrating or reconciling conscious and unconscious".⁵⁰⁷ Here, we also see further use of the term *beyond* to explain passage between different phases of CAL: "As a way of seeing, of knowing, of committing,

⁵⁰⁴ Hull referred to and engaged with Fowler's work in range of different publications: Hull, "The Theology of the Department for Education," 47, no. 3 (1995), Hull, "Money, Modernizing and Morality: some issues in the Christian education of adults", 13, Hull, "Spiritual Development: Interpretations and Applications".

⁵⁰⁵ Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning* see, 122-199.

⁵⁰⁶ Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, 198.

⁵⁰⁷ Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, 186.

Stage 5 moves beyond the dichotomizing logic of Stage 4's "either/or." It sees both (or the many) sides of an issue simultaneously. Conjunctive faith suspects that things are organically related to each other; it attends to the pattern of interrelatedness in things, trying to avoid force-fitting to its own prior mind set".⁵⁰⁸

Fowler's description of "conjunctive faith"⁵⁰⁹ as akin to "discovering that the rational solution or 'explanation' of a problem that seemed so elegant is but a painted canvas covering an intricate, endlessly intriguing cavern of surprising depth"⁵¹⁰ aligns with Moran, Harris and Hull's various understandings of CAL progression as not achieved in *replacing* the particular with the universal. Rather, they all assert the importance of understanding reciprocal engagement between the rational and the mysterious, the *ordinary* and the *non-ordinary* and managing the tension between these and other seemingly conflicting ways of interpreting reality.⁵¹¹ Thus, similarly to Moran's framework, Stage 5's conjunctive faith requires a pedagogy that allows disparate elements to interweave. Calling learners to be "Alive to paradox and the truth in apparent contradictions, this Stage strives to unify opposites in mind and experience", a conviction that will require repeated passage of "boundaries of self and outlook" which are "porous and permeable".⁵¹²

At first glance, for the purposes of this discussion, neither the position of stages 4 and 5 in Fowler's overall schema nor their specific details seem directly helpful in understanding how Christian adult learners might more effectively access the conditions conducive to *disruptive-inclusion*. However, once more Moran's work on the topic suggests a way forward. In his

⁵⁰⁸ Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, 185.

⁵⁰⁹ Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, 184.

⁵¹⁰ Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, 187.

⁵¹¹ Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 57.

⁵¹² Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, 198.

1983 book, *Religious Education Development*, Moran offers a critique of Fowler's Stages that centres on scepticism of the Stage 6 "reality" that Fowler calls *universalizing faith*.⁵¹³ Overall, Moran does not call into question its definition per se, but more specifically, finds no evidence in Fowler's description of Stage 6 that it demonstrates real progression beyond Stage 5. Rather, he suggests that Stage 6 be considered more as Stage 5 enacted; "At Stage 6 one becomes an "activist incarnation" of the values of Stage 5".⁵¹⁴ In fact, he goes further in referencing Fowler's own words from another of his works, *Life maps*, in which he states, "I am not sure that Stage 6 really describes or requires any basic structural advance beyond Stage 5".⁵¹⁵

If Moran's claim is to be upheld, that Stage 6 simply represents a point at which Stage 5 structures are fully embedded and unconsciously worked out in all areas of everyday life, then it has significant implications for the overall learning progression of Fowler's framework. Reflected through the lens of Hull's work, this clarifies how passage between learning phases may be described as functioning in *disruptive-inclusion*. Returning briefly to Hull's four part description of his own learning journey, having navigated the fading of the light, the fading of the memory of light and growth in awareness of darkness, the final phase Hull identifies is a fading awareness of the darkness.⁵¹⁶ Thus, Fowler's Stage 6, in which learners exist peaceably with the, "Suffering and loss, responsibility and failure, and the grief that is an inevitable part of having made irrevocable commitments of life and energy",⁵¹⁷ is

⁵¹³ Moran, *Religious education development: images for the future* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Winston Press, 1983), 118.

⁵¹⁴ Moran, *Religious education development: images for the future*, 119.

⁵¹⁵ Moran, *Religious education development: images for the future*, 118 quoting Fowler and Keen, *Life maps: conversations on the journey of faith* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1978), 90.

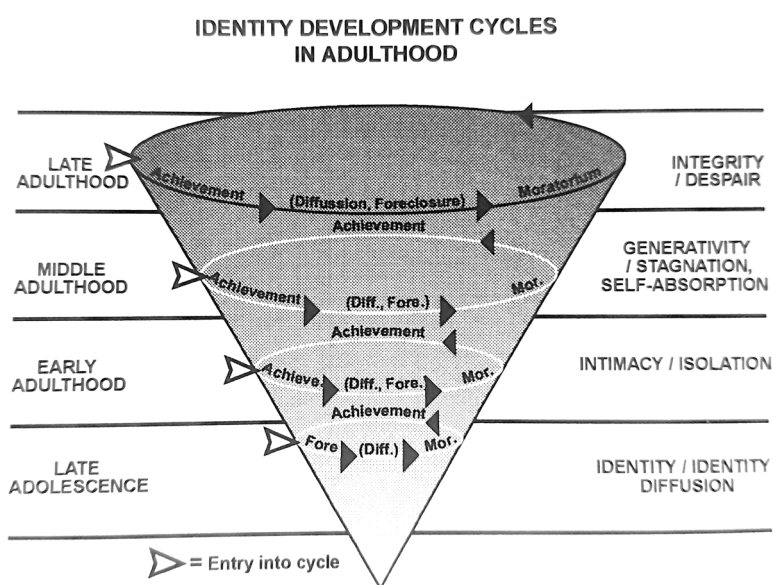
⁵¹⁶ The Story Behind 'Notes on Blindness'.

⁵¹⁷ Fowler and Keen, *Life maps: conversations on the journey of faith*, 81. Equally important in resisting a mentality of martyrdom is Moran's claim that "the individual's response to suffering, not the suffering itself, is the reason for development" Moran, *Religious education development: images for the future*, 118.

surely akin to Hull's description of the phase in which awareness of the darkness has faded? Stage 6 learners experience too much comfort for further *disruptive-inclusive* learning to take place and new levels or types of *darkness* are required to access *deeper* (in Moran's words) cycles of learning.⁵¹⁸

To use Moran and Fowler's language in parallel, perhaps *out, over, back, down*, might be seen to portray how once a learner fully outworking Stage 5 learning processes can no longer access the disruption by which they progressed to that point, they naturally pass back into the critical reflection of Stage 4. However, this is not a worthless re-tracing of steps. Since "pilgrimage ... is a life lesson in revision",⁵¹⁹ repeatedly passing between Stages 4 and 5 is the means by which a cyclical learning journey is necessary to reveal that "The deeper

⁵¹⁸ Moran and Fowler are among a larger group who present cyclical approaches to human learning and development. For example, the below cone diagram is Marcia's representation of Erikson's identity development cycles. It recognises many similar elements to Hull, Moran and Fowler - fundamentally, that "in most of our lives, there are disequilibrating circumstances in addition to the normal, expected ones" and their combination gives access to new stages. Marcia, "Identity and Psychosocial Development in Adulthood," 2, no. 1 (2002), 15. There is also a sense in which a learner "might recycle through the statuses" as an integral part of progression. Marcia, "Identity and Psychosocial Development in Adulthood", 17. However, by a pattern of *achievement* and *moratorium*, the aim is to *resolve* each stage, rather than necessarily benefit from the various tensions of each. Marcia, "Identity and Psychosocial Development in Adulthood", 16.



⁵¹⁹ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 56.

movement is a spiral, an old reality caught up and transformed into a new reality".⁵²⁰ Thus, the *proficient* Christian adult learner is not one firmly ensconced in Stage 6 (if that were truly possible), but rather repeatedly practising and committed to relating seemingly contradictory areas of life and ways of thinking. Thus, *Stages of Faith* ceases to be a linear journey from Stage 1 to 6. Once Stage 4 is reached, it becomes a self-contained spiral of "continual cycles of deconstruction and disintegration" in which "he or she is now resilient enough to repeat the cycle as many times as necessary".⁵²¹ As such, CAL progress is not measured by speed of progress through the Stages nor current location within a given Stage but is gauged by the manner in which one repeatedly passes between Stages in a "process that is definite but never-ending".⁵²²

⁵²⁰ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 56.

⁵²¹ Fleming and Mudge, *Leaving Home: A Pedagogy for Theological Education*, 78-79.

⁵²² Moran, *Religious education development: images for the future*, 113.

Chapter 6: translating blueprints into concrete. Inhabiting in-between spaces

With the detailed preparation of the opening chapters having dug out and filled foundation trenches, it is finally time to begin building above ground. However, this is admittedly the part of the overarching construction metaphor least able to represent the nuanced, multi-layered argument for *disruptive-inclusion* (and in fact, where any linear metaphor breaks down). Thus, in essence, the goal of this chapter is to demonstrate its limits. The fundamental aim of this project is to offer an analysis of Hull's work on CAL and via exploration of a *disruptive-inclusive* lens, move beyond his existing work to suggest implications for improved, future CAL understanding and practice. The challenge associated with this, however, as intimated in the introduction, is that such a simple, consecutive extrapolation of theoretical analysis and subsequent application is entirely incongruent with the content of Hull's arguments in *What Prevents...?* and the means of their presentation. In short, it would be deeply hypocritical to present a project separated into two, discrete halves addressing theory and consequent practice. This is not to say that these two, key components are unnecessary - rather an acknowledgement that similarly to the importance of combining and not integrating disruption and inclusion - any sense of reciprocal interaction between theory and practice is almost impossible to represent within the linear constraints of written English.

Chapter 6 underscores the critical importance of the interactive, reciprocal relationship between theory and practice to the structure of this project by exploring Hull's understanding of the relationship between *practice* and *theology* in three, different regards. 6.1. begins by analysing the developing relationship between the *practice* and *theological* in the academic discipline of UK, Practical Theology. It asks whether, by definition, Practical

Theology necessitate a procedural starting point of experience (or vice versa) and considers the implications of a *complexified* approach to Practical Theology. More specifically, 6.2. considers how the interaction between the *practice* and *theology* of CAL has influenced CAL scholarship in the years since *What Prevents...?* Finally, 6.3. explores several areas in which particular, ongoing theoretical approaches to CAL impact current UK practice.

6.1. Between practical and theology

The primary perspective of this project now pivots from considering *disruptive-inclusive* within its original, 1980s context to analysis of its position and influence against a twenty-first century backdrop. As has already been repeatedly demonstrated, the multidisciplinary contents of *What Prevents...?* make it difficult to locate within a single scholarly field. Therefore, understanding where its views correspond and contrast with the current state of twenty-first century scholarship is also a multi-layered task; perfectly illustrated by Hull's designation of *What Prevents...?* as an "essay on Practical Theology".⁵²³ On one hand, its use clarifies Hull's aim that the book would influence learners' lived experience, not just present a collection of thought experiments.⁵²⁴ Although *What Prevents...?* does not directly elaborate on Hull's precise understanding of the Practical Theology task, the year before its publication, he described its foundational conception as "Theology seeking to be related to the problems and possibilities of human life both inside and outside the community of faith".⁵²⁵

⁵²³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, xi.

⁵²⁴ This sense of Hull's focus on embodied, pedagogical engagement is echoed in Siebren Miedema's 2009 edited volume in tribute to Hull, *Religious Education as Encounter*. See Miedema, *Religious education as encounter: a tribute to John M. Hull* (vol. 14; Münster: Waxmann, 2009).

⁵²⁵ Hull, *Studies in Religion and Education*, 208.

On the other hand, a more incisive assessment of Hull's understanding of Practical Theology requires examination of some of his later work, from which two clear themes arise. Firstly, thirty years on from *What Prevents...?*, Hull still considered Practical Theology to play a key role in addressing some of the problems relating to CAL he earlier identified. Secondly, his called-for changes extended beyond influencing only the theoretical, theological *understanding* of CAL to the transformation of pedagogical practice. This theme is particularly pertinent in Hull's final publication, *Towards the Prophetic Church*, in which he repeatedly highlights the dual difficulty and importance of bridging the gap between underpinning theory and lived experience in a range of theological disciplines (including CAL). "Understanding is only a necessary not a sufficient means to change," he claims, because "without extending theology into action, the study of theology remains dislocated or ineffective".⁵²⁶ In particular, Hull draws attention to Gerben Heitink's definition of Practical Theology, echoing his suggestion that "the subject implies both the theory and practice of theology, that is, it [Practical Theology] is a theory of Christian action".⁵²⁷

On the other hand when considering Hull's 1980s conception of Practical Theology, the ever-disputed and evolving definition of the term means that today as much as then, "Saying that all theology can be ... practical is one thing; working through what this actually means is another thing entirely".⁵²⁸ To this end, it is important to take into account that, "For most of the twentieth century in the UK ... practical theology was identified with training for ordained ministry".⁵²⁹ However, in reflecting back on her life in British Practical Theology,

⁵²⁶ Hull, *Towards the Prophetic Church: A Study of Christian Mission*, 241.

⁵²⁷ Hull, *Towards the Prophetic Church: A Study of Christian Mission*, 240.

⁵²⁸ Ward, *Introducing practical theology: mission, ministry, and the life of the church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 10.

⁵²⁹ Graham, "On becoming a practical theologian: Past, present and future tenses," 73, no. 4 (2017), 2.

Elaine Graham explained in 2017 how this changed when “new perspectives” emerged in the early 1980s, with articles such as Anthony Dyson’s 1983 article *Pastoral Theology: Towards a new Discipline* “beginning to construct a fresh agenda”.⁵³⁰

In summary, Graham’s reflections highlight the mid 1980s as a key stage in which UK Practical Theology was beginning to, “Make the transition beyond the therapeutic and clerical paradigms, bringing a more robust theoretical framework to bear and undertaking a more searching investigation into the conditions under which the ‘action-guiding world views’ of Christian communities were actually engendered”.⁵³¹ Relating this pattern back to *What Prevents...?*, “a searching investigation into ... the ‘action-guiding world views’” of CAL would make an appropriate subtitle for *What Prevents...?* As a result, it also seems reasonable to locate it (although potentially anachronistic to suggest that Hull might have articulated the same) within this mid 1980s re-invention of Practical Theology proposing fresh modes and levels of connection between theologically-informed thought and action with implications by no means limited to those training for ministry.

Clearly, this move away from what some refers to as “the clerical paradigm”⁵³² was a watershed moment in UK Practical Theology. However, it was not the end of its development as an academic discipline. Despite not being able to offer more than a cursory overview here, it is undeniable that the overall trajectory of UK Practical Theology since the 1980s has been one of continual growth and diversification.⁵³³ In turn, this has resulted in much discussion as to whether Practical Theology ultimately describes a process by which

⁵³⁰ Graham, "On becoming a practical theologian: Past, present and future tenses", 2.

⁵³¹ Graham, "On becoming a practical theologian: Past, present and future tenses", 2.

⁵³² Ward, *Introducing practical theology: mission, ministry, and the life of the church*, 2.

⁵³³ For one approach to this see Bennett, "Invitation to research in practical theology," (London: Routledge, 2018), 2.

everyday experiences of Christian communities inform doctrinal and biblical thinking, the inverse, or neither because as a central connection point for all theological thought, “being in the middle means that there is no defined starting point”.⁵³⁴ In light of these disagreements, Pete Ward’s 2017 “broad understanding” of twenty-first century Practical Theology seeks to encapsulate the above options under the banner of “ways of thinking that take both practice and theology seriously”.⁵³⁵ While some may suggest this is too general to be instructive, it highlights the fact that the majority of twenty-first century approaches to Practical Theology agree that its fundamental function transcends the promotion of any single discipline or area of theological concern above others. Instead, the aim is to promote understanding of and methodological insight into how various theological disciplines and ways of thought can most effectively inter-inform.

Swinton and Mowat’s 2006 definition of Practical Theology helps to further specify this categorisation of Hull’s approach to Practical Theology as prioritising dialogue between multiple disciplines. They describe Practical Theology as, “Located within the uneasy but critical tension between the script of revelation given to us in Christ and formulated historically within scripture, doctrine and tradition, and the continuing innovative performance of the gospel as it is embodied and enacted in the life and practices of the Church as they interact with the life and practices of the world”.⁵³⁶ Not unlike Ward, Swinton and Mowat locate the function of Practical Theology at the intersection of scripture, doctrine, tradition and performance of the gospel. However, drawing on Edward Farley’s 1983 claims, they extend their description as embodying an “uneasy but critical tension”.

⁵³⁴ Ward, *Introducing practical theology: mission, ministry, and the life of the church*, 10.

⁵³⁵ Ward, *Introducing practical theology: mission, ministry, and the life of the church*, 5.

⁵³⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical theology and qualitative research* (London: SCM Press, 2016), 5.

“The focus of Practical Theology ... is that it seeks critically to complexify and explore situations. Complexification is a process that at first glance seems normal and uncomplicated, but through a process of critical reflection at various levels, is in fact revealed to be complex and polyvalent”.⁵³⁷

Therefore, for Swinton and Mowat, complexification offers an approach to Practical Theology which not only consciously allows various disciplines and ideas to inter-inform, but also insists that the best analysis and outcomes are achieved by purposefully drawing seemingly paradoxical or conflicting statements and approaches together in reciprocal relationship. Eric Stoddart offers a helpful metaphor as to how this works, “Practical Theologians are congenitally more comfortable with the notion of two-way rather than one-way streets. Practical Theologians will ... hold that people’s practice is informed, shaped, perhaps, by doctrine – or even dictated by it. But ... Practical Theologians [also] want to keep asserting that doctrine is informed, shaped and even dictated by practice”.⁵³⁸

Thus, to extend the traffic metaphor a step further, a complexified approach is not effectively visualised by a single stretch of motorway but rather a complex travel network with multiple intersections and constant multi-way traffic (to give a UK example, spaghetti junction as opposed to the A1), highlighting the inherent polyvalence and multi-layered nature of the Practical Theology task and its contributory factors. At its core is the belief that as diverse elements of any given situation are engaged and their complexities embraced,

⁵³⁷ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical theology and qualitative research*, 13.

⁵³⁸ Stoddart, *Advancing practical theology: critical discipleship for disturbing times* (London, England: SCM Press, 2014), xii.

better quality theological dialogue ultimately leads to more effective and well-informed theory and actions and importantly *vice versa*.⁵³⁹

Returning to Graham's article on the development of Practical Theology in the UK, she too highlights the role of simultaneous reflexivity and interdisciplinarity as primary, defining constituents of the contemporary academic discipline. She summarises, "It is not about reducing practical theology to autobiography but seeing how our own standpoints and concerns informed our intellectual and academic interests, and *vice versa*".⁵⁴⁰

Understanding the reciprocal relationship between theological theory and embodied, theological CAL practice through this complexified lens demonstrates why many Practical Theologians find even the name of their discipline a tautology, arguing, "Christian practice itself is inherently and profoundly theological. If theology can be practical, then practice is also theological".⁵⁴¹

In summary, against the backdrop of contemporary Practical Theology in the UK, it is clear that *What Prevents...?* can be considered an example of thoroughly complexified Practical Theology in both approach and substance. Firstly, Hull's most basic approach epitomises complexification in that his arguments are not presented as untested, abstract theory but evolving products of previous research, professional practice *and* personal experiences.

Arguments which Hull then later re-subjects to the scrutiny of fresh research interests,

⁵³⁹ Although she does not call it *complexification*, Karen Kilby takes a similar approach in *Seeking Clarity* Kilby, "Seeking Clarity," in *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology* (eds. Higton and Fodor; London: Routledge, 2015). She claims, "Clarity and mystery need not be opposed" because "Whatever clarity means in theology, it cannot be the elimination of all elements of mystery and paradox", 66-67. Interestingly, and again relating to the earlier observation from John 10 that friend and foe in both located in *known* and *unknown* spaces, Kilby also argues that it is a false dichotomy to see the *known* as the only source of refuge, summarised in her rhetorical question: "is not the appeal to mystery a very easy refuge"?, 65.

⁵⁴⁰ Graham, "On becoming a practical theologian: Past, present and future tenses", 5.

⁵⁴¹ Ward, *Introducing practical theology: mission, ministry, and the life of the church*, 10.

practice and experiences leading to some changes in his position by its US re-release in 1991. Secondly, a *disruptive-inclusive* lens illuminates the complexified nature of the core of Hull's pedagogy. In the first instance, this is achieved by drawing attention to his lingering focus on the "uneasy but critical tensions" which he demonstrates are essential to effective CAL but also via its claims that the ultimate pedagogical goal is to inhabit such tensions well, rather than progressing through or beyond them to some form of *haven*.

6.2. Between *What Prevents...?* and *Towards the Prophetic Church*

Having characterised a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL in terms of the trends within twenty-first century Practical Theology, one final area of contextualisation is required to ensure the most effective exploration of its contemporary practical implications possible. Earlier, it was highlighted how Hull's final publication in 2014 re-asserted similar frustrations with patterns in UK CAL to those he noted thirty years previously. In fact, the last section of *Towards the Prophetic Church* is dedicated to outlining the differences it would make in both the Church and the wider world were his observations translated into improved pedagogical practice. Thus, the final contextual task undertaken here is to trace the meta-themes and trajectory of UK CAL scholarship from the late twentieth through to the early twenty-first century. This will give a broader sense of the developments that have occurred and whether and how such developments address the major problems facing CAL highlighted during his lifetime, as well as the current state of the debate. Given the limited space and function of this discussion, and in order to avoid confusion by trespassing into other areas of Hull's work, the following assessment is focused around several primary loci of the UK scholarly debate concerning CAL from the 1990s until the early twenty-first century.

The tone for the 1990s discussion of CAL methodology and practice was set by the publication of *Christian Perspectives for Education: A Reader in the Theology of Education* (1990) edited by Leslie Francis and Adrian Thatcher. Interestingly for our purposes, the first article (of thirty-four) in the collection is a re-print of Hull's 1984 essay, *What is Theology of Education?* whose main focus is a "list of problems"⁵⁴² yet to be addressed in CAL, many of which are more fully developed in *What Prevents...?* The subsequent contribution is also a re-print of Francis' commentary on the Hull-Hirst dialogue from the 1970s that concludes, "John Hull's critique of Hirst's position has gone a long way towards the rehabilitation of the legitimacy of the theology of education".⁵⁴³ However, Francis also highlights the need for much further work to be done. From here, the direction of the compendium moves away from explicitly addressing what exactly is Christian about Christian education towards discussions focused on classroom teaching, schools and pluralism. On his website, Thatcher gives an insight into his assessment of the creation, publication and response to the volume:

In the 1980s I was one of a few theologians who called for, and tried to contribute to, a 'theology of education'. The subject of education was then divided into the sociology, psychology, philosophy and history of education. We surmised (wrongly as it turned out) that Church Colleges, all of whom had a stake in education and in 'Church-relatedness', would welcome this new addition to Education Studies.⁵⁴⁴

Despite Thatcher's perception of the book's poor reception by some theological educational institutions, *Christian Perspectives for Education* became the first of four similar volumes published in the 1990s, with Thatcher's editorship taken over by Astley, director of The *North of England Institute for Christian Education (NEICE)* which began in 1981.⁵⁴⁵ Just before the Institute's closure in 2013, David Goodbourn, President emeritus of the

⁵⁴² Francis and Thatcher, *Christian perspectives for education: a reader in the theology of education* (Leominster: Fowler Wright, 1990), 14.

⁵⁴³ Francis, "The Logic of Education, Theology, and the Church School," 9, no. 2 (1983), 155.

⁵⁴⁴ "Recent Books", <http://www.adrianthatcher.org/books.php?id=4>

⁵⁴⁵ <https://neice.webspace.durham.ac.uk/>

ecumenical partnership for theological education in Manchester, singled out NEICE for its significant contribution to the debate. He notes, “outside the North of England Institute of Christian Education, little research is being done in the UK [although] (things are very different in North America)” to reverse the “decay of the adult Christian education movement”.⁵⁴⁶ NEICE’s stated aim was “To create links, both at the theoretical and the practical level, between the Christian education activities of the churches and academic research in education, theology and religious studies within the academy”.⁵⁴⁷ During its operation, it oversaw the publication of a wide selection of work addressing issues at the intersection of Theology and learning,⁵⁴⁸ with Astley co-editing the aforementioned, three subsequent volumes during the 1990s.

The first of those volumes, *The Contours of Christian Education* (1992) takes a largely contextualised approach to the debate, mainly relating how the relationship between theology and learning impacts specific groups such as teenagers and relates to issues such as racism and political unity.⁵⁴⁹ However, there remain two British-authored contributions focusing on the relationship between theology and educational theory. In his contribution to the collection, Astley unpacks the differences between “process-centred” and “content-centred” approaches to the theological nature of learning akin to the discussion outlined in this project’s introduction.⁵⁵⁰ David Heywood also discusses the “theoretical basis for Christian education” which he later described as “what was then an ongoing discussion in

⁵⁴⁶ Goodbourn, "Richness and Ruefulness: Looking Back Over a Life in Adult Theological Education," 9, no. 1 (2012), 81.

⁵⁴⁷ <https://neice.webspace.durham.ac.uk/history/>

⁵⁴⁸ NEICE’s archived website lists at least 30 books, <https://neice.webspace.durham.ac.uk/pubs/>

⁵⁴⁹ Astley and Day, *The contours of Christian Education* (Great Wakering, Essex: McCrimmons, 1992), See chapters 23, 19 and 20 respectively.

⁵⁵⁰ Astley, "Tradition and Experience: Conservative and Liberal Models for Christian Education," in *The Contours of Christian Education* (eds. Astley and Day; Great Wakering, Essex: McCrimmons, 1992), 43.

the field of Christian education in the United States about the proper basis for the discipline".⁵⁵¹ In particular, his primary claim aligns with Hull's approach in the ultimate argument that "every field of study is conceptually linked to each of the others"⁵⁵² and that no single discipline ought to dominate the discussion.

The following volume, *Christian Perspectives on Christian Education: a reader on the aims, principles and philosophy of Christian education* (1994) returns more squarely to the discussion of how theology and educational theory engage but does so by re-printing articles from the 1970s and '80s. For example, Evelina Orteza Miranda's 1986 article⁵⁵³ discusses the challenges associated with the expression 'Christian education' (a discussion also unpacked in the introduction to this thesis), and the fundamental viability of a *Theology of Education* is raised once again via Hirst and Hull's respective 1971 and 1976 articles. However, while the book dedicates an entire section to the relationship between "Christian education and education about Christianity", only one of the articles under this heading actually addresses distinctively *Christian* education rather than the wider issues of teaching and learning religion in a pluralist society.

Finally, the content of the 1996 volume (*Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: a reader on theology and Christian education*) arguably overlaps most with the central interests of this thesis. However, in terms of its contribution to the trajectory of the debate and its practical implications for CAL in the UK, its significance is more challenging to assess. This is because the authorship of the volume is heavily weighted towards US scholars. None

⁵⁵¹ "Theology or Social Science", <http://www.davidheywood.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Theology-or-Social-Science.pdf>, 1.

⁵⁵² Heywood, "Theology or Social Science? The Theoretical Basis for Christian Education," in *The Contours of Christian Education* (eds. Astley and Day; Great Wakering, Essex: McCrimmons, 1992), 110.

⁵⁵³ Miranda, "Some Problems with the Expression 'Christian Education'".

of the authors of chapters addressing the relationship between theology and Christian education theory or its impact in areas pertinent to this discussion is UK-based or directly addresses UK-specific issues.⁵⁵⁴

After the publication of this third volume, Astley's attentions turned towards *Ordinary Theology*,⁵⁵⁵ and the journal known since 1987 as the *British Journal of Theological Education* (BJTE), with a reputation as the locus of much of the significant academic discussion concerning CAL in the UK, changed its name to the *Journal of Adult Theological Education (JATE)*.⁵⁵⁶ Where *Christian Perspectives for Education* set the tone of the 1990s conversation, a sense of the following decade's conversations can be gleaned from the editorial to the penultimate 2003 issue of the BJTE. Its then editor Zoë Bennett-Moore begins, "What must the churches in Britain engage with if theological education in the twenty first century is to 'cut reality at its joints'?"⁵⁵⁷ The slightly obscure platonic reference aside, Bennett-Moore sets out a clear determination to get to the heart of what "really matters when it comes to learning, teaching, articulating and living our faith in our understanding of God".⁵⁵⁸ However, in the same issue in which Alison Le Cornu reflects that "Theological education in Britain ... faces a particularly demanding set of challenges as the world moves into the twenty-first

⁵⁵⁴ For example, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza's article in particular reflects on US and German contributions such as those from Edward Farley, Jack Seymour and James Michael Lee. *Thinking theologically about theological education* Schüssler Fiorenza, "Thinking theologically about theological education," in *Theological perspectives on christian formation: a reader on theology and Christian education* (eds. Astley, et al.; Leominster: Gracewing, Eerdmans, 1996).

⁵⁵⁵ Astley defines ordinary theology as "the theological beliefs and processes of believing that find expression in the God-talk of those believers who have received no scholarly theological education" Astley, *Ordinary theology: looking, listening, and learning in theology* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Pub., 2002), 1. More recently, the implications of ordinary theology have been further discussed. See Astley and Francis, *Exploring ordinary theology: everyday Christian believing and the church* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Pub., 2013).

⁵⁵⁶ JATE became Practical Theology in 2016.

⁵⁵⁷ Bennett-Moore, "Editorial," 14, no. 1 (2003), 5.

⁵⁵⁸ "Editorial", 5. This particular issue is set against the backdrop of consultations held by the journal's partner organisation, the Association for Centres of Adult Theological Education (ACATE) and the Church of England's *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* report.

century”,⁵⁵⁹ the BJTE announced the removal of the word British from its name, marking a move “towards a more international flavour”.⁵⁶⁰ This is not to suggest however, that JATE was not true to its promise of “retaining a focus of interest in British theological education”⁵⁶¹ with Le Cornu among a small but significant group of voices repeatedly raising issues related to UK CAL throughout the decade. The first example of which is Jarvis, on whose work Le Cornu’s research frequently draws.

Jarvis’ specific interest in the theological nature of CAL is first, fully explored in his 1993 essay *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon*,⁵⁶² in which he draws two key conclusions that align well with the themes of *disruptive-inclusion*. Firstly, and more fundamentally, Jarvis concludes that, in regards to adult learning, “The process might be regarded as religious in certain situations, irrespective of whether the content is religious or not”.⁵⁶³ Unlike many other scholars, he takes care to differentiate Christian pedagogy from curriculum content resulting in a nuanced and careful discussion. Secondly, reflecting on the work of Erich Fromm,⁵⁶⁴ Jarvis notes, “There is a fear of freedom ... in many people and so they welcome the answers that are provided and sometimes they cling to them”.⁵⁶⁵ This resonates strongly with Hull’s determination that one of the major problems in CAL is the desire for comfort over challenge and associated disorientation.

⁵⁵⁹ Le Cornu, "The Shape of Things to Come: Theological Education in the Twenty-First Century," 14, no. 1 (2003).

⁵⁶⁰ Bennett-Moore, "Editorial", 6.

⁵⁶¹ Bennett-Moore, "Editorial", 6.

⁵⁶² Jarvis, *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon*.

⁵⁶³ Jarvis, *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon*, 14.

⁵⁶⁴ Fromm, *Man for himself: an inquiry into the psychology of ethics* (New York, N.Y.: Fawcett Premier, 1949) and Fromm, *The fear of freedom* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1984).

⁵⁶⁵ Jarvis, *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon*, 13-14.

Just before the aforementioned transition of BJTE to JATE in 2003, Jarvis extended the above discussion, calling on the UK scholarly community of adult Christian Education to “develop a broad, theoretical framework within which to place our discussion”.⁵⁶⁶ He opens his analysis by using *What Prevents...?* as an example of how quickly the social backdrop to CAL changes and therefore, how pressing it is that CAL keeps re-inventing itself to constantly create “approaches that are relevant to contemporary society”.⁵⁶⁷ Largely, Jarvis’ work draws on many of the same sources as Hull (Berger, Freire and Palmer among them) but overall, he suggests that the way forward for CAL lies in finding a far more central role for questioning. Quoting Freire and Antonio Faundez from 1989, Jarvis argues that this is because “at [its] root, human existence involves surprise, questioning and risk”.⁵⁶⁸ Building on this theme in JATE in 2004 he explains, “Churches need to recognize that they do not always have a pedagogy of the answer, but they do have a very relevant pedagogy of the question ... part of everybody’s quest for the truth”.⁵⁶⁹ In other words, he argues that rushing beyond or attempting to circumvent the disruption inherent in CAL is not only a barrier to effective learning but deeply counterintuitive to human nature.

This focus on the “process of questioning as the beginning of all learning”⁵⁷⁰ reveals a connection to another recurring theme of the first decades of twenty-first century CAL

⁵⁶⁶ Jarvis, "Expanding the Horizons of Research in Adult Christian Education," 13, no. 1 (2002), 18.

⁵⁶⁷ Jarvis, "Expanding the Horizons of Research in Adult Christian Education", 19. The only other direct reference to *What Prevents...?* as the basis for further research appears in John Elias’ 2006 article which begins, “if theological education of the laity means anything, it entails a serious study of all sides of an issue” Elias, "Models of Theological Education for the Laity," 3, no. 2 (2006), 191, and refers specifically to Hull’s “perceptive analysis” in this regard. Elias, "Models of Theological Education for the Laity", 180. However, it must be acknowledged that Elias is mentioned in a thank you note by Hull in *What Prevents...?* as having “encouraged me through many conversations and ... made helpful comments upon a very early draft” Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, xii.

⁵⁶⁸ Freire and Faundez, *Learning to question: a pedagogy of liberation* (New York, N.Y.: Continuum, 1989), 40.

⁵⁶⁹ Jarvis, "The Church and the Learning Society," 14, no. 2 (2004), 150.

⁵⁷⁰ Jarvis, *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon*, 8.

scholarship in the UK: Jack Mezirow's theory of transformative learning. "Although Mezirow himself does not delve deeply into the spiritual dimensions of his approach" and was based in the USA,⁵⁷¹ his work has been a popular theoretical launchpad for British scholars looking to re-consider CAL methodology in the early twenty-first century. One of Mezirow's many explanations of his theory reads,

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-set) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.⁵⁷²

When expressed this way, defining transformative learning in terms of self-understanding and connectedness within wider reality, rather than knowledge transfer and re-call, has much in common with Hull's theological pedagogy of CAL and resonates strongly with a *disruptive-inclusive* reading of *What Prevents...?* Barbara Fleischer and Joyce Mercer's considerations of the role of Mezirow's work on adult theological education nuance these similarities further. Firstly, Fleischer highlights the role of "the initial catalyst for examining an unquestioned assumption aris[ing] from what he [Mezirow] calls a "disorienting dilemma" that current meaning perspectives simply cannot address".⁵⁷³ Just as in *disruptive-inclusion*, Mezirow asserts that the key, learning catalyst occurs when normal life patterns create opportunities to probe areas hitherto not considered necessary of analysis. However, Fleischer's exploration of the potential impact of this on the practical experience of learning goes little further than highlighting the importance of "sustained critical reflection".⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ Fleischer, "Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning and Lonergan's Method in Theology: Resources for Adult Theological Education," 3, no. 2 (2006), 161.

⁵⁷² Mezirow and Jossey, *Learning as transformation: critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 7-8.

⁵⁷³ Fleischer, "Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning and Lonergan's Method in Theology: Resources for Adult Theological Education", 151.

⁵⁷⁴ Fleischer, "Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning and Lonergan's Method in Theology: Resources for Adult Theological Education", 160.

In the same JATE issue, Mercer extends this question to ask whether such critical thinking is appropriate and realistic for all Christian adult learners, not just an interested and motivated minority (an issue addressed in chapter 8). Specifically, she details the kinds of learning experiences that encourage the critical reflection necessary for transformative learning to occur, for example, “watching a controversial film or reading a text presenting new or different understandings, and followed by critical discussion”.⁵⁷⁵ While *disruptive-inclusion* does not claim that the nature of learning content is unimportant to CAL, Mercer’s comments fail to differentiate between learning opportunities created by contentious curriculum material and paradigm-shifting approaches to learning delivery. As Curtis Young recognises in his reflections on the usefulness of Mezirow’s work in ministry training, a distinctive feature of transformative learning is that it can be “recognized as holy work, not only when the content is deemed sacred but also when it is not”.⁵⁷⁶ Mercer’s comment above creates the impression that the *sacredness* (to echo Young’s words) of any given learning opportunity lies in the ability of learning material to cause learning disruption rather than the potential re-framing of existing views or information made possible by educator and learner posture. While Mercer’s article is interesting and instructive, it is a good example of how easy it is to retreat into thinking that the only (or perhaps, principal) factor impacting pedagogical progress is *what* is taught and learned rather than *how* teaching and learning happens.

⁵⁷⁵ Mercer, "Transformational Adult Learning in Congregations," 3, no. 2 (2006), 171.

⁵⁷⁶ Young, "Transformational Learning in Ministry," 10, no. 2 (2013), 334.

The final and most pertinent, “relatively young suite of literature”⁵⁷⁷ on CAL methodology to highlight is Threshold Concept Framework (TCF).⁵⁷⁸ At its core, TCF is interested in the role of “the middle movement of disturbing disorientation” in learning and inspired an entire, guest-edited issue of JATE in 2016.⁵⁷⁹ It began in 2004, when Meyer and Land undertook research into the nature of teaching and learning environments in Undergraduate courses.⁵⁸⁰ A significant part of the project’s findings was the role played by what we discussed earlier as *intrusive marker events* but Meyer and Land refer to as TCF. In the most basic sense, their research centres on describing the learning process at points where “seeing things in a new way is the only way to make progress”.⁵⁸¹ They present TCF as, “Akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something ... as a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of the subject matter, subject landscape, or event world view”.⁵⁸²

Meyer and Land’s work extends further than the examples so far seen, in that TCF is not limited to the identification and naming of the importance of disruptive modes or seasons of learning. Rather, it also identifies certain characteristics as the means by which particular moments prove to be such fertile and contributory moments in the overall pedagogical

⁵⁷⁷ Mudge, “Crossing frontiers without a map’—the role of threshold concepts and problematic knowledge in religious education and spirituality,” 19, no. 2 (2014), 53.

⁵⁷⁸ Mudge, “Crossing frontiers without a map’—the role of threshold concepts and problematic knowledge in religious education and spirituality”, 51.

⁵⁷⁹ Mudge and Meyer, 13, no. 2 (2016).

⁵⁸⁰ Meyer and Land “Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: linkages to ways of thinking and practising within the disciplines,” in *Improving student learning theory and practice - 10 years on: proceedings of the 2002 10th International Symposium Improving Student Learning* (eds. Rust and Learning; Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff & Learning Development, 2004), 1.

⁵⁸¹ Meyer and Land *Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: linkages to ways of thinking and practising within the disciplines*, 1.

⁵⁸² Meyer and Land *Overcoming barriers to student understanding: threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2012), xv.

process. In particular, they identify threshold concepts as pedagogically effective because they are, “Transformative, troublesome, irreversible, integrated, bounded, discursive, reconstructive, and liminal”.⁵⁸³ Further, TCF is applicable to all types of learning and there is a growing body of work unpacking its implications in a broad range of disciplines.⁵⁸⁴

Similar to Mezirow’s transformative learning, although not conceived as an intrinsically theological pedagogy, TCF has drawn attention from those seeking to apply its framework to the “in-between seasonal movements”⁵⁸⁵ of Christian adult learning in a variety of forms and settings and there are undeniable resonances with Hull’s work on the topic. For example, in the special JATE edition, Quentin Chandler considers the implications of TCF to those training for ordination, even drawing on Practical Theology terminology in referring to a “complexifying threshold concept”. This, he explains, refers to the pattern he witnesses when students find that “Engagement with biblical and other texts, far from simplifying the realities on which they were reflecting, serve to illuminate them in all their complexity”. He continues that the process involves the abandoning of “Quick or easy ways of reaching a false synthesis between text and experiences and recognition of the complex wrestling that is often involved in theological reflection”.⁵⁸⁶

However, theological applications of TCF are not only useful in facilitating better descriptions of CAL, but as briefly alluded to in 2.3.2, many scholars draw strong parallels between the various elements of the biblical story and three stage frameworks with a focus on the

⁵⁸³ Mudge, “Crossing frontiers without a map’—the role of threshold concepts and problematic knowledge in religious education and spirituality”, 53.

⁵⁸⁴ “Areas as diverse as dance, literature, economics, medicine, religious education and spirituality” Mudge and Meyer, 86.

⁵⁸⁵ Mudge, “Crossing frontiers without a map’—the role of threshold concepts and problematic knowledge in religious education and spirituality”.

⁵⁸⁶ Chandler, “Cognition or Spiritual Disposition? Threshold Concepts in Theological Reflection,” 13, no. 2 (2016), 96-97. The pedagogical implications of the language of wrestling is revisited in chapter 7.

importance of a middle, *threshold* phase. Peter Mudge notes a strong correlation between the pedagogical implications of TCF and Brüggenmann's three-fold vision of the Psalms, claiming that his "Taxonomy can promote a deeper understanding of this middle zone, and how it can provide some clues to ... 'where to next'". He summarises that in Brüggenmann's three-fold movement of "A., being securely oriented. B., being painfully disoriented, C., being surprisingly reoriented", the middle phase is "An invitation to the arts and poetry which offer us a lens to see the world differently, with wonder and creativity and ... a time when one is asked to confront the *dominant* powers consciousness of existence and replace these with an *alternative* consciousness".⁵⁸⁷ While the final chapters of this project will further unpack the kinds of methods and resources that make this possible, methodologically speaking, Mudge demonstrates how Brüggenmann's reading of the Psalms and TCF collaborate in a complexified approach to CAL.

Following this pattern, Rachele Gilmour's 2016 JATE article considers how the implications of TCF for CAL are illuminated when related to the biblical Exodus narrative. Firstly, she argues, "The Exodus functions as a threshold concept with the teaching of the canon of the Hebrew Bible".⁵⁸⁸ However, she also recognises that "The Exodus itself is a threshold image".⁵⁸⁹ Therefore, her central argument (the rationale for which is considered more closely in the following chapter) is that the Exodus can be used to "help students through their own journey".⁵⁹⁰ However, this *help* is not simply because it is found in the canon of

⁵⁸⁷ Mudge, "'Crossing frontiers without a map'—the role of threshold concepts and problematic knowledge in religious education and spirituality", 55. The pedagogical role of the arts will be re-visited in 7.4.1. and chapter 8.

⁵⁸⁸ Gilmour, "The Exodus in the Bible's Teaching and Our Teaching of the Bible: Helping to Reconcile Faith and Critical Study of the Bible Through Threshold Concept Theory", 13, no. 2 (2016), 119.

⁵⁸⁹ Gilmour, "The Exodus in the Bible's Teaching and Our Teaching of the Bible: Helping to Reconcile Faith and Critical Study of the Bible Through Threshold Concept Theory", 119.

⁵⁹⁰ Gilmour, "The Exodus in the Bible's Teaching and Our Teaching of the Bible: Helping to Reconcile Faith and Critical Study of the Bible Through Threshold Concept Theory", 125.

Christian Scripture but more specifically because the Exodus epitomises how via both the content of its story *and* the way it is presented to the reader, the pedagogical function of the biblical narrative is “transformative, integrative, yet troublesome”.⁵⁹¹

6.3. The ongoing challenges of learning in and from in-between spaces

As stated earlier, this project makes no claim to represent the entire discussion concerning CAL in the UK during the last decade of the twentieth and first decades of the twenty-first century. However, the path traced highlights many of the principal patterns and themes that, in turn, help to build a picture of the influence of *What Prevents...?* on the development of UK CAL scholarship during that time. The first and most fundamental observation to make from the examples given to this point is that since 1985, an increasing number of authors have echoed Hull’s determination that there remains much work to do in CAL, especially in relation to attempting, or at least drawing attention to the need for a more holistic (or perhaps even *complexified*) approach. For example, looking back on his career in adult theological education, Goodbourn noted in 2012, “The relationship between life and context on the one hand and the theological disciplines on the other was not working.” He continued that, as a result, he had long considered this intersection to be “The Holy Grail of discussions in theological education”.⁵⁹²

However, connections between the current debate and Hull’s pedagogical views have only been rarely drawn since the 1990s (most already mentioned). Yet simultaneously, the conversations which Hull both drove and in which he participated during the 1970s and 1980s (and their subsequent critical analysis) continue to have an unusually long half-life in

⁵⁹¹ Gilmour, "The Exodus in the Bible's Teaching and Our Teaching of the Bible: Helping to Reconcile Faith and Critical Study of the Bible Through Threshold Concept Theory", 125-126.

⁵⁹² Goodbourn, "Richness and Ruefulness: Looking Back Over a Life in Adult Theological Education", 87.

the field. For example, in the 2018 publication *Christian Faith, Formation and Education*, - several of its authors find it impossible to represent discussions concerning the Christian nature of learning and formation without basing their conclusions in the central concepts of Hull's work and his wider dialogue with Hirst.⁵⁹³ Overall, Hull's theological pedagogy of CAL has a far more tacit than conscious impact on the contemporary debate in the following regards:

Firstly, a significant element of Hull's lasting impact on CAL is his determination to address questions "on Christian theological grounds not only on educational grounds"⁵⁹⁴ or as Wilna Meijer puts it in Hull's Festschrift, the "educational cum theological line of thought that Hull developed".⁵⁹⁵ Although (as previously demonstrated) Hull was by no means the only scholar in the 1980s taking seriously the need to address issues relating to CAL in a thoroughly theological way, he was among a much smaller group of UK scholars doing so. As a result, theological engagement in learning has grown in popularity since 1985, with ISREV among the significant avenues creating opportunities for increasingly integrated debate. Equally, a positive focus on the disruptive elements of learning rather than a pedagogical approach seeking to "lay [] down the weapons of thoughts at the feet of the idol of comfort",⁵⁹⁶ has been variously developed in the UK since the mid 1980s, as specifically demonstrated in the examples of transformative learning and TCF in 6.2.

⁵⁹³ See Astley, "The Naming of Parts: Faith, Formation, Development and Education," in *Christian Faith, Formation and Education* (eds. Stuart-Buttle and Shortt; Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and Shortt, "Is Talk of 'Christian Education' meaningful?," in *Christian Faith, Formation and Education* (eds. Stuart-Buttle and Shortt; Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

⁵⁹⁴ Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 1.

⁵⁹⁵ Meijer, "The educational theology of John Hull," in *Education, religion and society: essays in honour of John M. Hull* (eds. Bates, et al.; London: Routledge, 2006), 86.

⁵⁹⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 121.

However, these points are countered by the reality that the geographical centre of the dialogue in relation to both CAL generally and specifically disruption in CAL remains in North America. In 2016, the International Evangelical Council for Theological Education's publication, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education* recognises only two geographical centres for the reform of theological education, North America and German-speaking Europe.⁵⁹⁷ Practically, this means that despite the overwhelming international influence of learner-centred theories (Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance among others), the primary narrative of twentieth century CAL in the UK was dominated by the challenges faced by teachers, not learners.⁵⁹⁸ This is demonstrated well in the structure of Chris Peck's 2003 JATE article *Milestones in Adult Theological Education*. Despite not completely disassociating the experiences of CAL educators and learners, Peck concludes that neither the 1970s model of adult theological educator as "experimenter", nor the 1980s "enabler"; nor the 1990s "technician" nor the 2000s "manager"⁵⁹⁹ "has succeed[ed] in equipping learners to discern what God is up to" in CAL.⁶⁰⁰

Peck ends his essay with an unanswered question as to how learners might be motivated to and equipped to participate in CAL and in doing so, his work is representative of a larger pattern. Particularly visible within the overarching patterns of 1990s scholarship is a polarisation between a theological analysis of CAL and an emphasis on applying existing method and theory to the "on the ground" situation of a particular group, denomination or

⁵⁹⁷ Ott, "Understanding and developing theological education," (*International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE)*; Langham Creative Projects, 2016).

⁵⁹⁸ As partially developed in 2.1.2., I concur with Biesta's assessment that the momentum of educational description and practice has swung towards *learner-centred* approaches in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries but disagree that this has been detrimental to *teacher-centred* educational understanding and research. Biesta, "Freeing Teaching from Learning: Opening Up Existential Possibilities in Educational Relationships".

⁵⁹⁹ Peck, "Milestones in Adult Theological Education," 14, no. 1 (2003), 7-10.

⁶⁰⁰ Peck, "Milestones in Adult Theological Education", 12.

scenario. Overall, this concentration on either philosophical underpinning *or* practical outworking of CAL creates a weakness, or perhaps even a void, in the centre of the field. Peck's article is an example of the many methodological or theological addresses of CAL that conclude with unanswered questions as to the implications for practice. However, if and when those questions are taken up by those applying particular theories, often the core theoretical ideas are quickly left behind in favour of making relevant suggestions for moving forward. In short, much of the good CAL theory proffered (Hull's included) has either not been seriously transposed into contextual practice and inversely, discussions of contextual practice have left good theory behind too quickly.

In the years since *What Prevents...?*, this binary has resulted in an increasing amount of commentary on, and reaction to, emerging patterns in CAL theory and practice, but *complexified* approaches to the topic are still lacking in response to some of the fundamental challenges Hull identified in UK CAL. On the occasion of Jarvis' death, among the many achievements Le Cornu could have highlighted as his lasting legacy in the field, she notes the pinnacle of his influence thus: "I continue to see that theology, spirituality and critical education have great interconnections that are still really useful".⁶⁰¹ Just as Le Cornu's work (particularly on distance learning) clearly takes its cues from Jarvis' holistic approach to CAL,⁶⁰² for Hull's views on the same to effectively the shape the debate moving forward will require contemporary scholars' willingness and ability to develop and flex their *complexified* muscles.

⁶⁰¹ Le Cornu, "Obituary," 12, no. 1 (2019), 5.

⁶⁰² See particularly Le Cornu, "Is Adult Theological Education through Distance Learning Self-defeating? An Exploration of the Relationships between Truth, Authority and Self-development," 11, no. 2 (2001) and Le Cornu, "The Shape of Things to Come: Theological Education in the Twenty-First Century".

The disconnect between the few examples of complexified scholarship on CAL in the UK and practice is best demonstrated in the 2018 publication, *Christian Faith, Formation and Education* and in particular, Cooling's article on *Formation and Christian Education in England*.⁶⁰³ While much of Cooling's research primarily pertains to learning in schools, the conclusions he and his team draws from a 2016 research project with teachers working in Christian ethos schools are deeply pertinent to this discussion.⁶⁰⁴ Upon interviewing a range of teachers about their perceptions of the Christian nature of their jobs teaching various curriculum subjects, the majority expressed the opinion that "Christian formation requires *telling* Christian truths".⁶⁰⁵ I.e., they found simply taking a particular posture or approach to teaching and learning was insufficient in defining it as Christian. Cooling's team found the respondents' opinions on this matter so strong that they summarise how regardless of any given teacher's personal faith position, "Anything less than [telling Christian truths] is perceived as disloyal as it lacks confidence in the assured truths that come from God's word".⁶⁰⁶

Unpicking this pattern further, Cooling concludes that this reveals how for many, education still means the "Pass[ing] on the uncontroversial knowledge that is the accumulation of objective academic enquiry over time",⁶⁰⁷ and therefore for such individuals, the Christian nature of learning cannot be defined as anything less than telling learners about God and the Bible. Thus, the teachers' mono-faceted understanding of the relationship between Christian

⁶⁰³ Stuart-Buttle and Shortt, "Christian faith, formation and education," (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

⁶⁰⁴ Cooling, et al., *Christian faith in English church schools: Research conversations with classroom teachers* (vol. 8; Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2016).

⁶⁰⁵ Cooling, "Formation and Christian Education in England" in *Christian Faith, Formation and Education* (eds. Stuart-Buttle and Shortt; Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 120.

⁶⁰⁶ Cooling, *Formation and Christian Education in England* 123.

⁶⁰⁷ Cooling, *Formation and Christian Education in England* 122.

faith and learning offers a glimpse of the prevailing focus on content over process; what Cooling refers to a “Christian version of positivism”.⁶⁰⁸ While a demonstration of the full extent of positivistic approaches to CAL in contemporary UK practice is, again, beyond the scope of this project (although it will be reprised to some extent in relation to biblical CAL in chapter 7), my various experiences teaching in a Christian ethos school and as a learner and educator in adult theological education align with Cooling’s findings and suggest that they extend beyond the particular setting examined in this case. Whether children or adults, my observation is that students’ biggest frustration with my holistic, pedagogical approach is the refusal to clearly present the *correct* answer they so deeply crave. Regardless of whether teaching French grammar or exegetical method, my determination to demonstrate Christian-shaped learning by modelling and helping students navigate the disruption of their existing worldviews is invariably met with frustration, confusion and attempts to circumvent the process. In short, a *disruptive-inclusive* view of CAL conflicts with many of my students’ decidedly positivist (or perhaps *affirmedly-exclusive*) assumptions about the Christian nature of learning.

Beyond anecdotal evidence, some key examples of current CAL practice corroborate both Cooling’s research and my experiences. For example, at time of writing, the UK’s only master’s programme with the stated aim of forming theologically-informed educators is based at London School of Theology. The course’s online homepage leads with the following rationale: “It is no secret that teachers in Bible colleges and seminaries all over the world are traditionally trained in theology but not necessarily in education”.⁶⁰⁹ However, the course

⁶⁰⁸ Cooling, *Formation and Christian Education in England* 122.

⁶⁰⁹ This course was discontinued in 2021 due to “the declining number of students wishing to enrol on the course along with the depletion of bursary funds offered to help subsidise those who did enrol”
<https://lst.ac.uk/home/courses/postgraduate-programs/pg-certificate-in-theological-education-de/>

content designed to facilitate this pedagogical re-think of theological education begins with a section called “the challenge of curricular reform”;⁶¹⁰ a starting point for the debate which is mirrored in the course’s creator, Perry Shaw’s 2014 book, *Transforming Theological Education*.

To be fair, the overall tone of Shaw’s work does not deny the need for new ideas to underpin fundamental improvements in CAL practice. However, its basic response to the crises he identifies focuses instantly and consistently on necessary changes to curriculum content rather than beginning with a more fundamental discussion of the potential, pedagogical constraints and obstacles by traditional curriculum structures, or even of what constitutes Christian teaching and learning in a more basic sense. He offers a lengthy discussion of the appropriate proportion of different subjects that results in a theologically balanced curriculum but makes very little allusion to the underlying claims that such a pre-existing paradigm assumes.

In summary, while there is some contemporary discussion among UK CAL scholars and practitioners that overlaps with some of the central themes and approach of *What Prevents...?*, it is impossible to claim Hull’s work on CAL as the direct source of this. Rather, there is far more evidence to suggest that the stimulus of much of the contemporary debate is the work of those from either outside the UK or outside of the Church. (I make no claim that this ought to be avoided, merely that it is difficult to draw a direct line from Hull’s work on CAL or any predominant themes on disruptive learning to current UK CAL theory and practice). In the introduction to Hull’s festschrift, Bates claims, “No one person has had more

⁶¹⁰ Shaw, *Transforming theological education: a practical handbook for integrative learning* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2014), 4-10.

influence on the development and promotion of religious education in virtually all of its aspects in the UK and internationally over the past thirty years of significant social, religious and educational change than John Hull".⁶¹¹ While I do not dispute this, it is difficult to claim a similar level of influence and change extends to CAL.

Even more widely, I would assert that the evidence suggests that neither Hull's nor any other voice or idea in UK, CAL scholarship has gained enough momentum to dethrone the prevailing, positivistic approach that has dominated CAL in both church and theological training settings in the UK for much of the twentieth century. Joshua Searle explains that this is because, "We are sometimes so assimilated into systems of administration and acculturated within set paradigms of academic theory and practice that it is difficult even to think without the aid of familiar categories and concepts ... The deep-rootedness of established patterns of thinking and behaviour can stifle creative thinking about how to break out of the current impasse".⁶¹²

I concur with Searle that a significant reason why neither Hull's work on CAL nor other significant ideas and approaches since have succeeded in addressing many of the patterns and problems Hull identified as far back at early 1970s, is because they cannot be assimilated into or simply used to augment the current system. For example, both Jarvis' and Hull's work is based in the assumption of "the nature of education as a subject of central theological concern",⁶¹³ but while their relationship continues to be understood in positivistic terms, or the relationship between theological theory and practice remains

⁶¹¹ Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 19.

⁶¹² Searle, *Theology After Christendom: forming prophets for a post-christian world* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2018), 2-3.

⁶¹³ Slee, "Endeavours in a Theology of Adult Education: a Theologian Reflects," in *Adult Education and Theological Interpretations* (eds. Jarvis and Walters; Malabar, Fla: Krieger Pub. Co, 1993), 327.

underdeveloped, the chances of progress are small. Ultimately, a *disruptive-inclusive* reading of Hull's work on CAL seeks to overcome these barriers by presenting an opportunity to engage with a truly *complexified* approach to CAL – offering CAL in a variety of settings the means to reconsider its purpose and goals and ultimately reinvent itself in order to form better educators and learners.

Chapter 6.5: Interlude. Remaining perpetually under construction

Recently, I learned that Antoni Gaudí's magnum opus, La Sagrada Família in Barcelona is due to be completed in 2026, 142 years after construction first began. However, the contentious debate that its potential completion is raising, helps to articulate a concept concerning this project (introduced in chapter 6 and with which I have wrestled with for some time). While some insist that Gaudí always intended for the building to be finished, others suggest that its completion would contravene the most basic nature of its design – that being constantly 'under construction' has become a fundamental part of its architectural identity. As Rowan Moore claimed in 2011, once La Sagrada Família is no longer a "romantic ruin", it will be, in fact, something else entirely.⁶¹⁴

As per the arguments of chapter 6, it is entirely discordant with Hull's holistic pedagogical approach to attempt to extrapolate *disruptive-inclusion* into theory and practice and I have been critical of approaches that have prioritised either theory *or* practice to the detriment of the other. As asserted in the introduction to chapter 6, I am therefore reticent to designate specific chapters of this project as addressing a theoretical approach to *disruptive-inclusion*, followed by a discussion of its practical implications. Rather, the various elements of this project as multiple sides ought to be considered as multiple sides of the same shape or climbing the same hill from its various faces: its initial chapters approaching *disruptive-inclusion* as a Practical Theology of CAL and the latter in terms of a Theology of CAL, practised.

⁶¹⁴ "Sagrada Familia: Gaudí's cathedral is nearly done, but would he have liked it?", <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/apr/24/gaudi-sagrada-familia-rowan-moore>

However, the necessarily linear nature of written argument makes it impossible to avoid some form of consecutive ordering. In short, despite my commitment to emulating Hull's complexified approach, on the most basic level, one element of the discussion must come first, and another must follow. Therefore, in referring back to my understanding of the overarching development of this project in terms of the construction of a building, this brief interlude is symbolic of my methodological commitment to the pivotal liminality represented in the perpetually developing but never (yet) complete example of La Sagrada Família.

At the heart of the objections to finishing Gaudí's magnum opus is the idea that, although by necessity architectural blueprints and mathematical planning must be translated into physical structures, the situation of ongoing construction means that the plans are never put away and forgotten about; a building's design is never irreversibly *locked*. Rather, the architects and planners remain on site, regularly re-visiting the plans to assess how they may need to change. Therefore, without Gaudí on hand to continue development (he was killed by a tram in 1926), I agree with Moore that retaining the fullest character of La Sagrada Família may require *not* finishing it – to purposefully have it perpetually linger in the methodological *in-between*.

As unsatisfying as this deliberate unfinishedness may be, it resonates strongly with Hull's basic determination that CAL should not be reduced to a single metaphor or practised according to a single set of rules or guidelines. Hull's ultimate pedagogical aim is learner access to a "trans-ideological"⁶¹⁵ viewpoint – the process of constantly "plac[ing] a new and

⁶¹⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 72.

self-conscious frame of reference around everything and thus to arrive at a new stage of coherence and control”.⁶¹⁶ Therefore, his stated goal is not that learners ought to adhere to his learning framework (or any other) but undertake a process of transformation that, in turn, makes learners yet “more vulnerable to further transformations”.⁶¹⁷ By Hull’s own admission, if a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL is proved at all successful, by definition, it should continually transcend any set boundaries or descriptions which attempt to contain or define it. As reflected in 5.2.3. in relation to Fowler’s stages of faith, perhaps it is well-described as a “process that is definite but never-ending”.⁶¹⁸ In this way, not only are *dynamic* and *emergent* the most effective descriptions of how Hull envisages healthy CAL progress, but also of both his, and my, various attempts to define and explain it.

Thus, with one metaphorical foot in both chapters 6 and 7, having already carefully chosen and set out an ideal location for the *disruptive-inclusive* structure of CAL; having outlined detailed plans for its shape and function and carefully dug appropriately strong and sufficiently broad foundations for its development, building can now start in earnest. It begins, however, in the knowledge that the *theoretical* phase is never fully left behind and that perhaps, the best way to represent the character of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is for construction to be, in some way, perpetually ongoing. With this in mind, chapters 7 and 8 reflect on the potential implications of a *disruptive-inclusive* pedagogical approach to contemporary CAL theory and practice in range of settings and modes. In short, the following chapters address the question: how does *disruptive-inclusive* CAL look, sound and feel?

⁶¹⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 34.

⁶¹⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 34.

⁶¹⁸ Moran, *Religious education development: images for the future*, 113.

PART C: DISRUPTIVE-INCLUSION AS SPRINGBOARD FOR DEVELOPING CAL
METHODOLOGY AND PRACTICE.

**Chapter 7: the mortar of a *disruptive-inclusive* structure. The Bible's
pedagogical function**

Where the project thus far has been presented as having carefully planned, set out and poured the foundations for a *disruptive-inclusive* structure via a comprehensive exposition of Hull's work on CAL and its place within the wider scholarly debate, the following chapters now continue building where Hull's direct engagement with CAL ends, including (as per 6.5.) embracing the fact that the task may never be complete! Before chapter 8 considers how a *disruptive-inclusive* structure may be *fitted out* to facilitate a range of uses, this chapter addresses that which Hull considered the most essential and integral pedagogical building material – the *mortar* that creates and maintains the structural integrity of *disruptive-inclusive* approaches to CAL – the Bible.

The Bible warrants this position and level of interest for several reasons. Firstly, as claimed in the initial introduction, and as demonstrated in every chapter thus far, Hull assumed the Bible to be of intrinsic, pedagogical importance. Throughout Hull's work on almost every topic, the discourse naturally "enter[s] into conversation with the Bible",⁶¹⁹ with rarely any justification or qualification as to why it is warranted. Hull worked on the general assumption that the Bible is an indispensable conversation partner in CAL (as well as the many other topics). Hull's Festschrift acknowledges that despite publishing very little officially classified within the field of biblical studies, or ever fully expanding his views on its pedagogical function in CAL,⁶²⁰ "The Bible continued to be the primary reference point for

⁶¹⁹ Hull, *In the beginning there was darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible*, 3.

⁶²⁰ Only Hull's doctoral thesis Hull, *Hellenistic magic and the synoptic tradition* and *In the beginning there was darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible* naturally classify within the biblical studies field.

Christian belief and his expository gifts and sheer pleasure in working with the text are reflected in many of his writings".⁶²¹

The pedagogical significance Hull placed on the Bible is also clear from his wider and personal activities as well as his academic publications. He did not perceive a conflict between his professional identities as an academic practical theologian and educationalist and commitments as a biblically-informed Christian. This is best evidenced in Hull's regular (and popular) preaching at Queen's Foundation chapel services during the final part of his career,⁶²² as well as an invited guest preacher at weddings, academic institutions and the churches he attended throughout his life. The sermon transcripts listed on the website of his work curated until his death, demonstrate the centrality of the biblical text to his approach, with each message focused around the unpacking of a Bible passage.⁶²³ In a rare description of his own hermeneutical approach from 2002, Hull expressed a determination to "ensure that the Bible reveals its riches to everyone" and implored his readers to "Hold up the diamond of God's word and give it a new twist, so that new patterns and colours flash forth from it".⁶²⁴ He also found solace in others' biblical engagement. Most notably, in a 2013 Church Times interview, Hull highlighted that it was Paul Tillich's sermons that "kept me in the Christian faith during a dark time of my life".⁶²⁵ Despite Tillich's primary vocation as an existentialist Philosopher, whether preaching "On the transitoriness of life" from Psalm 90 or a message entitled "You are accepted" from Romans 5:20, he never allowed his apologist or

⁶²¹ Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 6.

⁶²² Many who heard Hull preach live reflect on his incredible ability to hold attention in a room despite being unable to make eye contact with his audience. Much of this ease of delivery is attributed to the fact that Hull wrote and memorised full sermon transcripts.

⁶²³ See <http://www.johnmhull.biz/Sermons.html>

⁶²⁴ Hull, "Open letter from a blind disciple," in *Borders, boundaries and the Bible* (ed. O'Kane; Journal for the study of the Old Testament. 313. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 156.

⁶²⁵ "Interview: John Hull, academic, theologian", <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2013/17-may/features/interviews/interview-john-hull-academic-theologian>

systematic theological themes to overwhelm the biblical spine of his messages and Hull's practice mirrored this.⁶²⁶

Secondly, analysis of the pedagogical function of the Bible epitomises the argument offered in 1.2.2: the medium is the message. As such, it offers a range of opportunities to develop ideas alluded to earlier in the project, including the methodological importance of moving "dialectical relationships into the place of non-dialectical forms of thinking",⁶²⁷ the importance of connecting past, present and future learning and adopting a *playful* pedagogical posture. Where, to this point, the case has been primarily made that Hull's theological pedagogy is well represented by a *disruptive-inclusive* posture to CAL, this now extends to suggest that likewise, Hull understands the Bible to set the precedent for and provide the quintessential example of *disruptive-inclusive* posture for Christian adult learners. Thus, the following sections both examine the various implications of a *disruptive-inclusive* posture to the biblical text and demonstrate how the Bible's pedagogical posture models and encourages the same. In summary, examining the Bible's pedagogical function in CAL reveals how the biblical text and the major strands of a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL mutually inform and reinforce.

This chapter comprises four distinct, but connected, sections. The first, 7.1., argues that a *disruptive-inclusive* biblical pedagogy is best understood in terms of *connectivity* and outlines the various ways in which Hull argues for this. In particular, this is focused on how the Bible is regularly misused to stifle CAL engagement, as opposed to allowing it to facilitate pedagogical *movement* between worlds and create opportunities for direct cognitive conflict

⁶²⁶ For more see Re Manning, *The Cambridge companion to Paul Tillich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chapter 7.

⁶²⁷ ter Avest, *Dialogue and conflict on religion: studies of classroom interaction in European countries*, 54.

through the experience of loss and *re-ideologization*. The subsequent sections then explain, illustrate and model an element of the proposed *connectivity* of biblical CAL by *re-casting* an existing, *either-or*, interpretive dichotomy as a *both-and* framework.

7.2. concentrates on the Bible's *inner-connectivity*, or relationship between *part* and *whole*, by which it refers to its internal, canonical diversity. This point is explained in terms of the comparison between historical-criticism and canonical criticism and then illustrated via examples from the Psalter, the Gospels and Paul. Finally, the idea of *inner-connectivity* is summarised via the idea of the biblical canon as a diverse learning community demonstrated using worked examples and metaphors from the world of music.

7.3. considers the Bible's *inter-connectivity* or relationship between old and new and how this can result in an *inside-out* pedagogy in which traditionally excluded learners are revealed as being of central importance. Specifically, this is argued as requiring interpretive relationships between reading communities (across time, culture, privilege and geography). Discussion focuses on the implications of engaging with the Bible as a *structuring prototype*, not an *unchanging archetype*.⁶²⁸ In particular, this point is demonstrated by highlighting the naturally disruptive contribution of pre-critical biblical interpretations, a claim then demonstrated through a worked example of an assignment on the Good Samaritan.

Finally, 7.4. addresses the question of the Bible's *extra-connectivity* and navigates the debate concerning how the process of biblical CAL can be both simultaneously *open* and *closed* (referring back to the discussion in 2.1.2. that Hull presents a theological pedagogy that is both distinctively Christian *and* simultaneously open to outside influences), an approach Hull

⁶²⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza, *But she said: feminist practices of biblical interpretation* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1992), 149.

refers to as *critical openness*. 7.4. closely analyses both *critical openness* and counter claims from Cooling that *critical realism* provides a more effective way of holding the tension between *open* and *closed* in biblical CAL. The chapter closes by suggesting an alternative to both *critical openness* and *critical realism*, arguing that *poetics* is a much more appropriate and effective means of approaching *disruptive-inclusive*, biblical CAL.

7.1. Consolidating *disruptive-inclusive* CAL: the hallmarks of Hull's biblical pedagogy

As repeatedly stated, Hull does not offer a succinct or comprehensive overview of his pedagogical views and the same is true of biblical CAL. However, sufficient comments are distributed throughout *What Prevents...?* to gain an overall sense of Hull's appreciation of the Bible's pedagogical function. Most fundamentally, Hull indicates the Bible's ability to be used either as a resource of "multi-dimensional", *connected* CAL or in support of "one-dimensional", compartmentalised CAL tendencies.⁶²⁹ Hull offers Jehovah's Witnesses as an example of the latter, whose use of the Bible as "the exclusive source of all relevant knowledge about God and the world" (making interaction between it and any other form of belief, practice, spirituality or everyday life impossible) Hull claims to demonstrate that they have "renounced learning".⁶³⁰ While potentially easy to dismiss as an example from outside Christian orthodoxy, Hull holds the same core criticism against the far more widespread practice in which,

Curiosity about the actual problem is lost beneath the bland assurance that some wonderful person [Bible teacher/scholar] has solved it ... Sometimes the Bible takes the place of this person. The Bible has the answer, and would always yield the answer if only we studied it. The fact that we don't study it, and that we don't know what answer the Bible actually has for these problems is immaterial.⁶³¹

⁶²⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 81 and 136.

⁶³⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 125 and 118.

⁶³¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 135.

Many Christian adult learners, Hull presents, are thus dissuaded from engaging in dialogue and questioning with and about the Bible by a *disassociated* biblical pedagogy in which learner curiosity is dulled by an *all-knowing*, but not necessarily all-revelatory Bible.

Reflecting earlier discussions concerning *instructional* learning postures,⁶³² Hull identifies widespread CAL practice in which either biblical educators or the biblical text itself function in transmitting the *solution* to learner problems, bypassing their active participation and associated opportunities for *disruption*. Similar to Erikson's understanding of *foreclosure* in relation to adult identity development, Hull refers to the core mechanism of an *instructional* biblical pedagogy as "premature closure".⁶³³

Premature closure occurs when a decision is made "either by or for a learner that 'it is safer ... not actually to trouble the Bible. It is sufficient to believe it'".⁶³⁴ It relies on the belief that a *correct* answer exists but is inaccessible (possessed by someone or something else) and thus CAL is reduced to "Finding out, but not contributing creatively to what there is to find out". It is "Being told what the true teaching is. There will be a manual of instruction ... there is a one-way stream of information".⁶³⁵ The most pedagogically detrimental facet of premature closure is that it is often suggested as the *only* appropriate Christian response. As highlighted in 4.2.1., Cooling explains how commonly it is "assumed that Christian faith ought to be dealt with in an instructional mode ... to be *properly* Christian".⁶³⁶

⁶³² Chapter 4 offers an in-depth description of an instructional/positivistic approach. This claim is also confirmed by my own experience teaching Christian adult learners in the Charismatic Evangelical tradition. While there are multiple reasons behind the continuing *disassociated* pedagogical poverty in much contemporary biblical teaching and learning, I have come to believe that poorly conceived, negatively motivated and impossibly false pedagogical dichotomies are a strong contributor.

⁶³³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 135. For more on foreclosure, see Marcia, "Education, Identity and iClass: From Education to Psychosocial Development," 7, no. 6 (2009), 672.

⁶³⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 135. In *What Prevents...?* Hull refers to this as the difference between certitude and certainty, 92-95.

⁶³⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 126.

⁶³⁶ Cooling, *Formation and Christian Education in England*, 120.

Despite primarily focusing on the R.E curriculum, Hull's 1992 essay, *The Bible in the Secular Classroom: An Approach through the Experience of Loss*, offers the fullest, further explanation of his core convictions concerning biblical learning, centred around the familiar theme of rejecting comfort and familiarity as effective learning tools. Hull claims that the pedagogical function of the Bible takes the form of a multi-layered collaboration between the "experience of sheer loss" and "creative thinking"; a sense of loss envisaged as temporary displacement or detachment of self in reality.⁶³⁷ "To lose oneself, to become lost, is not a matter of *finding* oneself in unfamiliar surroundings. It is to become detached from that supreme centre of value from which one derives all sense of worth".⁶³⁸ In a move that strongly recalls Gilmour's argument concerning Exodus (see 6.2.), Hull's argument claims that not only is the biblical narrative *about* loss but also an invitation to participate in loss. On these terms, Hull identifies that biblical CAL is often experienced as "an insult to pride":⁶³⁹ a learning encounter in which the Bible functions as, "An account not merely of the losses that people have experienced, but of humanity experiencing loss of itself, what Adam lost was not so much the Garden of Eden but Adam".⁶⁴⁰

Further adding to this project's ever-growing list of pedagogical metaphors, Hull particularises a loss-driven biblical pedagogy of CAL with language of the agricultural life cycle from John 12:24, claiming that all new perceptions of reality "Emerge out of the way of the cross. 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit'.⁶⁴¹ Particularly pertinent (and resonating strongly with McKenzie and

⁶³⁷ Hull, "The Bible in the Secular Classroom: an Approach through the Experience of Loss," in *The Contours of Christian Education* (eds. Astley and Day; Great Wakering, Essex: McCrimmons, 1992), 197.

⁶³⁸ Hull, *The Bible in the Secular Classroom: an Approach through the Experience of Loss*, 198.

⁶³⁹ Hull, *The Bible in the Secular Classroom: an Approach through the Experience of Loss*, 197.

⁶⁴⁰ Hull, *The Bible in the Secular Classroom: an Approach through the Experience of Loss*, 198.

⁶⁴¹ Hull, *The Bible in the Secular Classroom: an Approach through the Experience of Loss*, 199-200.

Harris' arguments concerning learning in community in 5.2.1.) is Hull's juxtaposition of a painful but ultimately fertile learning process with that of *remaining alone*. Fundamentally, he claims that the Bible models a pedagogy in which learners are not *alone* but paradoxically avoid isolation via death to self. Where learners work towards self-sufficiency and refuse self-displacement, Hull argues, learning growth is impossible.⁶⁴²

However, self-loss and displacement only represent one phase of Hull's views. He also envisages a parallel process of identity and paradigm re-building. As the pre-existing, isolated, static view of self dies, simultaneously, a new, dynamic, connected self-awareness within reality forms – a rebuilding process *What Prevents...?* refers to as *re-ideologisation*. “An important function of adult Christian education is to bring adults to the point where they can re-ideologize their own living faith”.⁶⁴³ *Re-ideologisation* is the opposite of ideological or premature enclosure. By continually bringing issues of faith and belief into dialogue with contemporary issues and the changing self, ideological thought need not (and in fact, cannot) be bypassed altogether but denied the ability to render learners unconscious and passive passengers. The key to understanding what Hull imagines by *re-ideologisation*, is to recognise that the Bible is so fundamental to his overall pedagogical conception that it cannot be held as one among a range of sources of pedagogical re-ideologization but the *primary* means by which Christian adult learners can truly explore connected reality and their place in it. In fact, his understanding of its function is so expansive that he presents it

⁶⁴² This idea of solo development being impossible resonates with Erikson's concept of *identity crisis*. “This crisis involves a renegotiating of one's value, as they are oriented around other individuals and society” Dowling, et al., *Encyclopedia of religious and spiritual development*, 150. Erikson insists that *self* is both a dynamic and deeply related concept, and as such, the process of constant *renegotiating* cannot be done *but* in relation to others and the wider, changing environment.

⁶⁴³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 79-80.

(both its message and mode of delivery) as modelling participation in the “Multi-dimensional ... relatedness of Christian history, Christian thought and Christian time”.⁶⁴⁴

As explored in Hull’s experiences straddling blind and sighted worlds (4.1.1.), he explains the progression between loss and *re-ideologization* as a transition between worldviews. The Bible facilitates pedagogical *movement* between its world and the learner’s own reality whereby “The points of inconsistency, of unrelatedness ... are deliberately prised open in a situation of confrontation”⁶⁴⁵ resulting in the disruption of existing beliefs and engagement in potentially paradoxical realities.⁶⁴⁶ Hull explains his view of the Bible’s central role: “Jesus used stories to undermine the limited images of those who heard him. The Unjust Judge and the Good Samaritan are classical examples of images involving direct cognitive conflict and indeed, in the image of divine man and a crucified God Christianity presents cognitive dissonance at the very heart of its self-understanding”.⁶⁴⁷ Ultimately, a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL and the Bible’s role within it is defined by the ability to create opportunities

⁶⁴⁴ In 1984 and 2014 respectively, Hull highlights the importance of the “two moments” functioning in tandem at the heart of CAL - a dual pattern of “out of pain and into pain”. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 81. Hull, *Towards the Prophetic Church: A Study of Christian Mission*, 248.

⁶⁴⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 82.

⁶⁴⁶ This theme is exemplified in Moran, *Education toward adulthood*, 60. See also Barth and Horton, *The word of God and the word of man* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), and Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 301. Barth and Von Rad’s wrestle with the difference between ‘ordinary history’ and ‘saving history’. Vanhoozer explains the Bible’s incongruence with prevailing pedagogical traits via both its message (after Meir Steinberg’s references to “the drama of redemption”) and its means of its delivery (or “drama of reading”). Vanhoozer, “The Voice and the Actor,” in *Evangelical futures: a conversation on theological method* (ed. Stackhouse; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2000), 65. He summarises that these dramas combine in “the struggle between the biblical worldview set forth in Scripture on the one hand and the heart and mind of the reader on the other”. Vanhoozer, *The Voice and the Actor*, 65. More recently, Brüggemann has also encapsulated this clash of worldviews in saying, “It has to be recognised that the more excellent way contradicts the dominant way and is terribly inconvenient”. “The Ache”, <https://vimeo.com/413808880>

⁶⁴⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 101.

for what Hull refers to as “direct cognitive conflict” and “cognitive dissonance”, not coping mechanisms that insulate from potential conflicts, or the skills to avoid or deny them.⁶⁴⁸

Thus, in methodological terms, not only does Hull reject the substance and practice of prevailing, *disconnected* biblical pedagogies but the very basis on which they are deemed effective and appropriate. A simple description of *connected* as opposed to *disassociated* learning is insufficiently nuanced to accurately represent a *disruptive-inclusive* biblical pedagogy of CAL, rather Hull’s resistance of isolationist, individualist and *disassociated* biblical pedagogy requires a fundamental paradigm shift or “ideological re-casting”.⁶⁴⁹

Following Hull’s example of undermining *disassociated* biblical pedagogies on multiple levels, the following sections present three *re-castings* required to create optimal opportunities for the Bible to function in creating direct cognitive conflict. Underpinned by the concept of *multiplicity of vision* and following a pattern already seen on several occasions in this project, the following investigations address how existing, either-or paradigms might be replaced by both-and approaches, to enable seemingly conflicting or paradoxical factors to be embraced together in the facilitation of *disruptive-inclusion*.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 82, c.f. Festinger, *A theory of cognitive dissonance* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and co., 1957),

⁶⁴⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 82.

⁶⁵⁰ See 2.2.3. for a description of the “inter-dependent” symbiosis Hull observed in the dual function of his front door. “Liminality explains nothing. Liminality *is*. It happens. It takes place. And human beings react to liminal experiences in different ways Briefly put, the concept of liminality can help us understand transitional periods and social processes of change in a different light”. Thomassen, *Liminality and the modern: living through the in-between* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2018), 7, in Carson, et al., *Crossing thresholds: a practical theology of liminality*, 6. The move from *either-or* to *both-and* also resonates strongly with Fowler’s understanding of progression from Stage 4 to Stage 5 *conjunctive* faith that seeks “to unify opposites in mind and experience”. Fowler, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*.

The three, specific *re-castings* discussed here address the Bible's *inner-connectivity*, *inter-connectivity*, and *extra-connectivity*.⁶⁵¹ The first specifically addresses how including both attention to the Bible's close details *and* wider shape can facilitate direct cognitive conflict. The second undermines the idea that learners must reject *old* readings of the Bible to concentrate only on new and relevant contemporary interpretations. Finally, the third addresses the importance and difficulties associated with the search for a biblical pedagogy of CAL sufficiently *open* as not to result in a fully objective, passive learning process but also sufficiently *closed* to enable the biblical narrative to retain its position as primary and pivotal, CAL resource.

7.2. *Re-casting an inner-connected biblical pedagogy: part and whole*

The first *re-casting* builds on the argument that the Bible's pedagogical function creates direct cognitive conflict in representing a *world* distinct from readers' contemporary reality. Specifically, it argues that it achieves this by encompassing a wide range of styles, approaches and subject matter within its canon. In short, this section explores Hull's designation of the Bible as the "Principal educational source for the re-ideologization of Christian consciousness" based in its *inner* diversity.⁶⁵² In fact, Hull imagines the diversity within the biblical canon as so pedagogically indispensable that he uses it to summarise the entire CAL process. He imagines a pedagogy in which learners practise, "The need to put

⁶⁵¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 84-85.

⁶⁵² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 79. Regarding this diversity, it must be acknowledged that, for many *peripheral* interpretative groups, canonical diversity is obscured by its homogeneity in some areas. For example, Asian female theologian Kwok Pui Lan does not see herself represented in the Bible's male, middle-Eastern authorship perspective to the point where she questions whether "the concept of canon is still useful" because "a closed canon excludes [] many voices ... and freezes our imagination". Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 18. Kwok's argument is more closely considered in 7.3. and 7.4., where it will also be demonstrated why, while the canon may be closed to new additions, its posture to all (particularly learners belonging to peripheral or minority learning groups) remains open.

oneself in the place of the other and to listen to him. So adult Christian education introduces the study of Matthew and James in order to free the Christian consciousness from Paul, and he introduces the study of Luke and Acts in order to free the Christian consciousness from Mark".⁶⁵³

This point is reinforced in *What Prevents...?* via the identification of pedagogical techniques that create the opposite effect, i.e., how the Bible is used to avoid learning conflict. As well as laying the foundations for all three *re-castings*, 7.2.1. focuses on one such approach to biblical conflict avoidance, summarised by Francis Watson as "the privileging of the discrete part" compared to "the discrete part as integrated into the whole".⁶⁵⁴ 7.2.2. demonstrates how the fundamentals of this argument are epitomised in the contrast between historical-critical and canonical-critical biblical interpretation. 7.2.3. summarises the argument as a model of diverse, community learning and finally, 7.2.4. offers a worked example of how a *re-cast* relationship between *part* and *whole* approaches to biblical pedagogy are well represented by using metaphors from the world of music, specifically jazz.

7.2.1. Inner-connectivity explained: historical v. canonical criticism

Although an obvious over-generalisation representing extremes on a sliding scale, Watson's distinction between *part* and *whole* summarises the most basic sense of this *re-casting*. At

⁶⁵³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 79. It is important to recognise that the meaning of the term "canon" is disputed. As Michael Kruger succinctly recognises, although an *exclusive* meaning that refers to the "final, closed list" of biblical books is dominant, there is value in exploring a more *multi-dimensional* approach to biblical canon. Kruger, "The definition of the term 'canon': exclusive or multi-dimensional?," 63, no. 1 (2012). While my use of the term does rely on its dominant meaning, it by no means seeks to minimise the arguments concerning the potential, canonical contributions of wider scriptural writings or indeed (as Kruger argues), a wider, *ontological* definition of canon. In short, an understanding of Christian Scripture functioning as a canonical, disruptive learning community raises a range of questions worthy of further research.

⁶⁵⁴ Watson, *Text, church, and world: biblical interpretation in theological perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1994), 34.

one extreme, a highly compartmentalised biblical pedagogy reflects the already discussed, widely-held view that CAL ought to be defined as “Producing knowledge about reality by carefully and objectively observing the facts”.⁶⁵⁵ In this approach, learners ask closed questions of the Bible and then decide (what they deem) its single, most effective or convenient response to address it. At the other extreme, Hull claims that interpreting individual biblical verses, passages or even biblical books in isolation cannot help but lead to *disconnected* and *instructional* biblical CAL. As Lewis Ayres summarises, “The function of Scripture for the Christian community pushes Christians to search for a canonical unity beyond that provided by the sense of any one discrete passage”.⁶⁵⁶

A critical element of a *connected* pedagogical approach is its simultaneous and multi-level function. Thus, a *connected* biblical pedagogy not only constitutes an alternative *life-world* but also functions as a form of *meta-life-world*, a key by which all other worlds and narratives are accessed and understood. In the simplest terms, the pedagogical function of the Bible in CAL not only offers answers to learner questions but also informs the questions, setting the entire tone and shape of the conversation. Hull summarises that the Bible’s function is, “Not only to help Christian adults to sort out whether Yahweh or Baal is Lord of Israel, but whether whoever is Lord of Israel is Lord of Israel alone, or of the whole world”.⁶⁵⁷ Thus, the Bible is “Not only part of but ... *the* integrating pattern for meaning”,⁶⁵⁸ by which CAL invites learners to interpret their own stories in self-displacing, dynamic engagement in the biblical narrative.

⁶⁵⁵ Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: an analysis and proposal* (Louisville, Ky.: WJK Press, 2008), 76.

⁶⁵⁶ Ayres, “The Patristic hermeneutic heritage,” in *Using the Bible in practical theology: historical and contemporary perspectives* (ed. Bennett; Farnham: Ashgate Pub., 2013), 28.

⁶⁵⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 30.

⁶⁵⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 183. Italics mine.

Hull further reinforces the idea of the Bible as providing *the* pedagogical pattern by using the overarching trajectory of the biblical narrative from “Wholeness, passing through differentiation, and returning to wholeness once again” to explain the arc of CAL progress.⁶⁵⁹

The Garden of Eden is sometimes shown as a mandala ... one must hack one’s way through the dangers of consciousness to reach life. At the end of the process, the Heavenly City is also described as a mandala, one in which the pain of separation of consciousness from unconsciousness is finally overcome. Between the Garden and the City we have Christ himself, the supreme symbol of the self.⁶⁶⁰

While Hull’s symbolic use of a mandala (intricate and usually circular patterns often associated with Eastern forms of meditation) could be analysed in various ways,⁶⁶¹ in the most basic sense, Hull believes that the beautiful intricacy of Christian adults’ learning progression is best represented via the given order of the biblical canon. Beginning and ending in shalomic unity, with the intervening path defined by the pain of its loss and motivated by its restoration, the biblical narrative does not exclude confusion and disorientation. Inversely, its incorporation provides a means by which “a new coherence [is] made present”.⁶⁶² Equally importantly (as also in John 10), learners are not left alone *to hack through the dangers* of the intervening learning journey but Jesus’ central location provides an intersecting pedagogical fulcrum; learning guide and defining presence between the equilibrium exemplified in the biblical narrative’s opening and closing scenes.

The full implications of *part* and *whole* approaches to biblical CAL are most clearly reflected in the major pendulum swings of the history of biblical interpretation. Davis summarises

⁶⁵⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 160. Hull defines *wholeness* as representing “the achievement of equilibrium, a synthesis ... in which a more inclusive balance is struck” Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 157.

⁶⁶⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 160-161.

⁶⁶¹ In light of the earlier discussion of Hull’s progress from the “the fading of the light” onto the “fading of the memory of the light” and the liminal space in between these sighted and blind *lifeworlds* (4.1.1.), it is noteworthy that he continues to use visual imagery to convey his point here.

⁶⁶² This mirrors the movement Brüggenmann identifies in the shape of the Psalter. Brüggenmann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*, 11.

what she believes is at stake: the “Bible is often read “too historically” – that is, too narrowly so ... as if its aim were to give us insight into ancient ideologies and events ... Teaching the Bible ... is not primarily a matter of conveying historical information”.⁶⁶³ Stanley Porter adds, “The historical-critical method shifted the emphasis of interpretation from the underlying unity – which was still affirmed by many – to the various localized issues regarding the text itself”.⁶⁶⁴ Ultimately, Davis and Porter tease out the fundamental insufficiencies of an exclusively historical-critical biblical pedagogy as *disconnected* or piecemeal. If “‘description’ is a fair representation of historical-critical practice” Davis continues,⁶⁶⁵ then “the conventional debate circles around the concept of description, with one side insisting on its autonomy while the other asserts its inadequacy as an approach to its object”.⁶⁶⁶

In relation to the term *historical-criticism*, it is important to acknowledge that, as per many academic disciplines, its definition is disputed and evolving. However, its sub-disciplines such as form, redaction and source criticism share a conceptual centre that locates its meaning in “The social and cultural realities of the ancient context of the text’s production and reception”.⁶⁶⁷ Therefore, this project’s use of *historical-criticism* refers to the general pursuit of objective, behind-the-text information as *the* key to biblical CAL, and not specifically to any specific technical sub-discipline. While it is difficult to imagine that the many Christian teachers and learners who exclusively employ such approaches, do so consciously, it is nevertheless telling that historical criticism remains the primary method taught to the

⁶⁶³ Davis, “Teaching the Bible confessionally in the church,” in *The art of reading Scripture* (eds. Davis and Hays; Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2003), 11.

⁶⁶⁴ Porter and Adams, “Pillars in the history of biblical interpretation. Vol. 1, Prevailing methods before 1980,” (*McMaster biblical studies series*; Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 5.

⁶⁶⁵ Watson, *Text, church, and world: biblical interpretation in theological perspective*, 33.

⁶⁶⁶ Watson, *Text, church, and world: biblical interpretation in theological perspective*, 32.

⁶⁶⁷ Adam, et al., “Should We Be Teaching the Historical Critical Method?,” 12, no. 2 (2009), 163.

majority of those training to teach the Bible to others. Dale Martin's 2008 research project on American theological training institutions' approaches to teaching the Bible discovered that the historical-critical approach was, "Still the dominant one taught to students training to be ministers. They may be taught to go beyond the historical meaning of the text, but that historical meaning is nonetheless predominant or foundational in the education of most clergy".⁶⁶⁸ As one of Martin's interviewees summarised, "We don't do the 'meta' issues".⁶⁶⁹

The aim of this *recasting* is not to undermine historically contextualised approaches to biblical CAL per se. However, rather than *part* interpretive approaches' dominance resulting in pedagogical *disassociation*, similarly to Hull's dual understanding of his door as both dividing boundary *and* point of connection, the suggestion is that *part* and *whole* function in biblical CAL in inter-dependent symbiosis.⁶⁷⁰ In his discussion of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, Rikk Watts makes a helpful distinction of how the same information takes on a different form when employed as part of *disconnected* and *connected* approaches. He argues, "It is important to distinguish between data and evidence" because in and of itself, historical data has little import to the learning process. Rather, its value is judged "Based on training and experience, as to what data might or might not be relevant".

Watts points out that when information remains *disconnected*, even the most fascinating, historical *fact* has no pedagogical value without being subjectively processed as to its relevance, contextualisation etc. and thus, the inherent subjectivity of biblical interpretation cannot, and should not, be bypassed. Information gleaned in the historical-critical exercise only becomes interpretationally useful when mingled with human experience and

⁶⁶⁸ Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: an analysis and proposal*, 3.

⁶⁶⁹ Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: an analysis and proposal*, 22.

⁶⁷⁰ Hull, *In the beginning there was darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible*, 140.

judgement. Watts concludes, "It is only in the light of the progression towards ... coherence and comprehensiveness ... and of the role that any given datum plays in that explanation, that one can come to know what is or is not evidence".⁶⁷¹

Watts' argument is stark. The only kind of biblical CAL is *connected*, biblical CAL. Raw data gleaned from behind-the-text interpretive approaches ought not be considered superior and self-authenticating due to its basis in objective fact or as Davis claims, we must move beyond a pedagogy based in the idea that "A given text is a puzzle with only one solution".⁶⁷² Rather, Hull argues for an *inter-connected* biblical pedagogy in which historical-critical approaches function as one facet within a wider process, or perhaps one sentence in a much larger conversation, thus avoiding a pattern in which, "A Christianity of solid historical and scientific evidence has resulted in an appalling poverty of Christian exploration and creativity ... affected by this knowledge-bias. A one-dimensional Bible mirrored upon a one-dimensional science becomes the authority for a one-dimensional Christian faith".⁶⁷³

At almost exactly the same time Hull was losing the final traces of light perception and writing *What Prevents...?*, Brüggemann also addressed the "Important interface between Scripture study and education in the church".⁶⁷⁴ He agrees that "Historical-critical ... has been unable to address education as a biblical theme ... because canon was bracketed out as a secondary, irrelevant, or mechanical process".⁶⁷⁵ In what he later defined as "Neither a

⁶⁷¹ Watts, "Rethinking context in the relationship of Israel's Scriptures to the NT: character, agency and the possibility of genuine change," in *Methodology in the use of the Old Testament in the New: context and criteria* (eds. Allen and Smith; London: T&T Clark, 2020), 163.

⁶⁷² Davis, *Teaching the Bible confessionally in the church*, 24. This is a good explanation of how some interpretations of John 10 reject or compartmentalise Jesus' various roles in the passage. See 2.1.1.

⁶⁷³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 36. Joel Green helpfully delineates historical-critical biblical engagement into different categories. See Green, "Rethinking "History" for Theological Interpretation," 5, no. 2 (2011).

⁶⁷⁴ Brüggemann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 1.

⁶⁷⁵ Brüggemann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 3.

criticism not a displacement of form-critical work. Rather ... the need to move beyond historical-critical analysis into other perspectives and models”,⁶⁷⁶ Brüggenmann argues that “The enterprise which perhaps holds most promise ... [is] loosely called *canon criticism*”.⁶⁷⁷ Similarly to Hull, Brüggenmann delineates his arguments into means and method; making a double claim concerning the impact of canon criticism on biblical teaching and learning as both “a *substance and a process*”.⁶⁷⁸ As a result, Brüggenmann’s work provides a good basis for a thorough exploration of the pedagogical implications of rejecting a choice between canon and historical-critical approaches to biblical learning and implementation of their symbiotic use.

At first glance, Brüggenmann’s proposal of canon criticism as the means of *moving beyond* historical-criticism may seem counterintuitive, given that some recognise canon criticism as “An approach associated in the 1980s with James Sanders ... based upon text-critical and tradition-historical instincts”.⁶⁷⁹ However, Brüggenmann’s broad definition of the approach does not recognise such a conflict. For Brüggenmann, canon criticism extends far beyond behind-the-text concerns, focusing particularly on the Bible’s inner connections – “The way the Bible uses the Bible, reinterprets the Bible, claims and restates it in a new form for a new day”.⁶⁸⁰ Thus, he continues, “The dynamic of canon requires that it not just remain open ended”⁶⁸¹ and therefore in the dialogical relationship between the Old and New Testaments, Brüggenmann finds an example of how “New claims are either recognised in or assigned to

⁶⁷⁶ Brüggenmann, "The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," in *Soundings in the Theology of Psalms: Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Scholarship* (ed. Jacobson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2011), 1.

⁶⁷⁷ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 3.

⁶⁷⁸ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 3.

⁶⁷⁹ Seitz, *The character of Christian Scripture: the significance of a two-Testament Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 28-9.

⁶⁸⁰ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 6.

⁶⁸¹ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 6.

the old materials".⁶⁸² Although the exact nature of this multi-layered relationship between *old* and *new* remains widely disputed,⁶⁸³ in stark contrast to historical-criticism's central focus on unbridgeable distance between reader and text, via Brüggenmann's canonical pedagogy, the reader learns in, and according to, the Bible's natural, *inner-connectivity*. As for the specific pedagogical implications of canon criticism, Brüggenmann further divides its impact into "How the biblical material reaches its present form (canonical *process*) and the *present form* that it has reached (canonical *shape*)".⁶⁸⁴ The pedagogical role of canonical *process* is addressed in 7.3., but firstly, this section addresses Brüggenmann's understanding of how canonical *shape* influences both the substance and process of CAL, adding another level of meaning to Hull's imagining of a biblical learning journey from Eden to the New Jerusalem.

In light of Brüggenmann's dual-focus on *substance* and *process*, Hull's conception of the biblical canon as a pedagogical journey from "Wholeness, passing through differentiation, and returning to wholeness once again"⁶⁸⁵ may apply, not only to the trajectory of the Bible's overarching message but also to its methodology. In line with the tri-partite frameworks identified in 3.2.2. (for example, Jarvis's "alienation ... reframing and ... finally, re-integration"),⁶⁸⁶ Hull's understanding of a canonical learning *journey* is methodologically akin to a historical-critical *inclusio* in which *localised, differentiated* approaches to biblical learning are methodologically hedged by *unifying*, or as Hull calls them, *whole* approaches.

⁶⁸² Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 6.

⁶⁸³ For example, Childs, *The church's guide for reading Paul: the canonical shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008), and Watson, *Paul and the hermeneutics of faith* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

⁶⁸⁴ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 3.

⁶⁸⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 160.

⁶⁸⁶ Jarvis, *Learning as a Religious Phenomenon*, 10.

Crucially then, just as Hull identified Jesus θύρα as ushering sheep out into the *unknown* and his voice guiding them back in, so too the pedagogical, canonical *wholeness* represented by Hull via the images of Garden and City function reciprocally (and not in competition) with the tension of the intervening journey. Thus, Hull does not *bracket out* historical-critical approaches but *embeds* them in a wider, connected process. Christopher Seitz summarises this synergy well, “Such an approach does not minimize the historical dimension; neither does it seek to do away with approaches that take it seriously enough to spot problems and tensions in ... the final form of the text as its own piece of historical reality and witness to God’s ordering of the world”.⁶⁸⁷

Accordingly, in what may be referred to as Hull’s pedagogical, canonical *inclusio*, the *whole* approaches that bookend the disruptive, fractured intervening journey are not just a tantalising taste of how things ought to be, and one day again will be. Rather, their primary pedagogical function is to provide an orienting security by which the entire and unpredictable journey can be navigated. As Jesus’ voice allows the sheep to venture further than they would otherwise dare but also instructs as to the wise limit of their search for life-giving pasture, so too the biblical canon not only facilitates a broader pedagogical vision but also provides the necessary boundaries for effective exploration of self, others and wider reality. It simultaneously widens and directs learning: ushers in and out, drawing attention to both the implications of its micro and macro aspects and their engagement.

Returning to the terms of historical criticism and canonical criticism, it would be remiss to move on from this topic without addressing the relationship between *hermeneutical*

⁶⁸⁷ Seitz, *The character of Christian Scripture: the significance of a two-Testament Bible*, 39.

distance and *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. Where historical-critical approaches assume, name and provide a means of bridging the claimed, unavoidable distance between contemporary reader and text in its ancient setting, canonical shape does not deny historical gaps nor make any attempt to entirely bridge them. Rather, *optimum distance* asserts that facilitating reader proximity to the text's original setting (or at least believing themselves to be) so as they can no longer separate themselves from it, may not be as pedagogically advantageous as historical-critics imply. As Anthony Thiselton explains, "Distance between the reader and the text performs a positive hermeneutical function. *Premature assimilation* ... leaves the reader trapped within his or her own prior horizons".⁶⁸⁸

Thus, rather than denying or setting the bar at entirely overcoming Gotthold Lessing's famous "ugly, broad ditch",⁶⁸⁹ an *inter-connected*, canonical approach to biblical CAL asserts that not only is some distance or disparity between contemporary reader and biblical text impossible to entirely remove, neither would it be entirely pedagogically helpful to do so if it were. The impossible-to-bridge, historical distance of the text need not be denied but, in tandem with the Bible's own diverse inter-connectivity (and as we will see in the following sections, *inter* and *extra connectivity*) creates the "Possibility of moving back and forth between ancient function and contemporary intentionality"⁶⁹⁰ as the foundation of a connected biblical pedagogy of *optimum distance*. In this sense and borrowing Martin's language, it may be again helpful to consider *optimum distance* functioning as "a meta-language that occupies a middle space between",⁶⁹¹ creating opportunities for dialogue

⁶⁸⁸ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992), 8.

⁶⁸⁹ Lessing and Nisbet, "Philosophical and theological writings," in *On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power* (*Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy*; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 87.

⁶⁹⁰ Brüggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function*, 4.

⁶⁹¹ Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: an analysis and proposal*, 71.

between, but not artificially conflating otherwise non-conversant pedagogical elements and approaches.

7.2.2. Inner-connectivity illustrated: the Psalter, the Gospels and Paul

The clearest example of Brüggemann's use of *inner-connected*, canonical, biblical pedagogy is in his work on the Psalms. Based in Brevard Childs' insistence on "Paying attention to the beginning and end [of both individual books within the Bible and the Bible as a whole], to see how the two may relate to each other",⁶⁹² he argues that interpreting individual Psalms in isolation leads to a misreading of the Psalter. This is demonstrated in his proposal that the Psalter's opening and closing poems function as interpretive lenses, setting and summarising the tone for the rest. Specifically, he argues that the combination of Psalm 1's focus on Law and Psalm 150's unqualified worship, "Makes an assertion about *the shape of life* lived in Israel's covenant by means of the *canonical shape* of the collection of the Psalms. Like the Psalter, life derived from and ceded back to Yahweh begins in obedience and ends in praise".⁶⁹³ In other words, the interpretational backdrop of each Psalm is the dialogical relationship between its content and its wider contribution to the pattern, cadence and trajectory of the Psalter, Hebrew Bible and perhaps even the entire Bible.

An example of this wider, connected influence is his argument that the Psalter's overarching movement from Law to praise also provides the interpretational backdrop to the conversation in Mark 10 between Jesus and the man who asks, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In Jesus' initial response referencing the commandments (10:19), Brüggemann recognises an assumption "not unlike the expectation of Psalm 1".⁶⁹⁴ Whereas

⁶⁹² Brüggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (ed. Miller; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995), 190.

⁶⁹³ Brüggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 193.

⁶⁹⁴ Brüggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 195.

in Jesus' second instruction that the man give away his possessions to follow him, Brüggenmann sees deep resonance with "the abandonment of Psalm 150".⁶⁹⁵ Thus, he interprets the overall conversation as mirroring the Psalter's movement from, "*willing duty* to *utter delight* ... The requirements of Psalm 1 are not scuttled; they are assumed. But they are also superseded in the delight the community knows with God".⁶⁹⁶ Within this framework, the man's unwillingness or inability to follow (v.22) is couched, not as a rejection of Jesus' niche or new instruction but as a demonstration of his pre-existing non-compliance with the longstanding pattern of Israel's life with God. While the man clearly believes himself an active participant in God's Kingdom (v.20, v.23), by interpreting the passage against the backdrop of the canonical shape of the Psalter, Jesus' responses to him suggest that his problem is not acute or momentary. In fact, he has never understood nor participated in the most fundamental trajectory and motivation of God's people (v.25).⁶⁹⁷

Brüggenmann is joined by Hull and Watson in demonstrating the interpretive implications of combining *part* and *whole* approaches via the Gospels. Watson recognises that many who approach the four-fold gospel on "the literal and historical plane alone"⁶⁹⁸ do so to avoid the "perceived defectiveness of the canonical plurality".⁶⁹⁹ He summarises that a uniquely

⁶⁹⁵ Brüggenmann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 195.

⁶⁹⁶ Brüggenmann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 196.

⁶⁹⁷ Richard Hays identifies a similar pattern in the parable of the wicked tenants. "The Canonical Matrix of the Gospels," in *The Cambridge companion to the Gospels* (ed. Barton; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 53-55.

⁶⁹⁸ Watson, "The Fourfold Gospel," in *The Cambridge companion to the Gospels* (ed. Barton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 47.

⁶⁹⁹ Watson, *Gospel writing: a canonical perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2013), 4-5. This area is so contentious that it has spawned multiple sub-disciplines - the most significant of which is the Quest for the Historical Jesus, whose various iterations demonstrate how, in effect, the search for behind-the-text interpretive answers forces the biblical texts to take only a minor role in their own interpretation. In his 2010 book, *Canon and Creed*, Robert Jenson summarises the problem: "Whatever authority the canonical text of the Gospels may have in other contexts, the biblical scholar's work - as it is held by [] exegetes - must treat the canonical text of the Gospels as a starting point and as a source of clues to its own reconstruction". Jenson, *Canon and creed* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 55. Jenson, however, also highlights that the phrase *the historical Jesus* can confuse contemporary discussion and suggests that "We should distinguish

historical-critical approach serves only to present the fourfold gospel as a problem that “must remain eternally unresolved”.⁷⁰⁰ Similarly with examples such as the distinctive, double telling of the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2 and Chronicles’ re-interpretation of material from Samuel and Kings, whether dealing with individual biblical books, genres, testaments or the biblical canon as a whole, Brüggemann and Watson’s canonical, biblical pedagogies refute John Barton’s claims that canonical interpretation has “a tendency to harmonize or smooth over disagreement when it handles the biblical material”.⁷⁰¹ Rather, as historical-critical approaches alone are unable to achieve, canonical-criticism drives a pedagogy of multi-layered connectivity that, as Watson explains is “Articulated *in* the differences and not in spite of them”.⁷⁰² Thus, “Dissonance within the canonical writings becomes a potentially positive rather than negative factor. Different contexts may call for different canonical voices”.⁷⁰³

Returning to the example of Mark 10, it reveals further implications of this divergent co-existence. Brüggemann’s reading against the backdrop of the Psalter is complicated but not compromised (rather, potentially *complexified*) by the fact that “The Markan and Lukan version of this episode contain important differences from Matthew’s account”.⁷⁰⁴ While historical-critics may cite Markan priority and canonical critics, Matthean priority as the reason *why* such differences exist,⁷⁰⁵ they both contribute to a debate rich in direct cognitive

‘the historical Jesus’ from the ‘historians’ Jesus’” Jenson, *Canon and creed*, 57, thus clarifying that *canonical criticism* is not an attempt to de-historicise or de-contextualise Jesus. Brevard Childs makes a similar observation that the entire project is dependent on a careful definition of *history*. See Childs, *The church’s guide for reading Paul: the canonical shaping of the Pauline Corpus*, 10-12.

⁷⁰⁰ Watson, *Gospel writing: a canonical perspective*, 6.

⁷⁰¹ Seitz, *The character of Christian Scripture: the significance of a two-Testament Bible*, 39.

⁷⁰² Watson, *The Fourfold Gospel*, 50.

⁷⁰³ Watson, “‘Every Perfect Gift’: James, Paul and the Created Order,” in *Muted voices of the New Testament: readings in the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* (eds. Hockey, et al.; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 137.

⁷⁰⁴ Turner, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 468.

⁷⁰⁵ Collins and Attridge, *Mark: a commentary* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2007), 473-475.

conflict, with historical-critical concerns serving to nuance and further exemplify the import of canonical questions. As Seitz explains it, canon criticism, “Does not ignore dimensions of the text that can only be explained by recourse to “sources” or “authors”, which account for divergences and tensions in the final form, but it judges the task far from complete when attention to these features fails to ask what effect has been achieved by bringing them together ... in the final form of the text”.⁷⁰⁶ Jenson, however, takes the significance of the canonical approach even further by suggesting, “The general rule must be that if we are to know the plain truth propounded by Scripture, then “historical-critical” practices and results cannot stand alone; instead, they must serve understanding of the canonical narrative. The true purpose of tracing the history behind the canonical text ... is to help in elucidating the canonical text itself”.⁷⁰⁷

Thus, in returning to Hull’s three-fold framework of “*Wholeness ... differentiation ... wholeness*”, Seitz agrees that a methodological *sandwich* comprising of only historical-critical filling would be *far from complete* without the canonical *bread* holding it in place. Equally, although ultimately this metaphor still represents historical-critical approaches as the *substance* of biblical CAL, any filling *cannot stand-alone* and exists to *serve* the overall shape provided by *the canonical narrative*. While, admittedly, this methodological *inclusio* is, like all metaphors, limited in its instruction and scope, similarly to the earlier careful discussion of the relationship between disruption and inclusion (2.3.3.), it begins to tease out the potentially mutual, but not equal, nature of the relationship between *part* and *whole* biblical

⁷⁰⁶ Seitz, *The character of Christian Scripture: the significance of a two-Testament Bible*, 31-32.

⁷⁰⁷ Jenson, *Canon and creed*, 59-60.

learning. Or, as Childs expresses it, unpack the nature of these “Crucial partner[s] in this ... continuing dialectic between a historical critical and a canonical reading of the text”.⁷⁰⁸

A final example of the implications of an *inner-connected* pedagogical approach comes from Pauline studies, in particular, attempts to understand and articulate Paul’s use of the Old Testament. The key question is summarised well by Childs: “A crucial problem respecting the interpretation of the Pauline letters arises ... What is the relation between the church’s traditional canonical understanding of its sacred Scriptures and the historical critical approach to ancient writings that was first clearly formulated during the Enlightenment?”⁷⁰⁹

While the full pedagogical significance of the various responses to Childs’ question cannot be represented here, one element of Richard Hays’ interpretational framework in response to Childs epitomises the wider debate. Recognising that his suggestion is one among many and open to criticisms such as oversimplification and vagueness, Hays refers to his final criterion for Paul’s use of the Old Testament as satisfaction. For Hays, satisfaction asks, “Does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? Does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation?”⁷¹⁰

This is a compelling observation for the purposes of this discussion in that Hays’ question simultaneously requires a global sense of awareness *and* a grounding in evidence.

Ultimately, Hays understands the decision as to whether a particular reading constitutes a *satisfying account* cannot be reduced to any single fact, nor solely based in inarticulable senses. Or as Childs’ praise of Watson’s argument details, it “Deals seriously with the canonical shaping of the whole Scriptures as the context for Paul’s reading, rather than

⁷⁰⁸ Childs, *The church's guide for reading Paul: the canonical shaping of the Pauline Corpus*, 130.

⁷⁰⁹ Childs, *The church's guide for reading Paul: the canonical shaping of the Pauline Corpus*, 10.

⁷¹⁰ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 31.

assuming the need for a prior historical critical reconstruction as its context, or seeing just metaphorical echoes from isolated biblical texts".⁷¹¹ The key elements of satisfaction, as identified by David Allen, reveal the heart of an *inter-connected* biblical pedagogy.

Satisfaction, Allen argues,

Is more than thematic coherence; it is a more 'macro' assessment that attends to the overall effect of the mooted allusion. While he [Hays] concedes its potential subjective dimension, this criterion becomes the most significant one for Hays, or so he declares: 'It is the most important test: it is in fact another way of asking whether the proposed reading offers a good account of the experience of a contemporary community of competent readers.'⁷¹²

Thus, Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures cannot fully align with either a *part* nor a *whole* approach, but somehow fully encapsulates *and* transcends both. His engagement with the Old Testament occurs on a level beyond (somehow simultaneously both deeper and more *meta* than) *thematic coherence*, but not even Paul is free to autonomously self-determine what constitutes a *good account*. The key concept: Paul's ultimate metaphorical measuring stick for biblical engagement is *community*.

7.2.3. Inner-connectivity summarised: preparation for learning in diverse community

Via both its message and model, the biblical canon presents Christian adult learners with a group of historically, ethnically, theologically diverse individuals whose coming together forms the prototypical Christian learning community. Not only is "the church is a community of a *message*",⁷¹³ but the church also owns a message that has community *built into* its fabric. The biblical canon provides a mandate for diverse Christian community and informs the nature of its own participation in the Church's learning development. As Watson

⁷¹¹ Childs, *The church's guide for reading Paul: the canonical shaping of the Pauline Corpus*, 130.

⁷¹² Allen, "The use of criteria: the state of the question," in *Methodology in the use of the Old Testament in the New: context and criteria* (eds. Allen and Smith; London: T&T Clark, 2020), 133.

⁷¹³ Jenson, *Canon and creed*, 3.

explains, “The scriptural texts function as both source and resource” in that they, “Constantly recall the community to its origin, an indispensable role when a communal identity, ethos and praxis are so closely bound up with that origin. But the canonical texts are resource as well as source. They are there to be *used*, and the manner of that use will be determined by its different contexts”.⁷¹⁴

Watson’s language of *source* and *resource* highlights how the diverse multiplicity within the biblical canon contributes to the substance of CAL dialogue and provides a means of interactive CAL engagement where access to a community of live, learning dialogue is unavailable. Even if practically “intrapersonal dialogue takes place within participants as ‘talking to self’”,⁷¹⁵ as individual learners enter into conversation with the voices of the biblical canonical community, the texts act as a source and resource of dynamic, *disruptive-inclusive* Christian community learning. As such, the Bible provides opportunities for dialogical CAL and a specific model of how this can be achieved.

Thus, this conversation of “divergent voices” not only invites learners to question their existing views of reality but models how each voice’s true pedagogical value is found in dialogue that “accommodate[s] unresolved dissonance”.⁷¹⁶ As Brüggemann explains in response to Childs, “The notion of instability is not an enemy ... but, in fact, an honouring of the detail and nuance of the text that dogmatic closure does not easily entertain or allow”.⁷¹⁷ As a result, it could be said that the biblical, canonical community is the ultimate tool of *optimum distance* in that it provides the necessary *disorientation* that allows learners

⁷¹⁴ Watson, 'Every Perfect Gift'. *James, Paul and the Created Order*, 137.

⁷¹⁵ Rule, "The pedagogy of Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan: A diacognitive analysis," in *HTS Theological Studies* (vol. 73 of, 2017), 3.

⁷¹⁶ Watson, 'Every Perfect Gift'. *James, Paul and the Created Order*, 137.

⁷¹⁷ Brüggemann, "Against the Stream: Brevard Childs's Biblical Theology," 50, no. 2 (1993), 283.

to engage in the process of loss intrinsic to CAL. However, it also requires participation in its wider community, providing learners with sufficient solidarity and re-orientation that in turn enables re-ideologization.⁷¹⁸

However, in an argument fully examined in 7.3, Bennett warns that “The analogy of ‘conversation’ is limited, even misleading, as no text can ever ‘speak’ other than through the head of the reader and the interpretive tradition of which she is part”.⁷¹⁹ In one sense, Bennett’s point importantly highlights that the inextricable links between the biblical texts, readers and their wider interpretive settings (some discussed here, others not) should not be underestimated. However, *disruptive-inclusion* undermines Bennett’s suggestion that a dialogical learning relationship between the distinct *voices* of the biblical texts and learners’ pre-existing views and experiences is impossible. In her exposition of the most helpful prepositions to describe the interpretive posture between learner and text, Bennett seems to suggest the possibility of a two-way relationship. In her preference for “‘me inside the text’ and ‘the text inside me’”, Bennett draws an analogy to Paul’s use of the expression, ‘I in Christ’ and ‘Christ in me’. She argues, “In this way the world is read through the lens of the Bible and its overarching story ... Christians so indwell the story, and it so indwells them, communally and individually, that it becomes the interpretive framework for life”.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ 8.2.2. picks up this argument again in relation to the Bible’s function in restor(y)ing the imagination. In other words, the multiple ways in which the Bible acts as its own *disruptive-inclusive* interpreter.

⁷¹⁹ Bennett, *Using the Bible in practical theology: historical and contemporary perspectives* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Pub., 2013), 26.

⁷²⁰ Bennett, *Using the Bible in practical theology: historical and contemporary perspectives*, 28. In turn, Bennett references Hans Frei in this regard. Frei, *The eclipse of Biblical narrative: a study in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics*.

Therefore, despite her scepticism regarding the possibility of reciprocal learning dialogue between text and reader, Bennett understands the pedagogical agency of both learner and texts, and in referencing the Apostle Paul's language, implicitly acknowledges the paradoxical mystery this entails. Although they disagree on exactly how it works, in summary, Bennett's claim that the Bible functions as *the* interpretive *framework* for life aligns with Hull's insistence of the Bible's pedagogical function as "Not only part of but ... *the* integrating pattern for meaning".⁷²¹ This is possible because of, not despite, the wide variation of contributions included within the biblical canon (and no doubt Bennett would add the wide variety of people who read it).

Finally, the contemporary learner is not limited to observing such conversations at a distance but as Davis beautifully expresses, "Faithful interpretation of Scripture invites and presupposes participation in the communion brought into being by God's redemptive action – the church".⁷²² Thus, at the heart of *disruptive-inclusion* is the claim that the canonical community is the ultimate expression of "multi-dimensional ... relatedness" at the heart of Christianity,⁷²³ and is just one of the ways in which the Bible functions as the *meta-life-world* in which all others find their meaning. While the Church insists that the written canon is closed, active and varied participation in the conversations it raises is not only open but modelled and mandated by its diverse nature. Taking seriously the pedagogical, canonical conversationality of the Bible requires acknowledging that each generation who joins in, does not begin a new conversation but responds to an invitation to participate in dialogue that is both ancient and contemporary, a topic addressed in the following *re-casting*.

⁷²¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 183. Italics mine.

⁷²² Davis, *Teaching the Bible confessionally in the church*, 3.

⁷²³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 81.

7.2.4. Inner-connectivity demonstrated: a musical metaphor of community

The final question addressed in each *re-casting* considers how it can be explained to learners and worked out in practice. In the case of the Bible's, pedagogical *inner-connectivity*, the discussion concludes by asking what language can be used, ideas explained, and classroom exercises done so that learners can both understand and experience the "fine dialectical balance between oneness and plurality" found in the Bible.⁷²⁴ Thus, the following sections offer suggestions as to how the *inner-connectivity* of biblical CAL can be introduced, explained in the classroom, explored within scholarship and independently investigated and experienced by learners.

1. A starting point: biblical learning as investigation, conversation and art

Firstly, Gorman's three-fold description of biblical pedagogy as *investigation, conversation* and *art* provides a strong basis from which to present a multi-faceted, *inner-connected* view of biblical CAL:

Good reading – like good conversation or any sort of investigation – is an art more than a science ... there are certain principles and steps to follow, but knowing what to ask of a text ... can never be accomplished with complete certainty or done with method alone. Rather, an exegete needs not only principles, rules, hard work and research skills, but also intuition, imagination, sensitivity, and even a bit of serendipity on occasion.⁷²⁵

In this regard, the strength of Gorman's definition lies in his explanation of learning *mode* rather than offering a step-by-step methodology. In fact, Gorman demonstrates how biblical learning "Requires an openness to others and the text that method alone cannot provide".⁷²⁶ The overlapping categories of *investigation, conversation* and *art* make space for behind-the-text work; presenting even the most objective of interpretive approaches as

⁷²⁴ Watson, *Gospel writing: a canonical perspective*, 8.

⁷²⁵ Gorman, *Elements of biblical exegesis: a basic guide for students and ministers* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 12.

⁷²⁶ Gorman, *Elements of biblical exegesis: a basic guide for students and ministers*, 12.

necessarily dialogical in nature, but which ultimately cannot be reduced to the accumulation of more information. As an artform, Gorman insists that biblical CAL “Can never be accomplished with a complete certainty or done with method alone”.⁷²⁷

2. Follow-up exercises: the art of musicianship

Following Gorman’s definition, opportunities may be offered for learners to appreciate and test his argument concerning the interweaving of the three learning *modes*: a task many scholars have fruitfully addressed by locating the conversation in the world of music. The first suggestion for a follow-up exercise is akin to *lectio divina*, in which learners are encouraged to imagine themselves as experienced, classical musicians approaching a particular performance. As such, they are invited to acknowledge their reliance on previous training and how the skill of musicianship began many years ago with rigorous application and practice of music theory. Secondly, they also made aware that neither cognitive ascent nor technical excellence alone guarantee an exceptional rendition. Somehow, it is impossible to play a piece identically, twice.

This experience is brought into greater relief by a clip of the final few minutes and judge’s comments from the BBC young musician competition 2016. The panel praise the artist for demonstrating, “Tremendous maturity and depth of feeling and emotional nuance. He’s got the physical technique; he’s got the emotional and mental maturity and most importantly he has a full understanding of this composer. He completely understands what he’s playing”.⁷²⁸ In particular, the judge’s comment, “he completely understands what he’s playing” cannot only refer to the musician’s technical skills or superior possession of information about the

⁷²⁷ Gorman, *Elements of biblical exegesis: a basic guide for students and ministers*, 12.

⁷²⁸ BBC, "Sheku Kanneh-Mason - Winner Young Musician 2016 - Shostakovich Cello Concerto No 1," in *Young Musician 2016* (2016).

composer or their music. Rather, the parallel use of terms such as *technique* and *maturity* and *understanding* demonstrate, in line with Watts' earlier parsing of *data* and *evidence*, the art of biblical CAL is similar to the art of musical performance in that neither result from an entirely objective nor subjective process. There remain multiple incorrect ways to play musical notation but there is also more than one correct way to do the same.

The exercise may then move onto a wider discussion, observing the means by which the judges articulate their decision as to whether the performance is deemed to give *good account* of the piece in question. This may include awareness that a significant marker of an appropriate rendition is based on the musical community's collective opinion as to whether a particular performance is commensurate with how the composer/piece in question has come to be understood. Thus, although not always easily perceptible, biblical learning, like musical performance, is not an isolated, solo activity. Just as a concerto results from musicians in dialogue with themselves as performers, the composer, audience and the wider musical community, so too biblical learning "Is a conversation with ... living and dead, more learned and less learned, absent and present ... it entails listening to others, even others with whom we disagree".⁷²⁹ Neither a musical performer nor a biblical learner's aim is restricted to identically reproducing previous outcomes: unique self-expression should not just be encouraged, but is unavoidable.

Despite raising questions of the qualifications necessary for inclusion in any given community, the above discussion highlights how the Bible's *inner-connectivity* sets a pedagogical model of interactive, community learning, an idea further nuanced by jazz. In

⁷²⁹ Gorman, *Elements of biblical exegesis: a basic guide for students and ministers*, 11.

one sense, jazz is similar to classical music in that technical mastery is a pre-requisite, but alone insufficient for good musicianship. However, in contrast to how the classical musical community functions as a guide to the appropriate application of the rules, the jazz community's role is as model of how to bend and break the rules in line with the mandate to continually find new expression. In short, complete command of the rules is required to participate in the community that continually pushes them to new limits.⁷³⁰

3. Engaging with scholarship: the Black, jazz community

At this point, learners may be given the opportunity to consolidate their understanding of *inner-connectivity* by engaging with wider scholarship on the issue (whether in a classroom setting or as independent research). The ways the above sense of community provides both pedagogical freedom and simultaneous boundaries is epitomised by Martin in his description of improvisation: "The notion of improvisation better traces that there is no one right interpretation of a text of Scripture, but that does not mean that all interpretations are just as good as all the others ... but the results are genuinely true and Christian will be those that creatively interpret Scripture within the boundaries and expectations of Christianity".⁷³¹ In this sense, a biblical pedagogy that exclusively asserts the sufficiency of the historical-critical quest for the *correct* answer will never be able to be truly Christian.⁷³²

Anthony Reddie's chapter in Hull's 2006 Festschrift, *Telling a new story: reconfiguring Christian Education for the challenges of the twenty-first century* details how "a jazz

⁷³⁰ The connection between Christianity and jazz is perhaps most popularly expressed by Donald Miller in *Blue Like Jazz*: "I never liked jazz music because jazz music doesn't resolve ... I used to not like God because God didn't resolve." Miller, *Blue like jazz: nonreligious thoughts on Christian spirituality* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2012), vii.

⁷³¹ Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: an analysis and proposal*, 87.

⁷³² Bruce Birch draws a similar connection between jazz and midrash as "Ways that extend the meaning of the text and often make the text more accessible to contemporary experience." Birch, "The Arts, Midrash, and Biblical Teaching," 8, no. 2 (2005), 115.

hermeneutic” can form the basis for “an anti-racist approach to Christian education”⁷³³ and nuances the above observations even further. As will become increasingly clear through this chapter, where even the fundamental pattern of jazz *seems* to be casting off the past to move forward, actually the past and present are required to work in deep synergism. As Reddie puts it, “Jazz musicians are constantly re-working an established melody in order to create something new and spontaneous for that split moment in time”.⁷³⁴ He continues, “Improvisation is never totally created or made up on the spot; one does not create new art in a vacuum. All jazz improvisation is a negotiation between what has been conceived previously and what emerges in that specific moment ... ‘it all comes from someplace, it isn’t entirely yours to make it up as you like, you have a responsibility for this stuff’”.⁷³⁵

At the heart of arguably the most free-form, creative communities in the world, Reddie identifies a critical balance at work between freedom of self-expression and responsibility not to *make it up as you like*. Reddie claims, a Black jazz musician’s performance is not simply the playing of a selection of notes but participation in a process that “has been an important chronicler of the Black experience”.⁷³⁶ As such, the musician carries both the privilege and responsibility of representing and celebrating the community’s past and present in their performance. In terms of the combination of historical-critical and canonical

⁷³³ Reddie, "Telling a new story: reconfiguring Christian Education for the challenges of the twenty-first century" in *Education, religion and society: essays in honour of John M. Hull* (eds. Bates, et al.; London: Routledge, 2006), 120-122.

⁷³⁴ Reddie, *Telling a new story: reconfiguring Christian Education for the challenges of the twenty-first century*, 121.

⁷³⁵ Reddie, *Telling a new story: reconfiguring Christian Education for the challenges of the twenty-first century*, 122.

⁷³⁶ Reddie, *Telling a new story: reconfiguring Christian Education for the challenges of the twenty-first century*, 121. In a pattern more fully explored in the following section, a *disruptive-inclusive* pedagogy turns the traditional interpretational circle *inside-out*, i.e., the *disruptive* experiences of those often deemed on the peripheries or unimportant in interpretive conversations are placed in the centre of the interpretational framework. Here, the Black jazz community naturally embodies disruptive learning in ways that other groups’ identities and experiences cannot.

approaches in biblical CAL, this example of simultaneous invitation into fresh, innovative self-expression and boundaries created by responsibility and accountability to the wider community, is the closest example I have yet found as to how the biblical canon functions as community in *disruptive-inclusive* CAL.

The biblical, canonical community does not represent *perfection*, in terms of having fully attained and presenting the solution to the reader (as discussed at length in 2.3.3.) but offers a model for meaningful participation in the tension of diverse CAL communities.

Reddie's below summary of how the Black jazz community embodies tension is equally applicable to *disruptive-inclusive* biblical CAL:

It straddles the contradictions between a group of intensely fierce individuals who come together to join forces to make music. This is a voluntary engagement for jazz is a form that eschews rigid conventions or categorisations. It demands mutuality and community, and yet it has ... been built around the searing geniuses and contradictions of brilliant soloists. It is free form and yet demands certain rules and conventions working alongside with others – those with whom one might not possess any empathy or love.⁷³⁷

4. A task: working with divergent voices

In many formal learning settings, learning is (normally) assessed by means of a written assignment. Questions of the appropriateness of this format aside (further research is required – see 9.2.1.), learners may be given an opportunity to practise their understanding of an *inner-connected* view of the Bible through a task or assignment similar to the following:

Watson presents the contrasting contributions of Paul and James to the biblical canon as the quintessential examples of how the aim of biblical learning requires uniting “different voices ... in a single polyphonic structure.” He continues, we must resist the need “to compel Paul

⁷³⁷ Reddie, *Telling a new story: reconfiguring Christian Education for the challenges of the twenty-first century*, 122.

and James to sing from the same hymn-sheet” and see the fact that “two such divergent world views coexist within the same collection of canonical writings,” as an opportunity to participate in “the perpetual struggle of the faith community to test different perspectives”.⁷³⁸ Without *compelling Paul and James to sing from the same hymn-sheet*, how can Ephesians 2:8-9 and James 2:17-18 be read together as contributing to a *single polyphonic biblical structure*?

7.3. Re-casting an inter-connected biblical pedagogy: old and new; centre and periphery

The first *re-casting* argued that the diversity and *inner-connectivity* of the biblical canon invites interactive dialogue as an alternative to *disconnected*, biblical CAL created via the abstraction of information from individual passages and associated isolation of learners. This second *re-casting* builds on the first in undermining “The capacity of autonomous reason to read the Bible correctly and objectively. That is ... an interpreter is able to read, think and interpret without the support of or dependence upon interpretive communities”.⁷³⁹ Despite this shared starting point, this *re-casting* is also distinct from the last. Where the former focus was on the Bible’s dialogical function between *part* and *whole*, this section considers the *inter-connectivity* between learning communities who have interpreted the Bible throughout history - a concept summarised well by Birch:

One of the fundamental concerns of biblical teaching in theological education is to impress upon students that biblical texts do not come to us directly from the witness of the biblical communities where they originate. Biblical texts have been handed on to us through a long history of interpretation, and they are read and interpreted only in the context of communities of readers both past and present.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁸ Davis, *Teaching the Bible confessionally in the church*, 16.

⁷³⁹ Brüggemann, *The re-emergence of Scripture: post-liberalism*, 153.

⁷⁴⁰ Birch, "The Arts, Midrash, and Biblical Teaching", 114.

In simple terms, contemporary learners do not embark on biblical CAL from scratch. Just as the Bible's canonical *inner-connectivity* undermines the superiority of *part* approaches to biblical CAL and reveals how they can be employed in concert with *whole* approaches, so too its historical *inter-connectivity* resists the tendency to prioritise the disconnected, new and novel and casts the historical community of biblical interpretation as a rich, pedagogical resource, not defunct relic.

7.3.1. *Inter-connectivity explained: two-way traffic*

In *What Prevents...?*, Hull describes *inter-connectivity* as the connection between “That which the text has since created and may still create”.⁷⁴¹ As discussed in relation to the pedagogical metaphor of horizon (5.2.2.), Hull summarises that the biblical texts embed the learner in the present *by* connecting them to the interpretational past and future. “The text, in other words, is the horizon, the point at which the world behind and the world in front are fused”.⁷⁴² This interpretive space *in-between* text and reader is reminiscent of Reddie's jazz metaphor: future progress occurs in the synergy between past and present.

As analysed in 7.2., Brüggemann describes this as *canonical process* and claims that its importance is deeply linked with the biblical texts' fundamental *vitality*. “Canon has to do with life. And in the end there can be no noncanonical life or ministry which can have any sense, meaning, joy, or certainly, staying power”.⁷⁴³ Therefore, while few dispute that *canonical shape* is set and closed, *canonical process* is, by definition, ongoing, “There is not a learner in the church, young or old, who is not in fact engaged in the process of the

⁷⁴¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 23.

⁷⁴² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 23.

⁷⁴³ Brüggemann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 7.

canon".⁷⁴⁴ Where the canonical community of the biblical texts initiates a diverse learning conversation, the canonical community of the learning Church throughout history facilitates and perpetuates its pedagogical potential.⁷⁴⁵

Therefore, Hull's biblical pedagogy of CAL necessitates an intrinsic connection between *old* and *new*. He argues that it has always been the practice of the Church to participate in *new* biblical learning, not to demonstrate the inadequacies of previous efforts but to participate in ongoing, interactive learning dialogue. Thus, Hull presents the following interpretive pattern as "The principle educational treasure for contemporary Christian life".⁷⁴⁶ He continues, "We study church history up to the year AD 451 in order to free us from the presuppositions which we draw from post-Reformation Christian faith, and we study contemporary Christian life and thoughts in order to free us from the assumption of the Victorian church and vice versa".⁷⁴⁷ To the first *re-casting's* relationship between *part* and *whole*, is thus added the ongoing, developing relationship between continuity and discontinuity. Brüggenmann argues that the process by which *old texts* constantly find *new expression* offers,⁷⁴⁸ "Continuity of vision, value and perception so that the community sustains its self-identity. At the same time, such maintenance must assure enough freedom and novelty so that the community can survive in and be pertinent to new circumstances. Thus, education must attend both to processes of continuity and discontinuity".⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁴ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 7.

⁷⁴⁵ *Learning Church* is the title of the video Hull made in 2014: Hull, *North West and Mann Learning and Development Network: The Learning Church*.

⁷⁴⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 79.

⁷⁴⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 79.

⁷⁴⁸ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 6.

⁷⁴⁹ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 1.

In Hull's words, the historical learning community facilitates the contemporary learning Church in "Avoid[ing] the hazards of rigid *fossilization* which hold to a frozen, unresponsive canon, and ... a deep *relativizing* which gives up everything for a moment of relevance".⁷⁵⁰ Thus, according to the guiding principles of Hull's biblical pedagogy that introduced these *re-castings*, biblical CAL throughout the ages models "A series of layers of re-ideologization, each superimposed upon earlier layers".⁷⁵¹ Biblical CAL is not a one-off process, but a heritage in which each generations participates. As such, Hull concludes that his thoughts on the repeated and inter-connected interpretations of the Bible constitute, "An educational application of the much-discussed hermeneutical circle ... in which interpretation depends on previous interpretation and while re-interpretation is always possible and always necessary it will always operate within meaning defined by other meanings within the system".⁷⁵²

In this sense, *inter-connected* biblical CAL might be envisaged in terms of a mid-twentieth century telephone call, with the biblical texts represented by the call's origin and the contemporary learner by its recipient, with the *system* (i.e., the Church both past and present) providing the hardware to enable the call. However, the metaphor also requires that the Church is also represented by an ever-growing number of telephone exchange operators, both connecting calls and remaining on the line to participate in multi-way conversations. This undermines any sense of the superiority of newness, or the inferiority of

⁷⁵⁰ Brüggenmann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 6-7.

⁷⁵¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 80-81.

⁷⁵² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 79-80. This idea is variously expressed in the form of a spiral. "A spiral is a better metaphor because it is not a closed circle but rather an open-ended movement from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the reader" Osborne, *The hermeneutical spiral: a comprehensive introduction to biblical interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 22. The intersection between a *disruptive-inclusive* biblical pedagogy and Thiselton's work on the hermeneutical circle and spiral are deserving of further research.

distance from the call's origin. As Seitz summarises, all the voices in the conversation are "Equidistant and at once proximate to the subject matter they both share".⁷⁵³ This is possible because as the conversation develops, the dialogue occurs reciprocally, not chronologically (represented in Hull's use of the phrase *vice versa*). It is not just past learning that facilitates present interpretation but also contemporary learning that facilitates a growing understanding of the past. In a by now familiar approach, Kwok imagines the Bible to function in "creating a polyphonic theological discourse".⁷⁵⁴

Kwok is the first of several feminist scholars considered here whose contribution concerning the nature of the connection between biblical texts, learning communities and *new* readings of the text have significant implications for biblical CAL. At first glance, Kwok's arguments resonate strongly with the key tenets of *disruptive-inclusion*. In particular, her description of "Attempts to bridge the gaps of time and space, to create new horizons, and to connect disparate elements of our lives into a meaningful whole"⁷⁵⁵ as "dialogical imagination" brings into relief the "Two-way traffic between our own tradition and that of the Bible".⁷⁵⁶ It is a process, she explains, in which, "On the one hand we have to imagine how the biblical tradition – formulated in another time and in another culture – can address our burning questions of today. On the other hand, based on our present circumstances, we have to re-imagine what the biblical world was like, thus opening up new horizons hitherto hidden from us".⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵³ Seitz, *The character of Christian Scripture: the significance of a two-Testament Bible*, 171.

⁷⁵⁴ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 32.

⁷⁵⁵ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 13. See also Kwok, *Postcolonial imagination and feminist theology*, 38-44.

⁷⁵⁶ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 12.

⁷⁵⁷ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 13.

Dialogical imagination nuances Hull's insistence that biblical CAL cannot avoid forging connections between *old* and *new* by demonstrating how learners' ability to *re-imagine the biblical world* based on *present circumstances* means that learning will always be *new*.

However, simultaneously, given the necessity for learners to bring their own tradition to the process, neither can the task begin nor end in the present. Moreover, because both elements of the task Kwok outlines remain unchanged since earliest biblical interpretations, it is also an unavoidably a very *old* process. However, in distinct contrast to Hull, in the Bible's "closed canon", Kwok perceives a pedagogical model defined by her own and others' limitation and exclusion from the ongoing learning conversation, leading her to the conclusion, "I ... do not think that the Bible provides the norm for interpretation in itself".⁷⁵⁸ Similar to Bennett's claim that "Texts do *not* speak to us, individuals and communities of interpretation do",⁷⁵⁹ Kwok continues, "The critical principle lies not in the Bible itself, but in the community of women and men who read the Bible and through their dialogical imagination, appropriate it for their own liberation".⁷⁶⁰

On one hand I support Kwok and Bennett's insistence that the connection between the biblical texts and *all* the communities who learn from them must not be underestimated. I also echo and will later fully unpack, the greater imperative for this to occur in relation to the participation of historically disempowered "peripheral groups" in biblical, CAL conversations.⁷⁶¹ However, on the other hand, I do not agree that empowering *new* biblical learning necessitates downgrading or decentralising the pedagogical import of *old* texts nor their historically *old* interpretations in two specific senses.

⁷⁵⁸ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 18.

⁷⁵⁹ Ayres, *The Patristic hermeneutic heritage*, 27.

⁷⁶⁰ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 19.

⁷⁶¹ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 12-16 & 19.

Firstly, the reciprocal relationship Kwok imagines between text and learner/ learner's tradition resists competitive definition. As has been defined throughout, successful biblical CAL does not require the avoidance of conflict between life-worlds. As Kwok herself claims, "In the end we must liberate ourselves from a hierarchical model of truth",⁷⁶² and therefore rather than displacing the *old texts* as the *norm* and replacing them with something *newer*, *disruptive-inclusion* posits that a more dramatic inter-informative paradigm shift is required as opposed to just a re-ordering of priorities within the pre-existing framework. Other elements of Kwok's work consolidate the case for a more equitable, collaborative relationship. For example, she insists that the Bible ought not "to be taken as the norm *by itself*".⁷⁶³ She also details various ways in which, as a story of "The continual struggle of anxious prophets, sinners, prostitutes, and tax-collectors",⁷⁶⁴ the biblical narrative participates in resistance against its own oppressive use and is the means by which "Groups, which used to be peripheral in the Christian Church, are revitalizing the Church at its center".⁷⁶⁵

Secondly, resulting from this relationship between *old* and *new*, and in a theme fully addressed shortly, Kwok's female, Chinese identity does not make her an *outlier* in biblical CAL. Rather, than being forced to deny or somehow overcome her own identity, if the biblical narrative is fundamentally concerned with, and postured as, a collection of stories that actively disrupt societal norms (of any era), Kwok (and others represented by her arguments) personifies a quintessential biblical learner and teacher. As is so often the case in the message of the biblical narrative, those deemed *peripheral* in society find themselves at

⁷⁶² Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 19.

⁷⁶³ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 18.

⁷⁶⁴ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 19.

⁷⁶⁵ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 19.

the heart of the Christian story. As those well practised in living with, telling and re-telling *disruptive* stories in order to see self and others *included*, Kwok embodies the qualities and possesses the skills of an ideal *disruptive-inclusive* teacher and learner.

Schüssler-Fiorenza neatly expresses the *old* and *new* aspects of biblical CAL raised here:

Instead of reducing the historical richness of the Bible to an abstract principle, timeless norm, or ontologically immutable archetype which is to be repeated from generation to generation, a critical hermeneutics of liberation seeks to reclaim the whole Bible as a formative root-model; that is, as a historical-ecclesial prototype. To read the Bible not as an unchanging archetype but as a structuring prototype is to understand it as an open-ended paradigm that sets experience in motion and makes transformation possible.⁷⁶⁶

Schüssler-Fiorenza's incisive contrast between the Bible as *unchanging archetype* and *structuring prototype* reframes the Bible from both *Alpha* and *Omega* of its own *disassociated* learning conversation to functioning within a constantly outward-facing biblical pedagogy in which the texts require dialogue partners. She also envisages this *prototype* functioning as a *historical-ecclesial* tool, further suggesting that biblical historicity is not only located in the context in which the texts were conceived and written but the ecclesial settings in which they have since been read and interpreted. As Watson outlines in his critique of the Quest for the Historical Jesus, "Access to an uninterrupted 'historical' figure by abstracting him from his own reception" is futile. He concludes that "The question of who Jesus was or is in himself cannot be differentiated from who he was or is for others, whether disciples or opponents".⁷⁶⁷

In the most basic terms, understanding the Bible's pedagogical role in terms of a *structuring prototype* expands the primary biblical pedagogical enquiry from only "What did it originally mean?" to "What has it since been understood to mean?" In this way, not only does

⁷⁶⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, *But she said: feminist practices of biblical interpretation*, 149.

⁷⁶⁷ Watson, *Gospel writing: a canonical perspective*, 8.

Schüssler-Fiorenza's reference to a biblical *prototype* align with Brüggemann's claim that the biblical canon is dialogically *openended*, but her reference to the Bible as *paradigm* also reinforces the suggestion that it sets the tone and offers interpretational boundaries for subsequent dialogue as described in the opening *re-casting*. Thus, again we arrive at a definition of biblical CAL as a process of simultaneous exchange: "A canonical enterprise of probing the normative, of casting off the ... no longer vital, and of embracing new aspects ... which address us inescapably".⁷⁶⁸

Although Kwok and Schüssler-Fiorenza would likely be slightly more cautious than Hull in denoting biblical pedagogical function as "Not only part of but ... *the* integrating pattern for meaning",⁷⁶⁹ all three imagine multi-way dialogues between the biblical texts in their original setting, the various, intervening historical contexts in which they have been read since and contemporary learning settings. Thus, given the earlier focus on Hull's determination to make the Bible universally accessible, I am convinced that it is with a similar determination to Kwok and Schüssler-Fiorenza to broaden and deepen the participation of all learners that Hull claims the Bible as "The ultimate framework ... within which all other stories are contained".⁷⁷⁰

7.3.2. Inter-connectivity illustrated: pre-critical biblical learning

There is insufficient space to analyse all the issues raised by defining biblical pedagogy as multi-way conversation between *old* and new. However, some of the potential, key implications for CAL methodology and practice are particularly well demonstrated by the example of pre-critical biblical interpretation. While it is important to recognise that, "pre-

⁷⁶⁸ Brüggemann, *The creative word: canon as a model for Biblical education*, 7.

⁷⁶⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 183. Italics mine.

⁷⁷⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 182.

critical exegesis” is no monolith. It is, rather, an unfolding story, a quest full of twists and turns, even substantial disagreements”,⁷⁷¹ the patterns common to many ancient approaches to biblical teaching and learning have been almost unequivocally denigrated in the modern imagination as primitive and uneducated, “swallowed up in arbitrarily pious or pedantic fantasy”,⁷⁷² or just deemed plain incorrect. Ironically, however, analysis of contemporary dismissals of pre-critical biblical readings serve to highlight the potential contribution of *old* learning to ongoing pedagogical conversation in several ways.

Firstly, and most generally, in considering a range of pre-critical readings of the biblical texts, contemporary learners “find [] allies in our neglected past”⁷⁷³ - companions in what Bennett presents as a *struggle* with the texts that re-enacts Jacob’s bruising encounter in Genesis 32. She argues that the latest generation of learners should not expect the Bible simply to give up a straightforward, *correct* answer any more than has been the experience of the Church throughout history. Rather, “We manage ... growth and wrestle with ... questions in relationship to the communities of faith that have nurtured us, that have taught us how to read the Bible and to which we belong”.⁷⁷⁴ This engenders learning disruption in that there is no, single, unequivocal reading for modern learners to lean on, consolidated over time by the fact that such tension is not new but its “friction has been allowed to stand” by multiple, intervening generations.⁷⁷⁵ John Thompson summarises this idea well: “In our own engagement with the troubling stories of Scripture, we may be reassured and challenged by

⁷⁷¹ Treier, "The superiority of pre-critical exegesis? Sic Et Non*," 24, no. 1 (2003), 79.

⁷⁷² Daley, "Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms," in *The art of reading Scripture* (eds. Davis and Hays; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2003), 71.

⁷⁷³ Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the dead: what you can learn from the history of exegesis that you can't learn from exegesis alone* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2007), 6.

⁷⁷⁴ Ayres, *The Patristic hermeneutic heritage*, 12.

⁷⁷⁵ Seitz, *The character of Christian Scripture: the significance of a two-Testament Bible*, 37-38.

the witness of past interpreters ... They worried, they wrestled. Sometimes they were glib or unfeeling. At other times they found something to say by bringing to bear not only their sympathy and imagination, but also a profound moral compass".⁷⁷⁶

In her reflections on the strengths of patristic readings of the Bible, Frances Young similarly reflects that, "Historico-critical research ... yields no hermeneutic".⁷⁷⁷ Therefore, avoiding an interpretive approach in which the Bible becomes only "an object of archaeological interest",⁷⁷⁸ requires that we take seriously those who have drawn connections between its narrative and their lives before us, and as Young particularly stresses, pay particular attention to *how* they did this. Equally, Brüggenmann's work on the Psalms speaks of their "full kerygmatic power" as not fully realised in attempts to "penetrate back to what was 'really there originally'",⁷⁷⁹ but only fully represented in the inclusion of the lives of those who have (and continue to) read it and speak into their present circumstances.

Relying strongly on the work of Paul Ricoeur, who, in turn, draws on Freud, Brüggenmann specifically highlights how this results in a dialectical hermeneutic of "*displacement* and *recapture*"⁷⁸⁰ in which "the first task – the displacement – cannot be separated from the second task – the recapture of meaning in interpretation".⁷⁸¹ Thus, Brüggenmann understands the Psalms as guiding readers on the repeated journey of *displacement* and

⁷⁷⁶ Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the dead: what you can learn from the history of exegesis that you can't learn from exegesis alone*, 31.

⁷⁷⁷ Young, *Biblical exegesis and the formation of Christian culture* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 4.

⁷⁷⁸ Young, *Biblical exegesis and the formation of Christian culture*, 3.

⁷⁷⁹ Brüggenmann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function*, 12.

⁷⁸⁰ Brüggenmann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function*, 12.

⁷⁸¹ Ricoeur, *Freud and philosophy: an essay on interpretation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970), 423-424. Interestingly also, in relation to earlier references to the hermeneutical circle or spiral, Ricoeur asserts a *knitting together* of meaning and interpretation that results in "a second naïveté" Ricoeur and Buchanan, *The symbolism of evil* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1969), 351. In short, although learners may arrive back at seeming the *same place*, their journey to that point enables them to experience it differently.

recapture, which as alluded to earlier, is well summarised as a (yet another) threefold journey through “A., being securely oriented. B., being painfully disoriented, C., being surprisingly reoriented”.⁷⁸² Brüggenmann’s focus on the Psalms’ pedagogical function does not suggest his ambivalence to their meaning but highlights his belief that the *function* of the biblical text helpfully draws attention to “*commonality ... even when other matters diverge*”⁷⁸³ without underplaying any disparities between ancient and modern audiences. Hull expresses a similar idea in claiming, “The biblical text is ... the point at which the Christian consciousness becomes faithful to the present”.⁷⁸⁴

Thompson explores the implications of this idea of connecting old texts and new readers in commonality of function by suggesting that ancient and contemporary biblical learning find common ground in basic, shared humanity. For example, he suggests that even though some historical readers of the Bible’s more violent or abusive passages may navigate the ensuing ethical quandaries on different terms to their contemporary counterparts, many ancient interpreters were no less moved nor concerned by what is generally held as their unnecessary brutality. He reflects, “One moving discovery was finding a number of poignant laments raised on behalf of biblical women such as Hagar and Jephthah’s daughter. Coming from the pens of church father, medieval monks, and Protestant Reformers, these laments look for all the world like molds for later feminist castings”.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸² Mudge, “Crossing frontiers without a map—the role of threshold concepts and problematic knowledge in religious education and spirituality”, 55.

⁷⁸³ Brüggenmann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function*, 4.

⁷⁸⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 23.

⁷⁸⁵ Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the dead: what you can learn from the history of exegesis that you can't learn from exegesis alone*, 9.

Despite the fact that ancient biblical interpretations may seem jarring and culturally distanced from the contemporary world, commonalities are still possible in the parallel disruptive, interpretative impact created. As Spear rightly points out, although, “The times ... were different ... the times were also the same. During those times, there were men and women who never questioned the rules and roles that structured their existence, who didn’t know that the culture that gave their lives meaning and purpose could in time become a prison”.⁷⁸⁶ Thus, disparate, Christian, historical learning communities are united by the ways in which texts have challenged and disrupted their hitherto taken-for-granted truths.

Secondly, and contrary to the widely-held belief that “Early Christian interpreters were generally as careless of questions of authorship, textual intelligibility, or original context as is often supposed”,⁷⁸⁷ in general, pre-modern interpretation engages in a reciprocal, *connected* learning style far more easily than many modern interpreters. This is because the concept of disconnecting *part* and *whole* and *old* and *new* had not yet gained popularity. In short, both contemporary, contextual critics and pre-critical commentators share a common dissatisfaction “With the sort of historical-critical exegesis that explains a text in terms of historical causes but never addresses the meaning of impact of what a text says”.⁷⁸⁸

Thus, it is misleading to speak of the *connection* pre-critical learners understood between a given text’s meaning and subsequent *real-life* application (what Young refers to as “earthly” and “heavenly” meanings⁷⁸⁹) because any such separation was yet to be conceived. It is not

⁷⁸⁶ Spear, "The Transformation of Enculturated Consciousness in the Teachings of Jesus," 3, no. 4 (2005), 372.

⁷⁸⁷ Daley, *Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, 77.

⁷⁸⁸ Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the dead: what you can learn from the history of exegesis that you can't learn from exegesis alone*, 9. Specifically referencing Augustine’s biblical engagement, Riemer Roukema claims, “Although we cannot expect Augustine to say that an exegesis of Scripture should first of all be historically correct, he appears to be aware of the necessity to faithfully reproduce what the writer demonstrably meant to say”. Roukema, "The Good Samaritan in Ancient Christianity," 58, no. 1 (2004), 74.

⁷⁸⁹ Young, *Biblical exegesis and the formation of Christian culture*, 3.

far-fetched to suggest that if early interpreters were able to comment on twentieth century exegetical and hermeneutical practice, they would echo Bennett's comment:

At first sight it may look as if there are two kinds of issues to be wrestled with: the struggle for understanding of what the text the text says and the struggle to integrate the text with life ... but the two are not really so different. There is no living out that is not embedded in an interpretation, and no interpretation that is not firmly rooted in life and so is conditioned by the life lived.⁷⁹⁰

Brian Daley explains how for patristic biblical learners, "What one might call the text's authentic *biblical* meaning" was considered "An organic part of the whole received complex of the word of God." In fact, he clarifies, "*Explaining what the text means in itself* was not seen as separate from explaining *what it has to say to the church*". Rather, he continues, "The real content of the Bible – was a single, universally significant story, an unfinished story".⁷⁹¹ David Steinmetz extends this in claiming, "Medieval exegetes held to the sober middle way, the position that the text ... contains both letter and spirit".⁷⁹² For our purposes, this means that pre-critical biblical interpretations do not require *re-casting* to maximise potential for *direct pedagogical conflict* because they naturally take this holistic form anyway. Young summarises,

The modern divorce between biblical exegesis and systematic theology, or indeed between biblical exegesis and praxis, would have been unthinkable in the days of the Fathers. The question of meaning was deeply affected by the issue of truth, by what was conceptually possible given the limitations of religious language, and by what was the perceived reference outside the text.⁷⁹³

Thirdly, in a point highlighted by Thompson earlier, because pre-critical biblical CAL "is generally free from the judgments about how to find the Bible's authentic meaning that seem so constricting, so theologically inhibited and inhibiting, to many modern religious

⁷⁹⁰ Bennett, *Using the Bible in practical theology: historical and contemporary perspectives*, 30.

⁷⁹¹ Daley, *Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, 78.

⁷⁹² Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," 37, no. 1 (1980), 37.

⁷⁹³ Young, *Biblical exegesis and the formation of Christian culture*, 4.

readers",⁷⁹⁴ it is more effective in facilitating dialogue concerning themes and passages many contemporary learners consider disruptive or disconcerting. Steinmetz's classic address of the subject makes exactly this point, "Unless Psalm 137 has more than one possible meaning, it cannot be used as a prayer by the church and must be rejected as a lament exclusively to the piety of ancient Israel".⁷⁹⁵ Thus, in direct contrast to the creation of a pedagogical *canon within a canon* in which the Bible's more intuitively comforting and encouraging passages are deemed of most use and value, pre-critical biblical CAL offers both a challenge and encouragement to thoroughly engage the entire biblical narrative (in fact, arguably, it emphasises the more ethically challenging parts).

7.3.3. Inter-connectivity modelled: a parable

Following the pattern of 7.2., this *re-casting* concludes with practical ideas as to how its approach may be used in contemporary CAL understanding and practice. The following worked example takes the form of a reflection on a student assignment from my teaching experience focused on various, historical and contemporary readings of the passage generally known as *The Good Samaritan* (Luke 10:29-37). It outlines the task and learner responses, offers analysis of the task in light of an *inter-connected* approach to biblical CAL and finally extracts some further implications for the shape of a *disruptive-inclusive* biblical pedagogy of CAL.

⁷⁹⁴ Daley, *Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, 73.

⁷⁹⁵ Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis", 29-30.

1. The task

As part of a module called, *The Bible for the Church*, students were set an assignment comparing and contrasting various interpretations of Luke 10:29-37 (the passage generally referred to as *The Good Samaritan*).⁷⁹⁶ These included the allegorical interpretation of Augustine; two different *canonically* focused interpretations from Amy-Jill Levine and Craig Evans and a contextually driven interpretation through the lens of the Indian caste system by M. Gnanavaram.⁷⁹⁷ The task set was to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each reading, explain the basis on which these decisions were made and compare others' interpretational decisions to their own.

2. Learner responses

While none of the interpretations received unequivocal support from the student body, Augustine's garnered the most scepticism - well represented by one student's comment that "Augustine's detailed and rather mystical allegorical interpretation was the most surprising, even disturbing, to me." This view aligns with the many contemporary scholarly dismissals of Augustine's reading as "extrinsic" and "farfetched"⁷⁹⁸ due to its "spiritual interpretation"⁷⁹⁹ of its many elements.⁸⁰⁰ Central to their distaste is Augustine's insistence that the Samaritan figure represents Christ restoring humanity from certain death (in line with many other early

⁷⁹⁶ From 2015 – 2020, I taught at King's School of Theology (<https://kingstheology.org/>), an independent theological training college, whose students are mostly drawn from Charismatic Evangelical churches.

⁷⁹⁷ See Teske, "The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) in Augustine's Exegesis," in *Augustine: biblical exegete* (eds. Van Fleteren and Schnaubelt; New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang, 2001), Levine, "The Many Faces of the Good Samaritan-Most Wrong," 38, no. 1 (2012), Evans, "Luke's Good Samaritan and the Chronicler's Good Samaritan," in *Biblical interpretation in early Christian Gospels. Vol. 3, Gospel of Luke* (ed. Hatina; London: T&T Clark, 2010) and Gnanavaram, "'Dalit Theology' and the Parable of the Good Samaritan," 15, no. 50 (1993).

⁷⁹⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 1995), 885.

⁷⁹⁹ Teske, *The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) in Augustine's Exegesis*, 349.

⁸⁰⁰ For example, Augustine identifies the inn where the attacked man recovers as the Church, the Samaritan's animal that carries the victim as Christ's body and the innkeeper, as Paul. A range of significant early interpreters offered thoughts on this particular passage with notably Clement and Origen also taking allegorical approaches. See Roukema, "The Good Samaritan in Ancient Christianity".

views). In contrast, Levine and Evans' conclusions centre around the idea that the passage's primary concern is with "how enemies can prove to be neighbours" or a wider call to "reassess [a] narrow view of who qualifies as ... 'neighbour'⁸⁰¹ built on allusions to 2 Chronicles 28. Similarly, Gnanavaram's contextualisation points out the similarities between the outcast Samaritan in the Ancient Near East and downtrodden Dalit in contemporary Indian society.

A dominant theme from students well-drilled in the importance of not taking a passage 'out of context', was to judge the various readings of Luke 10:29-37 according to their perceived proximity to original/authorial intention. One student summarised the concern that "The interpreter will seek to make the text support his or her preconceived argument rather than allowing it to speak on its own terms". Despite this however, students' general openness to Gnanavaram's central premise and comparatively strong distaste for Augustine's is intriguing. In general, students failed to observe that neither interpreter claims their reading to be "identical to 'the meaning' for the original audience".⁸⁰² Gnanavaram unapologetically contextualises the passage in an Indian cultural setting and Augustine (like many of his contemporaries) sees no conflict in arguing, "That the content of the parable interpreted in the Christological sense is true, even if Luke did not intend that sense".⁸⁰³ Regardless, many students accused Augustine of not adhering to interpretational rules that in Young's words, "belonged to the future"⁸⁰⁴ meanwhile praising Gnanavaram for what they considered

⁸⁰¹ Levine, "The Many Faces of the Good Samaritan-Most Wrong", 24 and Evans, "Luke's Good Samaritan and the Chronicler's Good Samaritan," in *Biblical interpretation in early Christian Gospels. Vol. 3, Gospel of Luke* (ed. Hatina; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 42.

⁸⁰² Gnanavaram, "'Dalit Theology' and the Parable of the Good Samaritan", 75.

⁸⁰³ Teske, *The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) in Augustine's Exegesis*, 356.

⁸⁰⁴ Young, *Biblical exegesis and the formation of Christian culture*, 10.

overall to be appropriate contemporary contextualisation of the passage (despite it being impossible to argue as original/authorial).

3. Analysis

Investigating why so many contemporary learners find Augustine's reading so counter-intuitive and Gnanavaram's (and others like it) equally praiseworthy, requires a much more in-depth consideration of the pedagogical assumptions at play. Stephen Spear's explanation of Jesus' foundational teaching approach provides a helpful frame for the discussion. In line with the earlier description of biblical pedagogy facilitating learner movement between different *life-worlds*, Spear's assessment of the pedagogical function of Luke 10:29-37 identifies Gnanavaram and Augustine's readings of Luke 10:29-37 as seeking to "Crack the enculturated consciousness of his listeners, thereby moving them from a conventional to a postconventional consciousness and worldview".⁸⁰⁵ Or, as William Herzog describes, Jesus' parables "Re-present a familiar or typified scene for the purpose of generating conversation about it and stimulating the kinds of reflection that expose contradictions in popularly held beliefs or traditional thinking".⁸⁰⁶

Postponing analysis of the role of learning *consciousness* until chapter 8, the concepts of exposing contradictions by refusing pedagogical compartmentalisation and describing CAL as movement from *conventional* to *postconventional*, resonate deeply within a *disruptive-inclusive* framework, particularly in respect of learners separating from hitherto unquestioned beliefs to embrace new thoughts and actions. For Gnanavaram, whose primary interpretation of Luke 10:29-37 centres around how to be a good *neighbour*, he

⁸⁰⁵ Spear, "The Transformation of Enculturated Consciousness in the Teachings of Jesus", 354.

⁸⁰⁶ Herzog, *Parables as subversive speech: Jesus as pedagogue of the oppressed* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 26.

exchanges the *conventional* model of *neighbourliness* associated with power and privilege with a *postconventional* model in which the Samaritan's identity as victim of negative and oppressive societal stereotypes inversely qualifies him as the ideal neighbour. Gnanavaram draws a particular, direct connection between the social exclusion of ancient Samaritans and contemporary Dalits in Indian cultural consciousness. "Dalits cannot be taken as models" in Indian society but Jesus' story inverts this to suggest, "Dalit people should be no more be ashamed of being Dalits" and can be "Rid of their inferiority complex and slave mentality ... as an integral part of Dalit consciousness".⁸⁰⁷

Ultimately, however, Gnanavaram's interpretation does not make contemporary identification with the Samaritan *neighbour* impossible. Rather, his reading suggests that emulating his neighbourly actions relies on the inversion of traditional definitions of power and privilege. Herzog argues that the principal reason why political and religious authorities perceived Jesus' teaching as such a threat is because he "Exposed exploitation and demystified the forms of legitimation used to sanctify oppression".⁸⁰⁸ On the other hand, Augustine's reading traces the disruptive pedagogical trajectory from *conventional* to *post-conventional* in a very different way to the above examples and many other contemporary readings. His identification of the ideal *neighbour* as Christ excludes the listener/reader from identifying with the same role. Thus, for Augustine, Luke 10:29-37 might be more appropriately entitled, *The Man on Jericho Road*, rather than *The Good Samaritan*, because its primary pedagogical invitation is to identify with the helpless victim.

⁸⁰⁷ Gnanavaram, "'Dalit Theology' and the Parable of the Good Samaritan", 81. and 78.

⁸⁰⁸ Herzog, *Parables as subversive speech: Jesus as pedagogue of the oppressed*, 27.

Given the earlier argument concerning the insufficiency of historical-critical argumentation in biblical CAL, it would be hypocritical to claim a precise and comprehensive understanding of how Augustine's reading was received by his contemporaries. However, Rodney Stark points to evidence that the most intuitive identification for the story's earliest Christian audiences would have been as giver, not receiver of help. Basing his argument in the letters of third century Alexandrian Bishop, Dionysius, Stark claims, "Christian values of love and charity had, from the beginning, been translated into norms of social service and community solidarity. When disasters struck, the Christians were better able to cope".⁸⁰⁹

Thus, although doubtless also counted among the sick and suffering, by the time of the gospels' circulation, in the cultural zeitgeist of the ancient world, Jesus' followers had already become synonymous with provision of practical kindness to the poor and needy. Therefore, Augustine and Gnanavaram's different understandings of the pedagogical move from *conventional* to *postconventional* in Luke 10:29-37 come into focus. Gnanavaram focuses on how Luke's story *empowers* those considered powerless in society. Inversely, the shift required by Augustine's claim that "The whole human race, after all, is that man who was lying in the road, left half-dead by robbers"⁸¹⁰ is obviously most challenging for those who do not/ have never acknowledged their own need. If Stark's claim that the ancient Christian community's self-identification as saviour of the poor and needy is valid, the strongest *postconventional* element of Augustine's reading is not that Christ takes the protagonist role per se, but that in doing so, the listener/reader is relegated to the relative anonymity of victim. Thus, the pedagogical challenge Augustine perceives in the story goes

⁸⁰⁹ Stark, *The rise of Christianity: a sociologist reconsiders history* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 74.

⁸¹⁰ Teske, *The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) in Augustine's Exegesis*, 351 quoting *Sermo CLXXI,2: PL XXXVIII, 933*.

beyond a call for a change of action or even underlying motivation, to a foundational shift in identity. While for many, the direct implications of Gnanavaram's reading make claims on the personal identity of *others*, for many, the suggestion that *neighbourliness* begins by acknowledging self-need and welcoming support from unexpected sources, is arguably significantly more disruptive. Spear echoes this in his summary that Jesus' pedagogy leads "His listeners from a consciousness dominated by culture to an alternative way of life centred on God".⁸¹¹

This process of pedagogical *decentralisation* is consolidated by the wider context of the passage of Jesus' engagement with the lawyer (Luke 10:25). As many echo, "Jesus does not directly answer the question "Who is my neighbour?" Rather, he redirects attention to the converse, "Who proved neighbour to the man?"⁸¹² Thus, "Jesus has transformed the focus of the original question; in fact, Jesus' apparent attempt to answer the lawyer's question turns out to be a negation of that question's premise".⁸¹³ In presenting the lawyer as both the grammatical and thematic subject of the question (καὶ τίς ἐστὶν μου πλησίον, 10:29), his initial engagement with Jesus reveals the lawyer's desire to follow Jesus' suggestion to love his neighbour as himself (v.27). However, it also reveals his inability to fulfil his duty and receive his reward without also being willing and able to identify with his neighbour. However, in Jesus' re-formation of the question (10:36), asking who proved neighbour to the robbed man (again, identified only by his unfortunate circumstances), Jesus reveals that the trajectory of Christian *neighbourliness* does not begin with *helping* others but in being *helped*. Roukema summarises this idea, "Before they [Augustine's contemporary Christian

⁸¹¹ Spear, "The Transformation of Enculturated Consciousness in the Teachings of Jesus", 355.

⁸¹² Spear, "The Transformation of Enculturated Consciousness in the Teachings of Jesus", 370 quoting Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2012), 231.

⁸¹³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997), 380.

audience] were ready to identify themselves with the Samaritan who showed his love towards a wounded man, they first had identified themselves with the wounded man helped by the Samaritan".⁸¹⁴

The key word in the above quote is *first*. It is important to state that many ancient interpretations do not rule out the idea of the Samaritan as a model to follow. Roland Teske highlights that "Augustine – along with Ambrose, Origen, and Irenaeus – would have us understand the parable of the Good Samaritan as revealing Christ's loving mercy toward our fallen race and as teaching us that his love for us provides the standard and model of how we should love one another".⁸¹⁵ Rather, and similarly, pedagogically pertinent to both ancient and contemporary audiences, for those already societally perceived as good neighbours (the lawyer in the passage included), Augustine's interpretation betrays the belief that the message of the passage would not translate into changes of attitude or action without disruptive *experience* first taking hold. "The listener's identification with this generic victim allows Jesus to accomplish the purpose of the parable, which is to enable the listener to experience postconventional compassion. To be told that one *should* be compassionate is not transforming, but to *experience* compassion is".⁸¹⁶

This claim is deeply significant to our discussion and reinforces Gorman's understanding that biblical learning is "more than a science". Augustine's reading of Luke 10:29-37 reveals a

⁸¹⁴ Roukema, "The Good Samaritan in Ancient Christianity", 73.

⁸¹⁵ Teske, *The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) in Augustine's Exegesis*, 357.

⁸¹⁶ Spear, "The Transformation of Enculturated Consciousness in the Teachings of Jesus", 371. The concept of experiential encounter is so central to Hull's work that *Religious Education as Encounter* was chosen as the theme of the symposium held on the occasion of the award of his honorary Doctorate and the subsequent, edited volume. In its introduction, the book's editor, Siebren Miedema muses that *encounter* may have several meanings in relation to Hull's work. "To meet people from other religions; to become reflective of one's own religious stance, background and biography seen in the mirror of another person ... may help to demolish the still too many existing walls between people's education and in particular religious education". Miedema, *Religious education as encounter: a tribute to John M. Hull*, 13.

biblical pedagogy not only concerned with cerebral engagement but designed to create a far more holistic experience than just cognitive awareness of new information. Ultimately, this means that the primary biblical pedagogy underpinning Augustine's reading of Luke 10:29-37 is to re-create what he believes is the disruptive parabolic *experience*, even if this results, by contemporary standards, in interpretational compromise in other respects. Applied more widely, this means that the pedagogical value of *old* biblical learning can be measured against its ability to catalyse and guide disruptive learning experiences that are able to further lead to changes in thought and action. This, as opposed to being judged as increasingly irrelevant according to the growing historical gap between ancient document and contemporary setting.

4. Conclusion: inside-out biblical CAL

While this example points to a wide variety of potential implications associated with disruptive and displacing biblical pedagogy, this section concludes by returning to its particular pertinence as revealed in Kwok's interest in *peripheral* interpretational groups. In a further example of how pedagogical method is mirrored in the content of the biblical message, a requirement of both Gnanavaram's Dalit empowerment and Augustine's insistence that the Christian community acknowledge their need of others (although achieved in different ways), is that those operating on the societal margins become pivotal to the story. In the words of Korean, feminist scholar June Hee Yoon, this role reversal of "Who is assigned the center and who is relegated to the periphery in the system"⁸¹⁷ is pivotal to the Christian pedagogical task.

⁸¹⁷ Yoon, "Finding Home from the In-between Space for a Queer Asian American Christian Woman," in *Asian and Asian American Women in Theology and Religion: Embodying Knowledge* (ed. Kwok; *Asian Christianity in the diaspora*; Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 67.

Rowan Williams' recent description of the core task of Christian learning consolidates Yoon's claim. "To do theology is, in some ways, to be taken back to that moment of bewilderment about the newness or the distinctiveness or the strangeness of being in this new Christian framework", he begins. He connects this perhaps surprising goal with inhabiting a "New set of relationships ... a new set of perspectives. You see differently, you sense differently, you relate differently." Williams continues, "Theological education is familiarising yourself with how people have found their way around that landscape with the perspectives they've occupied and then learning to pitch your own tent, as one might say, in that territory".⁸¹⁸ Relating Williams' language and Yoon's imagining of *centre* and *periphery* results in a prototypical learner whose key traits are practising navigating bewilderment and strangeness; perceiving and connecting to the world in new ways and learning from those who have inhabited similar territory in the past. Thus, those who have been living out in the metaphorical, theological wilderness become *central* to CAL process.⁸¹⁹ To incorporate Kwok and Williams' language, expert, theological *tent pitchers* are identified as interpretive communities who participate in the wider biblical pedagogical conversation on the *wrong end* of the "asymmetry of power" and whose pedagogical lives are, as a result, lived in territory "full of tension, fractures and resistance".⁸²⁰

Relating this back to the section's central focus on *re-casting* the relationship between *old* and *new* approaches to biblical CAL, focus on the paradoxical, pedagogical centrality of

⁸¹⁸ "Theological Education Is for Everyone", <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/august-web-only/rowan-williams-theological-education-for-everyone.html>

⁸¹⁹ It is important to note that even use of metaphors in this area reveals the endemic inequalities and unequal privilege experienced by many. The suggestion that *peripheral* learners ought to be pedagogically included, rather than excluded, assumes that it is the central, privileged learner who decides on and actions any inclusion. The principal paradigm shift of this section is that the traditionally, pedagogically peripheral groups, should not be *given* permission to provide examples of exemplary *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, but are the only ones experienced, and suitably equipped and qualified to do so.

⁸²⁰ Kwok, *Postcolonial imagination and feminist theology*, 43.

peripheral groups reveals how *old* and *new* may have far more similarities than it might first appear. Rather than being entirely at odds with this project's call for diverse and disruptive interpretational conversations, if taken seriously, Augustine's *old* approach to pedagogical disruption (as demonstrated in his interpretation of Luke 10:29-37) challenges contemporary interpretational power structures as strongly, and in very similar ways, to the likes of Kwok, Yoon and Bennett.⁸²¹ As a result, it provides an example of how pre-critical biblical CAL not only forms the basis for dialogical learning opportunities but can also contribute to the shape of the pursuant dialogue. For all learners, but particularly those who have previously assumed their place at the interpretive *table* and identity as lead meaning-makers, Augustine's reading of Luke 10:29-37 requires abandoning notions of self-sufficiency and acknowledging need of the life-saving and giving help of others: a much more demanding task for those with significant (and perhaps unacknowledged) social, political or economic privilege.

As Brüggemann aptly states, progress cannot be made without "Dismantling the old systems that hide the well-off from the dangerous theological realities of life".⁸²² In other words, many traditional interpretational hierarchies are at the very least, significantly undermined, and at most, completely inverted in *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. As discussed in 5.2.1., Christian community (*koinonia*) naturally reaches out and therefore, without undermining the question, "What does this mean for *me*?", a text's interpretation is demonstrated as far more inextricably entwined with the question "What does this mean for people *not* like

⁸²¹ In an argument developed more fully in 7.4., Higton and Muers argue that Augustine *plays* with the text in a way that "Extravagant though it appears, is simply what happens when the various texts that Christians read are thrown into promiscuous collusion with one another, and allowed by means of the connections that are established to take the reader on unexpected journeys deeper into their faith." Higton and Muers, *The text in play: experiments in reading scripture* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2012), 2.

⁸²² Brüggemann and Miller, *The Palms and the Life of Faith* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995), 21.

me?" than many acknowledge.⁸²³ Put another way, the implications of any given passage for *others* become just as critical as implications for self. Returning to Williams' language a final time, rather than perceiving the *disturbing* nature of Augustine's approach to Luke 10:29-37 as requiring apologetic explanation, it is exactly by embracing its potentially disorienting qualities that biblical learners are enabled to become a diverse pilgrim community, skilled in bewilderment and strangeness, or in other words, experts in *disruptive-inclusive* CAL.

However, in closing, this is not to suggest that this process is easily achieved by application of a simple, set methodology. In the third edition of *Voices from the margin: interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah recognises that the *interpretive margin* he has fought to develop and promote has become a contested arena. He reflects that in opening decades of the twenty-first century, what was once,

A thriving foundry where many counter-stories were minted, ... now has become a mean and menacing shelter for censorship, the single story, and the unambiguous message ... challenging subversion has been traded for subordination and standardization. The margin was where the reader rebelled, the past was liberated, and the text was made problematic... The task, then, in this respect, is to reclaim the margin from reactionary forces and reinvent it as an accessible model of critique and resistance.⁸²⁴

While Sugirtharajah's references to *subversion*, *problematization*, *critique* and *resistance* do not overtly reference pedagogical method, his language makes clear that he assesses the challenges of operating at the interpretational margin similarly to Hull's inverse complaint of how deeply *ossification* and *fossilization* had limited CAL in his experience. Critically, both also use language of *critique* and *resistance* to define the ideal pedagogical spaces they seek to create. I regret that there is no space to fully examine the implications of this here.

⁸²³ This resonates strongly with the discussion of John 10:9 in 3.2., where it was considered that the principal criticism of the Pharisees is that they have assumed that they are the model learners when actually, Jesus highlights them as an example *not* to follow.

⁸²⁴ Sugirtharajah, *Voices From the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (3rd ed.; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006), 9.

However, particularly in light of recent movements for social and racial justice, the connection between a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL and the recurring theme of Hull's wider work on education he refers to as "theology of resistance"⁸²⁵ is an area I more fully unpack elsewhere.⁸²⁶

7.4. Re-casting an extra-connected biblical pedagogy: open and closed

Where the first *re-casting* drew attention to the Bible's own community of *inner-connectivity*; the second focused on the power of its *inter-connectivity* across time, by far the most controversial aspect of Hull's stance against *disassociated* CAL is his focus on its *extra-connectivity* – "Characterized by dialogue and correlation between Christian and other worldviews".⁸²⁷ While this final *re-casting* does not require a full examination of every element of this (much of the debate relating to Religious Education in schools), it also goes to the heart of the question of Hull's adverbial view of the *christianness* of CAL raised in 2.1.2. and further addresses Hull's disagreements with Paul Hirst in 5.1.1. As such, it is essential to discuss it here as the component of Hull's pedagogy that has drawn the "most trenchant" criticism.⁸²⁸

The most significant difference between this and previous *re-castings* is that where the former have rejected dichotomous extremes in favour of their combined or simultaneous adoption, here the discussion also argues for the insufficiency of both Hull's and others' subsequent attempts at navigating a path between them. Thus, this section draws together

⁸²⁵ Hull, "Christian Education and the Re-construction of Christian faith," in *International handbook of the religious, moral and spiritual dimensions in education. Part one* (ed. De Souza; *International handbooks of religion and education*; v. 1; Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 31.

⁸²⁶ Smith, "A pedagogy of resistance and Scouse other-ness," (2021).

⁸²⁷ Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 20.

⁸²⁸ Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 23.

issues already introduced in previous *re-castings* as well as extending analysis of Hull's *connected* biblical pedagogy into new areas.

7.4.1. The problem of extra-connectivity explained: critical-openness and critical realism

The basis of much of the aforementioned criticism of Hull is that, as outlined from the outset of the project, he imagines the *christianness* of CAL adverbially and not adjectivally. In other words, rather than being measured in terms of curriculum content or underpinning ethos, Hull presents his "Christian rationale"⁸²⁹ as a methodological (or *how*-focused) concern. Rather than creating 'us and them' distinctions such as "'We are believers', they are unbelievers, we are right; they are wrong", Hull's approach does not "Depend[] on rejection and exclusion" and thus has potential universal pedagogical benefit.⁸³⁰ Specifically, in relation to the Bible's pedagogical role, Hull argues that it ought to not only be considered a tool in and from which Christians learn, but also a "resource book for human learning" that "May enrich the knowledge and insight of many a secular person who examines the Bible from a secular point of view".⁸³¹ Thus, this section endorses and seeks to address Bates' assessment that "John Hull's hermeneutic lies at the heart of this debate and there is interesting research to be undertaken here".⁸³²

In 1981, Hull encapsulated his commitment to pedagogical *extra-connectedness* in the term *critical openness*. In the broadest sense, *critical openness* describes a pedagogy centred on "Listening, respecting, being independent, being in relation, and it conveys a meaning which

⁸²⁹ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 221.

⁸³⁰ Hull, "The Transmission of Religious Prejudice," 14, no. 2 (1992), 70.

⁸³¹ Hull, *Utopian whispers: moral, religious and spiritual values in schools* (Norwich: Religious and Moral Education Press, 1998), 91, 90.

⁸³² Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 20.

is closer to Christian faith [than self-enclosed independence]”.⁸³³ Despite attracting significant disagreement from a range of scholars of various faith standpoints and none,⁸³⁴ *critical openness* remained influential in Hull’s work throughout his career. In line with previous themes, *critical openness* connects the simultaneous necessity of *connectedness* (being in relation) and learner distance from unquestioned realities (being independent). While primarily used by Hull in relation to R.E in schools, its implications are not limited to children’s learning. Drawing on the 1976 *The Child in the Church* report, Hull describes the foundational concept of all Christian learning as a process that “Support[s] a theology which sees critical openness as springing from Christian commitment” and takes the form of passing on “not the painting but the paint box”.⁸³⁵

Although it only constitutes one strand of a far more complex argument, *critical openness* epitomises Hull’s efforts towards a biblical pedagogy that neither excludes nor divides, and neither is it so ethereal nor liquid that it loses its distinctively *Christian* shape and qualities. He maintained a commitment that biblical CAL should and could be “open and inquiring” and simultaneously that “there must be criteria”⁸³⁶ by which learning is assessed. He maintained that “‘Thinking for yourself’ certainly does not mean ‘thinking whatever you like’”.⁸³⁷ Hull’s wider philosophical underpinning of pedagogical *openness* overlaps significantly with the key themes of *What Prevents...?* (as explored in chapter 4). In particular, the dynamic nature of a learning God who participates in “a consistent

⁸³³ Hull differentiates between Christian *instruction, nurture, education and indoctrination* and summarises that “An instructed person thinks what he is told to think ... an educated person thinks for himself” and that *critical openness* marks off “Education from training, which is imitative ... and from instruction, which is marked by obedience to authority”. Hull, “Christian Nurture and Critical Openness”, 209.

⁸³⁴ For example, Robert Jackson, Peter Doble, Cooling (fully unpacked in 7.3.) and Andrew Wright. See also Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation* for a fuller list. 5.1.1. offers a full, worked example.

⁸³⁵ Hull, “Christian Nurture and Critical Openness”, 208.

⁸³⁶ Namely, “experience, wisdom, character, rationality”. Hull, “Christian Nurture and Critical Openness”, 215.

⁸³⁷ Hull, “Christian Nurture and Critical Openness”, 209.

unfolding".⁸³⁸ However, the exact nature of the *critical* criteria applied to such pedagogical *openness* is not clearly outlined. In summary, Hull argues that *critical openness* is the necessary basis for CAL, "Because we know that our knowledge is only a fraction of the total sum of knowledge, and we must be critical because we so easily mistake falsehood for knowledge".⁸³⁹

Critically open biblical CAL is deeply problematic for many Christians, who (to varying degrees) understand biblical learning as an objective, closed exercise. Hull acknowledges that the key challenge posed by *critical openness* is that it may "Seem incompatible with the respectful acceptance which the Christian ought to have towards 'that which has been received from the Lord'".⁸⁴⁰ As already established, Hull clearly believed that the Bible can (and does) function as *the* defining guide and model for CAL. It seems deeply ironic therefore, and perhaps the greatest weakness of his argument for a *critically open* biblical pedagogy, that he does not argue for it *biblically*, (i.e., exegetically or hermeneutically), but rather on philosophical and phenomenological terms.⁸⁴¹ Despite clearly locating his discussion as "A problem in practical theology, or a problem of applicability",⁸⁴² Hull's exposition of *critical openness* remains squarely in the abstract and theoretical.

Thus, I join those who have critiqued Hull's over reliance on critical rationality in this area of his work in arguing that his case would have been significantly strengthened by underpinning his claims with evidence from the shape, format and message of the biblical canon. For

⁸³⁸ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 213.

⁸³⁹ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 217.

⁸⁴⁰ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 212.

⁸⁴¹ The phenomenological heritage of *Christian education* research is epitomised by the work of Smart in the 1970s.

⁸⁴² Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 208.

example, while Hull's claim that "Critical openness is the pedagogical technique adopted by a God who is personal and desires us to be persons"⁸⁴³ is entirely commensurate with *disruptive-inclusion*, at no point does Hull evidence his claim using (for example) the incarnational Christ of the canonical gospels. Equally, the statement that CAL requires "the abandoning of the old securities"⁸⁴⁴ has an obvious pertinence to the central argument of this thesis. However, rather than merely asking, "How could Jewish men who were not *critically open* have responded to the question of Jesus about who he was?",⁸⁴⁵ Hull might easily have demonstrated how the biblical texts repeatedly model this exact scenario. The narratives of Jesus' ministry offer a wealth of resources as to how the Bible postures itself to those (both *insiders* and *outsiders*) whose worldview is so fixed and unquestioned that they are unable to perceive themselves or others well.⁸⁴⁶

This suggestion that Hull might not only reference, but also actively support his argument from the biblical narrative is not unreasonable or unrealistic given his wider commitment (as ascertained in 7.1.) to the multi-layered pedagogical participation of the Bible. For example, in *What Prevents...?*, he specifically outlines its function in creating boundaries for interpretation and providing the framework for *connected* learning, "The horizons of self are formed by the borders of the story, and the Bible is thus both the expression and the source of self-hood".⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴³ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 216.

⁸⁴⁴ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 219.

⁸⁴⁵ Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 219.

⁸⁴⁶ For more on this, see Hull's interpretations of blindness in the gospels, Hull, *In the beginning there was darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible*, 34-66.

⁸⁴⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 182.

It is exactly this dual concept of the Bible as both pedagogical *expression* and *source* that I contend is missing in Hull's explanation of *critical openness*. Understood on these terms, the arguments contained in the previous *re-castings* become worked examples of how the biblical narrative not only provides general background inspiration for CAL but also substantively directs and guides it. Expressed another way, biblical pedagogy must take into account "*How* it means, not just *what* it means".⁸⁴⁸ Thus, the fundamental gap in Hull's explanation of *critically open* biblical pedagogy is that he only hints at the multifaceted, distinct biblical model and guiding voice of CAL. In light of this, I sympathise with Cooling's enquiry as to whether, and if so, how Hull's argument fully demonstrates *critical openness* as "Compatible with the traditional forms of belief that see Christianity as uniquely true"?⁸⁴⁹

As already acknowledged in regard to Hull's overall argument, Cooling's misgivings concerning Hull's approach to Christian learning run wider and deeper than can be fully represented here. However, his critique of, and counter-responses to, Hull's claims concerning the implications for the position and use of the Bible in *critical openness* are important to analyse here as they further clarify the various positions concerning the relationship between *open* and *closed* in biblical pedagogy. Cooling's key question can be variously articulated, but at its heart, the conflict he identifies in Hull's approach is that a dynamic, *extra-connected* approach to CAL is incongruent with what many perceive as the "fixed and time-less truths" found in the Bible.⁸⁵⁰ He asks, "Is conflict inevitable between

⁸⁴⁸ Stewart, "Poetry and Pedagogy in Proverbs 5," in *Biblical poetry and the art of close reading* (eds. Couey and James; Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1.

⁸⁴⁹ Cooling, *A Christian vision for state education: reflections on the theology of education*, 34.

⁸⁵⁰ Cooling, "What do we mean by Christian learning?," in *Faithful Efforts: Education, Formation and the Church* (ed. De Muynck and Kuiper; Kampen, The Netherlands: Summum Academic Publications, 2021), 4.

‘self-authorship’ and biblical authority?”⁸⁵¹ In other words, is a truly active, inclusive, participative biblical learning posture possible, and if so, does the Bible invite or resist it? Fundamentally, Cooling rejects radical *constructivist* positions defined in terms of “Mak[ing] the reader’s response *the* authority”⁸⁵² and asserts, “A way forward for Christian teachers that enables them to draw on the helpful insights of a constructivist theory of learning whilst remaining faithful to their own commitment to biblical authority”.⁸⁵³

Based in Thiselton’s *responsible hermeneutics* (which depends on the text as “‘in control’, interrogating and constraining the reader as enquirer”,⁸⁵⁴) Cooling concedes the need for some *openness* in the learning process (or probably more accurately, flexibility), but simultaneously reinforces the necessary role of the biblical texts as governing reference point. Although multiple maps of the same location exist to serve various purposes, he explains, ultimately, “The nature of any map that can be drawn is constrained by the nature of the terrain that is actually there”.⁸⁵⁵ While their arguments diverge as to how a narrow path between *open* and *closed* biblical pedagogy might be navigated, both Hull and Cooling agree that a balance must be struck which avoids indoctrination and passive information transfer at one extreme, and an *anything goes* approach at the other. On the surface at

⁸⁵¹ Cooling, "Enabling the Bible to control learning," in *Teaching well: insights for educators in Christian schools* (eds. Goodlet and Collier: Barton Books, 2014), 53.

⁸⁵² Cooling, "The Formation of the Christian Teacher: the role of faithfulness to the Bible in conceptualising learning," in *Re-imagining Christian education for the twenty-first century* (ed. Morris; Chelmsford: Matthew James Publishing Ltd, 2015), (italics mine). Echoing the language of Clive Erricker, Cooling highlights constructivism as a view of knowledge as a human construct, resisting the promotion of self-serving, insular narratives.

⁸⁵³ Cooling, *Enabling the Bible to control learning*, 56.

⁸⁵⁴ Cooling, *Enabling the Bible to control learning*, 56.

⁸⁵⁵ Cooling, *Enabling the Bible to control learning*, 56.

least, Cooling's counterproposal of *critical realism* appears to share some basic similarities with Hull's *critically open* approach.⁸⁵⁶

Similarly to the wide and varied application of Threshold Concept Framework (see 4.2.), the philosophical tenets of critical realism have been brought to bear in a range of academic arenas and disciplines.⁸⁵⁷ In the case of religious learning, Cooling joins Wright in positing that it provides a superiorly balanced pedagogy in a variety of regards, but particularly concerning *openness and closedness*.⁸⁵⁸ Specifically relating to biblical pedagogy, the foundational claim of the critical realist is the simultaneous ability to take seriously, "The subjectivity and situatedness of the knower" and the *ontological realism* of the text. (I.e., the fact that "There is an external truth to be known ... communicated through the text by a human author ... [meaning that] the idea the text has an intended meaning makes sense").⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁶ In 2013, Andrew Wright identified critical realism as "associated with the philosophical movement instigated by Roy Bhaskar". He explains how "it seeks to map a path beyond the extremes of modern certainty and postmodern scepticism via a triumvirate of core philosophical principles: ontological realism, epistemic relativism and judgemental rationality. Ontological realism asserts that reality exists for the most part independently of human perception, epistemic relativism asserts that our knowledge of reality is limited and contingent, and judgement rationality asserts that it is nevertheless possible to judge between conflicting truth claims while recognising that all such judgements necessarily remain open to further adjudication" Wright, "Christianity and Critical Realism: Ambiguity, Truth and Theological Literacy," (*New Studies in Critical Realism and Spirituality*; Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 9.

⁸⁵⁷ As mentioned in 1.2.2., *critical realism* is strongly associated with postliberal theology. Its implications are applied to the world of biblical studies by N. T. Wright in *The New Testament and the People of God*. Interestingly, for our purposes, he explains how it straddles the "naïve realism" of positivism and the "dark side of positivism" – relativism, using metaphorical language of sight. "Optical and other similar illusions are regarded as freaks, departures from the norm – which is presumed to be that human beings, with proper scientific controls available, have instant access to raw data about which they can simply make true propositions on the basis of sense-experience". Wright, *The New Testament and the people of God* (London: SPCK, 2013).

⁸⁵⁸ See Wright, *Christianity and Critical Realism: Ambiguity, Truth and Theological Literacy*, and Wright, *Religious education and critical realism: knowledge, reality and religious literacy*.

⁸⁵⁹ Cooling, *The Formation of the Christian Teacher: the role of faithfulness to the Bible in conceptualising learning*.

Continuing to build on previous discussions considering biblical pedagogy in terms of different forms of artistic performance, Cooling encapsulates his understanding of the pedagogical contribution of critical realism via Wright's description of the Church's biblical engagement as the improvisation of the final act of a play.⁸⁶⁰ He highlights how the imagery outlines a freedom in which the players can (and are required to) bring fresh and authentic interpretations to the play's final act, while simultaneously, the scripts of the previous acts set the parameters for the continuing performance. However, reflecting on this idea, literary critic Erich Auerbach demonstrates where Wright's unfinished play diverges from earlier use of jazz imagery and highlights my argument for *critical realism's* inadequacy in providing an adequately balanced framework for biblical pedagogy. "Far from seeking ... merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, it [the Biblical narrative] seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history".⁸⁶¹

According to Auerbach, and as per Hull's earlier claim that the Bible is "The ultimate framework of narrative within which all other stories are contained",⁸⁶² the Bible does not function as an alternative, competing reality to that of the players' and potential audience's everyday experience but rather as the prototypical or archetypal reality (as per 7.2.). The biblical texts are not just another story, but *the* story. As such, within the unfinished play metaphor, they perform an *orienting* function but not as the opening acts of an as yet

⁸⁶⁰ Specifically, Wright argues that we are currently in the "Fifth act ... living as people through whom the narrative in question is now moving towards its final destination" Wright, *Scripture and the authority of God* (London: SPCK, 2005), 91-93. See also Vanhoozer, *First theology: God, Scripture & hermeneutics* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2002), and Vanhoozer, et al., *Everyday theology: how to read cultural texts and interpret trends* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 55.

⁸⁶¹ Auerbach, et al., "Mimesis: the representation of reality in Western literature," (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 44.

⁸⁶² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 182.

incomplete play, but rather one-step removed, as *the* quintessential play on which all subsequent plays are based, and from which all subsequent narratives take their cues. While this may seem like an overly fastidious or inconsequential distinction, it has wide pedagogical implications in that it importantly moves away from the idea that the players analyse the scripts in search of the *correct* way to complete the story. The players' aim is not to continue the production in such a way as to trick the audience into believing that they continue to read the original lines. Alternatively, the existing scripts function in creating a much more fluid space in which *the story* openly invites multiple re-interpretations and re-embodiments in a range of spin-off, continuing narratives, more in the mould of fan fiction than pseudepigrapha.

This way, as per the first and second *re-castings*, the diversity of the biblical canon and subsequent interpretive communities function as pedagogical assets rather than liabilities, modelling *various* ways in which the play continues. The cadence, tone and substantive story of the prototypical scripts guide multiple re-embodiments of its scenes as new players enter the stage - interpretive variety in its many guises need not be feared nor avoided. Only then will Wright's wider pedagogical vision be possible in which, "The music so far, the voices around us, and the ultimate multi-part harmony of God's new world: these, taken together, form the parameters for appropriate improvisation in the reading of scripture and the announcement and living out of the gospel it contains".⁸⁶³

Switching metaphors one final time, following Wright's (and many others') imagery of learning as a physical journey, while I concur with Cooling's determination that the biblical

⁸⁶³ Wright, *Scripture and the authority of God*, 93.

texts map out the terrain leading to the play's "final destination",⁸⁶⁴ it does not follow that they offer guidance as to the optimum route (among many) by which to arrive there. That is dependent on personal participation and preference.

Cooling concludes that the overall aim of biblical pedagogy should be "creative living in light of the text".⁸⁶⁵ However, his use of Thiselton's language of the Bible as source of control, interrogation and constraint undermines focus on finding creative balance and encouraging truly participative textual interpretation. Within Wright's unfinished play metaphor, Cooling's language gives the impression that the preceding scripts function as a disciplinary tool to keep the players 'in line' rather than as a gateway to creative exploration. Thus, ultimately, the overarching tone of *critical realism* still relies on a *closed* paradigm of *correct* and *incorrect*; avoiding what some perceive as the potential risks associated with a more *open* approach.

Ultimately, a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to biblical CAL supports Cooling's assertion that "faithfulness and accountability to Scriptural authority"⁸⁶⁶ must not be compromised. However, it does not agree that this requires a submissive or passive learning posture that resists connection and deconstruction.⁸⁶⁷ As Ford comments specifically in relation to the pedagogical model provided by the Fourth Gospel, "An education so conceived today within this horizon needs to go deeply into scripture and also broadly into our civilization's history,

⁸⁶⁴ Wright, *Scripture and the authority of God*, 91.

⁸⁶⁵ Cooling, *The Formation of the Christian Teacher: the role of faithfulness to the Bible in conceptualising learning*, 11.

⁸⁶⁶ Cooling, *The Formation of the Christian Teacher: the role of faithfulness to the Bible in conceptualising learning*, 11.

⁸⁶⁷ Cooling, *The Formation of the Christian Teacher: the role of faithfulness to the Bible in conceptualising learning*, 11.

culture, science, technology, politics, economics, philosophy and religion".⁸⁶⁸ Thus, while *critical openness* is justifiably criticised for being too open, I would also argue that a *critical realist* approach is not open enough and, in multiple respects, forces the pendulum in the other direction.

Building on the discussion of the previous section, Cooling articulates his fundamental convictions concerning biblical CAL in prepositional terms: "The reader therefore sits under the text benefitting from its insights, rather than over and against the text adjudicating on its value. In the model that I am proposing, *self-authorship* in learning is therefore constrained by the external authority of the text".⁸⁶⁹ Note the contrast between these and Bennett's comments detailing her unease with the traditional ramifications associated with 'sitting under the text': "manipulation and domination...[and] inappropriate childishness".⁸⁷⁰ In contrast, she suggests, "The idea of 'playing with' the text appeals to me hugely. That implies my role as an active interpretive agent. But there is not only that dimension, for it means allowing oneself to be affected by it – a positive way in which one might 'sit under the text' therefore".⁸⁷¹

The core difference between Cooling's vision of *sitting under the text* and Bennett's exposition of the same is significant. Where Cooling envisages a primarily passive (or at the very least, *recipient*) learner position, Bennett imagines a multi-directional, reciprocal relationship between text and reader, or what Hull explains in terms of "the cooperative

⁸⁶⁸ Ford, "Deeply Christian, Healthily Plural: A Vision for Schooling," in *Christian faith, formation and education* (eds. Stuart-Buttle and Shortt; Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 86.

⁸⁶⁹ Cooling, *The Formation of the Christian Teacher: the role of faithfulness to the Bible in conceptualising learning*, 9.

⁸⁷⁰ Bennett, *Using the Bible in practical theology: historical and contemporary perspectives*, 27.

⁸⁷¹ Bennett, *Using the Bible in practical theology: historical and contemporary perspectives*, 29.

effort of the one who stands beneath the authority".⁸⁷² Thus, although Cooling claims a position that results in "Creative harmony between the pedagogical priority and biblical authority",⁸⁷³ his language betrays that *self* and *text* function in direct competition rather than reciprocal collaboration. In Bennett's re-conceptualisation of the same language, however, the adversarial tone of *over and against* and *constraint* is replaced with non-confrontational, participative language of shared agency such as, "Enjoying the text, captured by the text, falling in love with the text, writing on the text".⁸⁷⁴

In defence of his overall position, Cooling prefaces all of his work in this area with the recognition that the relationship between education and Christian belief is fraught with difficulty and his ongoing aim is to avoid both over-simplification and over-complication.⁸⁷⁵ Specifically, he explains how "The challenge for Christians involved in education is ... to find the narrow way that lies, often disguised, between the two extremes of certainty and paralysis".⁸⁷⁶ However, drawing on the language of Personal Construct Theory (as per 4.2.1.), I am unconvinced that either *critical openness* nor *critical realism* leaves sufficient room "For a commitment which is sincere and deep but at the same time sufficiently exploratory and tentative".⁸⁷⁷ My argument as to their relative insufficiencies lies not only in the content of their arguments *per se*, but more foundationally in the means employed in reaching their respective responses. Despite their differences, both Hull and Cooling build and illustrate

⁸⁷² Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness", 215.

⁸⁷³ Cooling, *The Formation of the Christian Teacher: the role of faithfulness to the Bible in conceptualising learning*, 11.

⁸⁷⁴ Bennett, *Using the Bible in practical theology: historical and contemporary perspectives*, 29.

⁸⁷⁵ Cooling, *A Christian vision for state education: reflections on the theology of education*, 8.

⁸⁷⁶ Cooling, *A Christian vision for state education: reflections on the theology of education*, 8.

⁸⁷⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 155-156.

their arguments on similar terms – a philosophical/ phenomenological explanation of a matter that seems naturally to resist clear articulation and categorisation.

Consolidating the earlier conclusion that the various interpretations of Luke 10:28-37 considered function in inviting learners to *experience* the story, my alternative suggestion to *critical openness* and *critical realism* begins in the observation that if a convincing *biblical* argument for biblical pedagogy is possible, it must take seriously that the biblical narrative is most pedagogically transformative when *experienced*, not simply obeyed or even cognitively understood.⁸⁷⁸ Any attempt to describe the biblical text's role in its own pedagogy that does not include an experiential dimension is insufficient. Speaking more broadly about education in general, James Smith claims, "It's a shift in the centre of gravity of our attention ... that expands from a narrow concern with informational perspectives to zoom out so that the scope our concern includes our gut ... our loves ... our *kardia*".⁸⁷⁹

7.4.2. Proposing an alternative means of extra-connectivity: playful poetics

At the conclusion of this focus on biblical pedagogy, it is important to recognise that in particular ways, all three *re-castings* have exposed how total reliance on *critical* approaches leads to *disconnected* or positivistic pedagogical approaches that are insufficiently nuanced to result in transformative learning experiences.⁸⁸⁰ As Ricoeur expressed as early as 1969, "Beyond the desert of criticism, we wish to be called again".⁸⁸¹ Herbert Brichto unpacks a similar sentiment: "Approaches of modern biblical scholarship – source-analysis, redaction-

⁸⁷⁸ C.f. Spear, "The Transformation of Enculturated Consciousness in the Teachings of Jesus", 371.

⁸⁷⁹ Smith, "Higher Education: What's love got to do with it? Longings, desires and human flourishing," (Christian Heritage College, 2016).

⁸⁸⁰ Louw extends this to claim that many become "so spellbound with a critical analysis method that it ultimately has a very positivistic approach". Louw, "Creative Hope and Imagination in a Practical Theology of Aesthetic (Artistic) Reason," 8, no. 3/4 (2001), 330.

⁸⁸¹ Ricœur and Buchanan, *The symbolism of evil*, 349.

history, and the like – justify their claim to the adjective *critical* in that they all begin with analysis of the text. They divide it into pericopes, sections, and documents ... [but] the one thing that these approaches do not do is synthesize ... to gap, to bridge, to inflate, to ambiguate, to enrich.”⁸⁸² Primarily, he continues, this is because “Cognitions as well as affections are part of the experience of being religious,” and rather than serving to keep the cognitive and affective realms of personhood separate, Hull claims, “It is the task of theologising to purify and integrate them conceptually”.⁸⁸³

Although articulated in slightly different terms than employed in this project, Brichto’s basic claim is that only adopting critical-dominant approaches results in compartmentalised learning. Interestingly, however, the above comment ends, “... the poetical approach is to proceed from critical analysis to an attempt at critical synthesis”.⁸⁸⁴ Thus, Brichto joins the likes of Ricœur, Gorman, Hayes and Michael Fishbane in proposing poetics (or *theopoetics*, an idea and whose implications are fully unpacked in 9.2.2.) as key to a more *connected* type of biblical engagement that retains criticality without being limited to it.⁸⁸⁵ While I do not subscribe to all the specifics of Brichto’s proposal, his articulation of the move from *critical analysis* to *critical synthesis* is a helpful gateway to the following paradigm shift with which I wish to draw together the arguments of chapter 7.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸² Brichto, "The names of God: poetic readings in biblical beginnings," (*OUP E-Books*.; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1998), 393.

⁸⁸³ Hull, "What is Theology of Education?", 10.

⁸⁸⁴ Brichto, *The names of God: poetic readings in biblical beginnings*, 393.

⁸⁸⁵ See Ricœur, et al., *Essays on Biblical interpretation* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1980), Fishbane, *The exegetical imagination: on Jewish thought and theology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 4, Hays, *The moral vision of the New Testament: community, cross, new creation: a contemporary introduction to New Testament ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 170-184, Gorman, *Reading Revelation responsibly: uncivil worship and witness: following the Lamb into the new creation* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2011). Hays’ and Gorman’s *theopoetic* readings of Revelation will be further addressed in 8.2.3.

⁸⁸⁶ A good example of Hull’s practise of *critical synthesis* is his work in the 2000s regarding hymns, that he considers both through the lens of imperialism Hull, "Isaac Watts and the Origins of British Imperial Theology,"

Fishbane suggests that *poesis* is not a new approach to biblical interpretation but deeply embedded in the process of “rabbinic exegesis” that defines the biblical canon and its early and ongoing interpretation.⁸⁸⁷ Karl Rahner takes this further in claiming, “The capacity and practice of perceiving the poetic word is a presupposition of hearing the word of God ... In its inmost essence, the poetic is a prerequisite for Christianity”.⁸⁸⁸ It is important, however, to clarify that *poetics* does not equal poetry. Despite the fact that a significant proportion of the Bible belongs to the genre of poetry, references to poetics do not focus on the use of patterned or rhyming verse but rather the fact that “Metaphoric ... figurative and ... creative imaginative [traits] may (in Scripture at least) be as much the hallmark of prose as poetry”.⁸⁸⁹ Heather Walton further clarifies that poetics constitutes, “Processes of creative transformation through which human language constructs a “something else,” ... or “Somewhere Else,” beyond the limits of the matter-of-fact, everyday world”.⁸⁹⁰

My concluding suggestion that biblical pedagogy ought to be approached on poetic terms not only addresses the need for a better relationship between an *open* and *closed* approach but also draws together issues raised in the previous *re-castings*. By engaging the *part* and the *whole* and taking seriously the interpretive contribution of both the historical and contemporary *other*, transformative biblical learning can optimally function. Unlike *critical openness* and *critical realism*, a poetic approach to biblical pedagogy does not seek to tightly define a method but suggests some new terms according to which biblical learning might be

4, no. 2 (2005) and disability Hull, "Lord, I was deaf: Images of Disability in the Hymnbooks," in *The edge of god: new liturgical texts and contexts in conversation* (eds. Burns, et al.; London: Epworth, 2008).

⁸⁸⁷ Fishbane, *The exegetical imagination: on Jewish thought and theology*, 2.

⁸⁸⁸ Rahner, "Poetry and the Christian," in *Theological Investigations: volume 4* (Baltimore, Md.: Helicon Press, 1961), 363.

⁸⁸⁹ Brichto, *The names of God: poetic readings in biblical beginnings*, 393.

⁸⁹⁰ Walton, "Poetics," in *The Wiley Blackwell companion to practical theology* (ed. Miller-McLemore; Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 173.

more effectively re-imagined. The core proposition of poetic biblical pedagogy is that if the Bible is to function as a pedagogical model “for all humanity”,⁸⁹¹ which makes space for genuine learner agency without compromising its role as primary, substantive source and expression of CAL, it is best conceived on terms such as art, lyric, beauty, and play.⁸⁹²

Davis further elucidates the shift in focus introduced by poetics: “Interpretations of Scripture are not just right and wrong, although at times such categories are useful and necessary. But perhaps ultimately a more adequate way of judging our readings is the way we judge works of art – according to the standards of beauty”.⁸⁹³ Louw’s presentation of *artistic reason* consolidates the sense in which *poetics* reframes an *either-or* between analysis and art, otherwise suggesting that they can mutually reinforce. He argues, “The experience of ‘beauty’ ... reveals the truth of our existence and the occurrence of identification with a ‘transcendent dimension’ which brings about a bridging of meaning and reality”.⁸⁹⁴ Davis concludes, “Reading Scripture is an *art* – a creative discipline that requires engagement and imagination ... In our practices of reading the Bible, we are (or should be) something like artists”.⁸⁹⁵ Thus, at a fundamental level, biblical pedagogy expressed in terms of artistic beauty is much more naturally able to hold together the subjective and objective pedagogical elements and results in a much more deeply *connected* approach to learning than those based in critical analysis alone.

⁸⁹¹ Hull, *Utopian whispers: moral, religious and spiritual values in schools*, 90.

⁸⁹² As previously stated, Hull summarises in *What Prevents...?*, “We have a Christian faith in which the irrational, the poetic, the mythic and the imaginative are rejected in favour of a Christianity of solid historical and scientific evidence ... a one-dimensional Bible mirrored upon a one-dimensional science becomes the authority for a one-dimensional faith”. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 35-36.

⁸⁹³ Davis and Hays, *The art of reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), xvi.

⁸⁹⁴ Louw, “Creative Hope and Imagination in a Practical Theology of Aesthetic (Artistic) Reason”, 332-333.

⁸⁹⁵ Davis and Hays, *The art of reading Scripture*, xv.

As alluded to in 2.3.2. and developing Bennett's earlier reference to "playing with" the text,⁸⁹⁶ it is helpful to consider how a sense of *playfulness* contributes to this discussion. Jerome Berryman offers an intriguing account of how many challenges associated with pedagogy (biblical pedagogy included) do not result from unsolved theoretical paradox but a lack of skilful play. In his 2005 article (re-worked the following year into a chapter for Hull's Festschrift), Berryman's exploration of *playful orthodoxy* unpacks the exact nature of the alternative pedagogical conception he offers. He begins by acknowledging that, for many, *playful orthodoxy* has "The ring of an oxymoron. This is because the opening and closing tendencies of the creative process have been two separate and different things in many people's minds".⁸⁹⁷ As a result, much Christian (and especially biblical) learning has suffered, Berryman argues, because, in attempts to "maintain the greatest control and avoid the most risk",⁸⁹⁸ creative engagement has been limited, and in some cases, completely abandoned. In simple terms, he argues that creativity should be actively re-introduced into biblical learning processes because it naturally has both *protective* and *expansive* properties. As Highton and Rachel Muers recognise, "playing with the text" is "A practice of *spiritual* reading that is not divorced from, but rather animated by, *literal* reading and *critical* reading".⁸⁹⁹ Currently however, this balance has been so skewed towards the *protective* that its ability to help learners "cope with trouble" has been almost entirely obscured by becoming "trouble itself".⁹⁰⁰

⁸⁹⁶ Bennett, *Using the Bible in practical theology: historical and contemporary perspectives*, 29.

⁸⁹⁷ Berryman, "Playful orthodoxy: reconnecting religion and creativity by education," 48, no. 4 (2005), 437.

⁸⁹⁸ Berryman, "Playful Orthodoxy: religious education's solution to pluralism," in *Education, religion and society: essays in honour of John M. Hull* (eds. Bates, et al.; London: Routledge, 2006), 207.

⁸⁹⁹ Highton and Muers, *The text in play: experiments in reading scripture*, 2.

⁹⁰⁰ Berryman, "Playful orthodoxy: reconnecting religion and creativity by education", 438.

As with Hull's descriptions of *critical openness*, the primary focus of Berryman's argument is on children in schools. He claims, however, that it is incorrect to correlate play with immaturity is incorrect and that it has far wider implications for a range of adult learning settings. At the heart of what he describes as *artful playfulness*, Berryman sees a natural balance misunderstood by wider society. Specifically relating to our current discussion, Berryman highlights a natural balance in play between "an opening (exploring) and a closing (conserving) phase"⁹⁰¹ that is "neither silly nor superficial. Adults confuse the entertainment or over-stimulation of children with play".⁹⁰² While some dismiss play as a simple process, it is actually highly complex, requires "deep concentration" and practice in order to improve.⁹⁰³ As a result, Berryman adds, due to the process of *unlearning* undergone by adults in relation to skilful play,⁹⁰⁴ children are often in a far stronger position to engage well in learning than adults. Berryman attributes the fact that "many of our churches have lost the art of reading it [the Bible] attentively and imaginatively"⁹⁰⁵ to adults' inability "to deeply play, participate in rituals or be active listeners to stories".⁹⁰⁶

A key parallel Berryman draws between play and biblical pedagogy that also appears strongly in Hull's work is engagement in both the *real* world and imagined reality. Hull summarises that "like the world of play, dream and theatre and cinema ..." learning from the Bible can be likened to being "caught up in [a] vision of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration" in which prior knowledge cannot be relied upon because one's,

⁹⁰¹ Berryman, "Playful orthodoxy: reconnecting religion and creativity by education", 441.

⁹⁰² Berryman, *Playful Orthodoxy: religious education's solution to pluralism*, 211.

⁹⁰³ Berryman, *Playful Orthodoxy: religious education's solution to pluralism* p211.

⁹⁰⁴ See footnote 1085 for more on *unlearning*.

⁹⁰⁵ Davis and Hays, *The art of reading Scripture*, xv.

⁹⁰⁶ Berryman, *Playful Orthodoxy: religious education's solution to pluralism*, 211.

“Mind is clouded, dazzled by unearthly whiteness. Was it sleep? Was it vision? To put it rather grandly, the whole cognitive apparatus is reeling, and yet one is grasped by an overwhelming certitude, so profound that one is not willing to let it go, as one does when awakening from dream or emerging from the cinema”.⁹⁰⁷

Like imaginative play scenarios that rely on some knowledge of real-life settings such as shops, hospitals or police stations but cannot be fully accounted for by cognitive knowledge or real-life experience, Hull’s above explanation describes an interpretive experience that is simultaneously grounded in the biblical narrative but also that immerses learners in more than just a cognitive exercise. As variously discussed in previous chapters (see the *θύρα* of John 10:8 (2.1.2.), liminality and narthex (2.2.3.)) the Bible invites a *playful* learning posture in that it creates a “kind of strange half world”;⁹⁰⁸ the crossover point or meeting place of various realities or the culmination of “many different narratives”.⁹⁰⁹ Walton expresses how this simultaneous *groundedness* in the present reality and other worldliness is a key trait of a poetic approach to the Bible:

Poetics is ... interested in how human imagination constructs narratives by winding its way amongst and between the factual and fictive. It explores the capacity of metaphoric utterance to embody the exotic, the beautiful, the tragic, the unknown, and the unnameable. It strays beyond the strict bound of the real to proclaim its own form of truth.⁹¹⁰

Walton’s use of the word *fictive* epitomises the kind of compromise to biblical authority Cooling and others strain to resist. However, rather than relegating the importance of the Bible’s authority, inversely, the call for biblical pedagogy to be considered in poetic, artistic, playful terms takes seriously its ultimate authoritative ability to facilitate transformative

⁹⁰⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 95.

⁹⁰⁸ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 31-32.

⁹⁰⁹ Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*, 38.

⁹¹⁰ Walton, *Poetics*, 173.

pedagogical experiences. This is only possible because, in line with earlier observations concerning clash of worldviews, in *winding its way amongst and between*, it “Does not pull me out of this world to some other world; rather, it changes what it means to be in this world”.⁹¹¹

Thus, a poetic approach to biblical pedagogy does not only address the questions of navigating the relationship between *open* and *closed* but also the earlier discussions of *part* and *whole* and *old* and *new*. In short, *poetics* is a means of expressing a pedagogical posture to the Bible that mirrors and consolidates the fundamentals of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. In her book, *A Poetics of Resistance*, Mary DeShazer summarises the pedagogical function of poetics as “Refus[ing] the pretense of objectivity, instead asserting polemically the terms of their engagement with the topic at hand”, “invit[ing] conflict and confrontation” and “engag[ing] our participation”. In doing so, she argues, “We too join a community of resisters”.⁹¹² Alternatively, as Bonnie Miller-McLemore encapsulates, “The goal shifts ... from understanding *qua* understanding to connectivity in difference”.⁹¹³ Seen through the lens of poetics, the Bible is not a quiz to answer correctly or a list of rules to follow. As Alva Noë explains, “[It] Isn’t a phenomenon to be explained. Not by neuroscience, and not by philosophy. ... [but] a research practice, a way of investigating the world and ourselves ... [that] displays us to ourselves, and in a way makes us anew, by disrupting our habitual activities”.⁹¹⁴

⁹¹¹ Veling, *Practical theology: "On earth as it is in heaven"* (Maryknoll, New York, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005), 206.

⁹¹² DeShazer, *A poetics of resistance: women writing in El Salvador, South Africa, and the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 271. This also highlights another connection to Hull’s aforementioned “theology of resistance”.

⁹¹³ Miller-McLemore, “The subject and practice of pastoral theology as a practical theological discipline: pushing past the nagging identity crisis to the poetics of resistance,” in *Liberating faith practices: feminist practical theologies in context* (eds. Ackermann and Bons-Storm; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 189.

⁹¹⁴ Noë, “Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature: A Précis,” 94, no. 1 (2017), 213.

Just as the overall trajectory of this project has presented CAL as a practice in which disruptive experiences act as the gateways to greater pedagogical awareness and *connectedness*, so too Noë paints a picture of biblical pedagogy as a transformative *research practice* that functions in line with all the key parameters of *disruptive-inclusion*. Her claims insist that biblical learning cannot be reduced to cognitive understanding of a single discipline that is achieved apart from engagement with others and the wider world. It requires, she argues, a disruption of the *norm* that creates tension and unease. Thus, in this way a poetic approach to biblical pedagogy is simultaneously “exacting and evocative”.⁹¹⁵ Helen Vendler adds that the *poetic* “Does intellectual work ... a unique model of investigation that is a legitimate source of knowledge”.⁹¹⁶ The *poetic* employs words to draw readers deeper and closer into a particular experience but simultaneously into an imaginative experience beyond: its ideas are (usually) transmitted in the form of words but its meaning cannot be reduced to them. The message of the *poetic* is conveyed in its ordering, placement on the page and perhaps even silence or absence. Terry Eagleton explains that this happens because poetic “Form and content are intimately interwoven ... [it] discloses the secret truth of all literary writing: that form is *constitutive* of content and not just a reflection of it”.⁹¹⁷

Understood in this way, *poetics* sums up how the reader is drawn deep into the text’s details and is set on a trajectory beyond them. The Bible encourages “close reading”⁹¹⁸ that takes the reader *into* the text and yet paradoxically, this process “interrupts our attempts to

⁹¹⁵ Stewart, *Poetry and Pedagogy in Proverbs 5*, 1.

⁹¹⁶ James, “Biblical poetry and the art of close reading,” in *“Silence is Praise”: Art and Knowledge in Psalm 65* (eds. Couey and James; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 32.

⁹¹⁷ Eagleton, *How to read a poem* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2012), 67.

⁹¹⁸ Stewart, *Poetry and Pedagogy in Proverbs 5*, 1.

reduce it conceptually and instrumentally".⁹¹⁹ In other words, taking the biblical text seriously and on its own terms requires a recognition that it points to a reality beyond just the words on the page. As Davis explains, the Bible "has suppleness as well as clarity".⁹²⁰ A poetic approach to biblical pedagogy provides parameters that create sufficient comfort as to facilitate exploration but also the necessary space for disruptive challenge to do its pedagogical work.

Returning to the language of John 10, *poetics* provides a means of passage by which the sheep can experience both the comfort of *coming in* and access *unknown* pastures. Veling explains this poetic tendency in spatial terms. He argues that it is "Always inclined toward a more or less distant, un-known addressee." As such, he continues, "Distance ... strangeness, is not an obstacle to be overcome but rather something ... welcome[d] – and so to speak, invite[d]".⁹²¹ So, Veling claims that taking biblical authority and structure seriously does not conflict with a call for reader participation, but requires it. As such, Veling continues, poetic engagement is unavoidably disruptive: "Poetic movement is not toward a point of completion, but a ceaseless, open-ended yearning and movement toward what is always elsewhere and otherwise, toward what is coming, toward an unexpected 'arrival' or 'event' or 'announcement' that is not of my own making, not in my hands ... poetic movement is not a quest that I undertake through mastery and control".⁹²²

⁹¹⁹ Veling, *Practical theology: "On earth as it is in heaven"*, 198-199.

⁹²⁰ "As the Gospels show, the best interpretation retains the poetic openness of the original and thus continues to beget a religious vision that has suppleness as well as clarity". Davis, *Teaching the Bible confessionally in the church*, 20.

⁹²¹ Veling, *Practical theology: "On earth as it is in heaven"*, 200.

⁹²² Veling, *Practical theology: "On earth as it is in heaven"*, 200.

However, as introduced in 2.1.1., considered through a poetic lens, learners are not expected to simply support unlimited, uncontrolled disruption offered by the Bible but rather participate in a learning environment that creates the opportunities for certain postures and actions to practised be rehearsed without consequence. For example, as Anne Stewart observes of Proverbs 5, it “Presents an unfolding pattern of pedagogy, alternatively exposing the student to visions of the crooked and the straight course ... allowing the listener of the poem to try on various actions and their consequences”.⁹²³ In effect, Stewart’s claim is that a poetic, biblical pedagogy offers opportunities for the learning ‘dry-runs’ highlighted as foundational to *disruptive-inclusion* in chapter 2.

A clear corollary of this is that a poetic biblical pedagogy assumes not only active learner participation but also resulting changed action. Again, Veling claims that the Arts in general, “Bring with them a radical call towards change, towards a new way of dwelling in the world. The awakening, the enrichment, the consternation, the unsettling of sensibility and understanding which follow our experience of art *prompt us to action*”.⁹²⁴ *Poetics* also suggests that the pedagogical function of the Bible is not reduced to subjective pleasure but transformed engagement in and with the world. “Evolving discoveries ... are not revealed by a thematic paraphrase of their import. They can only be grasped by our participating in the process they unfold”.⁹²⁵ It is impossible to cognitively ascend to the fullness of biblical *truth*, it can only be embodied. As such, the biblical pedagogical experience should be defined by “Vacillations of thought and experience and abrupt shifts in perspective”.⁹²⁶

⁹²³ Stewart, *Poetry and Pedagogy in Proverbs 5*, 91-92.

⁹²⁴ Veling, *Practical theology: "On earth as it is in heaven"*, 201-202.

⁹²⁵ Vendler, "Poets thinking: Pope, Whitman, Dickinson, Yeats," (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 119.

⁹²⁶ Stewart, *Poetry and Pedagogy in Proverbs 5*, 81.

The final issue addressed by a *poetic* approach to biblical pedagogy is Hull's claim concerning the *open* pedagogical value of the Bible. Here, the global universality of *poetics* offers a clue as to how biblical learning can be accessed by and benefit all. As part of UNESCO's *Poet at the heart of society* project, Ivorian poet Tanella Boni writes, "Poetry, like any other form of artistic creation, is one of the pillars of the humanities. By following the paths of emotion, sensitivity and the imagination, the poem transmits knowledge and human values. Better still, it shapes the human being, body and soul".⁹²⁷ Despite making a specific claim about poetry, it is clear that the core claim of the UNESCO project is that a poetic posture (expressed in a range of formats) is an essential quality of humanity and as such, has a powerful ability to unite and connect across cultural, ethnic and economic difference. Thus, in Roberta King's language, a poetic posture to biblical learning constitutes an invitation to *perform* the texts together, finding connections in the most basic level of human existence. King's description of her experiences with an ethnically and religiously diverse musical ensemble point to a range of parallels between the act of *musicking* she describes and poetic biblical pedagogy. She speaks of their performances as "musical spaces of discovering and relating"⁹²⁸ in which "people discover their common humanity".⁹²⁹ She continues,

When practiced on a regular basis, musicking becomes more expansive and enduring. People interact with each other in deeper ways and build friendships. Community music performance groups that regularly rehearse and perform together participate in generating community among themselves and find that it also links with the larger local community. At such points, Christian witness is afforded opportunity to travel across the bridges of community building.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁷ "The Poet at the Heart of Society", <https://en.unesco.org/courier/july-september-2017/poet-heart-society>

⁹²⁸ King, "Performing Witness: loving our religious neighbors through musicking," in *The arts as witness in multifaith contexts* (eds. King and Dyrness; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 42.

⁹²⁹ King, *Performing Witness: loving our religious neighbors through musicking*, 45.

⁹³⁰ King, *Performing Witness: loving our religious neighbors through musicking*, 45.

Using this example as a backdrop, a poetic pedagogical posture can be appreciated as an invitation to enter into an experience of the text with others, rather than a stimulus to division and conflict. Again, Rahner takes this connection between Christianity, humanity and the *poetic* deeper still, “Christianity must defend human culture and the poetic word. They live and die together for the simple reason that humanism, which is also poetic, can never be separated from Christianity, though they are not the same thing”.⁹³¹ Ruth Illman agrees with the foundational connection Rahner draws in declaring, “Our humanity rests upon our ability to unite across different worlds of experience”.⁹³² Thus, Rahner concludes, “The poetic word will never fail, because we must defend what is human, since God himself has assumed it into his eternal reality”.⁹³³

Therefore, if jazz epitomises the Bible’s invitation to participate in a dynamic pedagogical community and imaginative, experiential narrative participation is the means by which this community reaches across boundaries of time and space, then perhaps *poetic, playful musicking* sets the tone for a conversation that embraces contemporary differences, enabling the Bible to pedagogically *disrupt* and *include* all humans. In turn, my suggestion is that rather than an idea that requires *re-casting*, if Hull’s conception of an *inner, inter and extra-connected* biblical pedagogy is to be achieved, it must be treated as a concerto that needs a new arrangement; a song that needs constantly *re-singing*; a narrative that needs repeatedly *re-telling*. Then, “The arts may open a window to the wider religious landscape outside our own context and let us grasp other, valuable, legitimate, yet different viewpoints

⁹³¹ Rahner, *Poetry and the Christian*, 364.

⁹³² Hull, *Notes on blindness: a journey through the dark*, 202.

⁹³³ Rahner, *Poetry and the Christian*, 365.

to the world".⁹³⁴ Given that a *poetical* pedagogy is such a key idea, unlike 7.2. and 7.3., this section will not conclude with a worked example. Rather, the look, sound and feel of a *poetic* approach to CAL are repeatedly and thoroughly demonstrated in the following chapter.

⁹³⁴ Illman, "Art as Dialogue," in *The arts as witness in multifaith contexts* (eds. King and Dyrness; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 110-111.

Chapter 8: fitting out for use. *Disruptive-inclusive* lessons for future practice

At the beginning of every chapter of this project, construction language has clarified the overall shape and structure of its argument for a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL. However, like any metaphor, it is not able to convey all of the required complexities. Despite this, the language of construction has been retained for its value in providing easy (and in some cases, fluid) connection points between the different phases of this overall presentation. At this penultimate stage of the project, the idea of a physical building provides a link between impersonal structures and concepts and the personal, relational life they are designed to facilitate. In short, chapter 8 addresses how any theological pedagogy only finds its identity in human activity.

The above point was powerfully demonstrated recently when my maternal grandmother died at the grand age of one hundred years old. While her passing was painful in many respects, I found emptying the rented house she had occupied for 70 years far more traumatic than her final days in hospital or funeral. From its ugly, 1960s hall mural and steep stairs, handmade furniture and numerous places where repairs had been necessary due to mine and my sister's childhood antics, as we were forced to leave her inner-city terraced house, I was moved by the extent to which I had been shaped by the events that had taken place within its walls. For the purposes of this project, emptying Nan's house highlighted to me how physical structures cannot be reduced to either their materiality or inhabitants. Buildings only find their purpose in the interaction between physical form and human life.

Thus, the ultimate illustrative power of the construction metaphor lies in the fact that architectural planning and physical construction only represent the beginning of a building's

life, not its entirety. Understanding CAL in this way raises a range of helpful questions, pertaining not only to the physical setting and conditions of particular learning spaces but also their influence on learner posture and action in any given environment. As Smith and Felch perceptively enquire, “If students experience their classroom as a home, is it a house in the suburb? An apartment in the city? A flat in another country? A hotel room? Do we encourage them to think of themselves as homeowners, renters, guests, or tourists?”⁹³⁵

To re-state one of the project’s key aims according to the language of construction, the earlier chapters sought to bring a new phase of life to the pedagogical ‘house that Hull built’ and thus enable a new generation to discover and explore his work on CAL. The intention was never to construct a *show home* with unrealistic layout and empty facades that look appealing but whose design never had *real life* in mind. Rather, it is hoped that this research aims to positively shape real learning environments in which contemporary learners live and work. Thus, this final chapter of the main body of this project offers various proposals as to how *disruptive-inclusive* CAL may be *housed*, focusing specifically on areas where I claim Hull unnecessarily limited his conclusions concerning the shape and conditions of effective CAL. The following sections consider the role of *disruptive-inclusion* in imagining and facilitating environments that are accessible to all kinds of learners. Where the previous chapters built a *disruptive-inclusive* house, the project concludes by fitting it out for use, asking what kind of *disruptive-inclusive* acts, relationships and conversations *disruptive-inclusive* learning environments encourage, and in turn, what kinds of furnishings best facilitate them. In sum, this final chapter addresses the question, what does *disruptive-inclusive* CAL look and sound like when outworked in different formats and settings?

⁹³⁵ Smith and Felch, *Teaching and Christian imagination*, 195.

Although the potential, practical implications of *disruptive-inclusion* extend far beyond CAL practised in traditional, classroom settings, they are not excluded from its impact. The final phase of this project begins with an assessment of the specific consequences and considerations of *disruptive-inclusion* for CAL classroom settings (for example, of an adult, “Sunday School” format in churches or a theological education or training provider).⁹³⁶ Specifically, it analyses the potential impact of *disruptive-inclusion* on the beginning, central focus and end of a classroom session (or series of sessions) and offers illustrations of the kinds of activities that may result. Discourse here develops earlier themes raised, such as the classroom’s function as a pedagogical *dry-run* or laboratory, setting a trajectory towards *optimum distance* and the role of learner awareness in CAL.

Secondly, 8.2. addresses the overlapping but also distinct consequences of *disruptive-inclusion* for the primary, formal learning opportunity available to the majority of Christian adults: the teaching sermon. Addressing Hull’s scepticism as to the pedagogical efficacy of the teaching sermon format, it examines how considering *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in narrative terms displaces learners from the stories in which they had hitherto participated and introduces alternative narratives. Based in Smith’s work, it explores how *disruptive-inclusive* CAL might be considered a particular means of *pedagogical re-stor(y)ing* and investigates the role of imagination in creating opportunities for interactive CAL even when live dialogue is not available or possible. The discussion develops earlier themes such as the role of *crossing over* in CAL; how practice functions in *poetic, disruptive-inclusion* and ultimately argues why CAL ought to be understood to engage all human faculties, not just

⁹³⁶ Although not specifically based on, or aimed at, any particular institution, naturally, at the forefront of my mind in this regard are the places where I have studied and worked to this point: Fuller Theological Seminary, King’s School of Theology and Queen’s Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education.

cognitive ascension to factual information. 8.2. concludes with an example of a teaching sermon and analysis of its *disruptive-inclusive* traits.

Finally, 8.3. considers the potential implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on *disruptive-inclusive* CAL methodology and practice. It addresses the question of online CAL, asking how *disruptive-inclusion* informs virtual learning spaces, considers the wider concept of dynamic and holistic approaches to CAL and the potential of establishing a pedagogical 'new normal' in a post-pandemic world.

8.1. *Disruptive-inclusion* and the CAL classroom: towards better structured CAL

Before considering the various implications of a *disruptive-inclusive* pedagogy for CAL classroom settings, it is important to set its presentation within the context of a few, key claims introduced in earlier chapters. In the first instance, *CAL classroom setting* is carefully phrased so as to specify *who* learns but not necessarily *where* or *what* learning occurs. Specifically, the following sections on the potential implications of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL refer to group, interactive learning scenarios for Christian adults. In theory, the topic could be anything, from science to politics, languages to maths, farming to art history. However, the examples in the following sections are drawn from my experience teaching theology: firstly, because it is the most common topic around which groups of Christian adults learn. Secondly, because it is the area in which I am most experienced in the teaching of Christian adults and thirdly, because it provides further, consolidating evidence for the argument made throughout of how *disruptive-inclusive* CAL shapes and is shaped by biblical interpretation in terms of both *means* and *message*.

This decision means that the *where* of classroom settings addressed applies to CAL in churches (what many US churches refer to as ‘Sunday school’) but also Christian adult education and training settings variously referred to in the UK as Bible colleges and schools, colleges and centres of theology, training institutes and seminaries.⁹³⁷ While the vast majority of examples included in this project’s references to *CAL classroom settings* likely include a traditional set up of chairs and tables in a room, the common factor of the settings brought together here is a gathering of Christian adult learners (I would strongly argue that a classroom cannot constitute a single learner) one of whose primary functions is to facilitate learner dialogue - active, reciprocal engagement (whether between educator and learners or between learners) around a particular topic.

In the simplest terms, I define a *CAL classroom setting* as a structured opportunity for active exploration of others’ and own views. In this sense, a CAL classroom could theoretically take the form of an archaeological dig, a science experiment or nature walk as well as a more traditional lecture-style presentation – the key factor being the chance for learners to speak *and* listen as part of their theological engagement.⁹³⁸ Thus, the question addressed in this section is how the structure of both individual, CAL classroom learning sessions and series of sessions (generally referred to as a *class* in the USA, but more commonly known in UK education as a *module*) can most effectively utilise *disruptive-inclusive* CAL protocols and practices.

⁹³⁷ See <https://www.christianweb.org.uk/list-uk-bible-colleges/> for one such list.

⁹³⁸ Fisher, Rothenberg and Frey claim (based on Vygotsky) that “Thinking develops into words in a number of phases ... it seems reasonable to suggest that classrooms should be filled with talk, given that we want them filled with thinking!” Fisher, et al., "Content-area conversations: how to plan discussion-based lessons for diverse language learners," (Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008), 5.

Alongside this specific definition of a *CAL classroom setting*, it is equally essential to re-state that the core principles of *disruptive-inclusion* are not concerned with simply increasing the quantity of *disruptive-inclusion*, but rather identifying both new and the most favourable combinations and connections for it to occur.⁹³⁹ In particular, Hull's focus on the importance of *multiplicity of vision* highlights how Christian adult learners can only explore their own opinions and positions in tandem with alternative perspectives. Thus, Hull's 1985 argument for *optimum distance*, based in the phenomenological and sociological arguments of Alfred Schutz and Max Weber, does not associate pedagogical *optimum distance* with learner self-isolation or denial, but the pursuit of new and increased levels of *connectedness*.⁹⁴⁰ Later in his career, however, Hull underpinned his pedagogical views more widely, including referencing the growing influence of educational neuroscience.⁹⁴¹

Some of the more recent conclusions drawn in this field align with the idea of *optimum distance* by pointing to the existence of a pedagogical "sweet spot of difficulty" at which ideal levels of challenge and student interest combine to produce peak brain responses.⁹⁴² A 2019 study went as far as to quantify the "Edge of our competence – not so hard that we are discouraged, but not so easy that we get bored",⁹⁴³ concluding that a human learning "engagement peak" occurs at about 85%. In other words, in terms of brain chemistry, the peak of learning progress is not associated with learner ability to correctly solve *all* problems

⁹³⁹ See earlier metaphorical arguments for this including the difference between just icing a cake and changing the recipe (2.1.2.) and horizontal and vertical harmonies (3.2.2.). Also, the idea that learning results from the optimum combination of factors rather than their quantity is reflected in every section of chapter 7.

⁹⁴⁰ Hull references Schutz, *The phenomenology of the social world* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1967), Schutz and Wagner, *On phenomenology and social relations: selected writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), and Weber, et al., *The sociology of religion* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1963).

⁹⁴¹ Hull, "Religious Education as Encounter. From Body Worlds to Religious Worlds," in *Religious education as encounter: a tribute to John M. Hull* (ed. Miedema; Münster: Waxmann, 2009).

⁹⁴² Wilson, et al., "The Eighty Five Percent Rule for optimal learning," 10, no. 1 (2019).

⁹⁴³ Wilson, et al., "The Eighty Five Percent Rule for optimal learning", 2.

presented, but rather identified at a point where an incorrect answer is offered approximately 15% of the time.

A similar strand of research seeking to measure optimal, pedagogical prefrontal cortex responses resonates far more strongly with the central theme of *disruptive-inclusion*. In its analysis of how “Humans and other animals adjust their learning strategies nearly optimally depending on the level of uncertainty or the volatility of their environment”,⁹⁴⁴ it discovered that particular learning tasks were achieved more successfully when administered in changing and unpredictable rather than consistent conditions. When problems, their outcomes and associated rewards were presented to learners in an inconstant way, the brain was more successfully able to navigate a range of increasingly complex problems over time.

In several, significant ways, I make no claims that these studies speak directly to the core questions raised in this project concerning the nature of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL – they cannot for several key reasons. Firstly, because they are not focused on adult, human learners. Secondly, because subjects’ learning was monitored in individual, test conditions with learners out of their normal learning environments. Finally, and more significantly, the research defines *successful* learning as uniquely correlated with the ability to find the single, correct response to objective problems, i.e., it only takes into account accuracy or “error rates”, not quality or posture of response.⁹⁴⁵ Furthermore, returning to this project’s consistent clarification that in *disruptive-inclusion*, theology is not just “the icing on the

⁹⁴⁴ Massi, et al., "Volatility Facilitates Value Updating in the Prefrontal Cortex," *Neuron* 99, no. 3 (2018), 598.

⁹⁴⁵ Wilson, et al., "The Eighty Five Percent Rule for optimal learning", 2.

‘educational’ cake”,⁹⁴⁶ the above studies do not speak to the inherently theological nature of CAL. Despite all of these mitigating factors, it is included here because, at the most fundamental level, even that of human brain chemistry suggests that, should a pedagogical *sweet spot*, goldilocks effect or *optimum distance* exist,⁹⁴⁷ arriving at it does not require the exclusion or elimination of all unassailable obstacles. In fact, inversely, it underscores that the repeated inclusion of disruptive circumstances in learning gives rise to the most conducive pedagogical conditions.

The complicating factor in considering the nature of a *disruptive-inclusive sweet spot* in the CAL *classroom* lies in its deeply interconnected and multifaceted nature. Thus, the list of potential variables implicated in the identification and measurement of any potential *sweet spot* extends far beyond just the difficulty of the task set or a particular learner’s interest in it. Any discussion must also take into account learners’ previous assumptions and experience (religious, cultural, political and otherwise); mode of learning (i.e., online, face-to-face, size of group) and specific learning differences (for example, dyslexia or ESL) as well as the particular challenges posed by specific topics. Thus, in *disruptive-inclusive* terms, the optimum combination of *disruption* and comfort/familiarity in the CAL *classroom*, is perhaps better represented as a *sweet network* rather than a *sweet spot*. As has been argued from a variety of angles in this project thus far, the key to effective CAL at *optimum distance* is the forging and maintenance of disruptive learning connections navigated with the help of the orienting voice of the shepherd.

⁹⁴⁶ Whittle, "Some Theological Reservations Surrounding One Contemporary Christian Approach to Teaching and Learning", 195.

⁹⁴⁷ Kidd, et al., "The Goldilocks Effect in Infant Auditory Attention," 85, no. 5 (2014).

From one perspective, the fact that “A syllabus is two-dimensional, but a classroom is dynamic, organic and multidimensional”⁹⁴⁸ renders the possibility of successfully cultivating *optimum distance* in a CAL classroom almost impossible, given that so many factors are out of educator’s (and even learners’) control and combine in creating an infinitely complex pedagogical landscape. However, from the opposite perspective, such levels of inter-connectivity open up multiple avenues via which educators can curate opportunities in a CAL classroom setting for learners to operate at *optimum distance*. Rather than only considering how pedagogical disruption results from the level of academic challenge associated with a particular topic or task, CAL educators must develop sensitivity as to how learners’ classroom experience results from the interplay between “classroom content, context and community”⁹⁴⁹ and cultivate the “pedagogical agility”⁹⁵⁰ required to influence these factors as far as possible.⁹⁵¹

8.1.1. Setting a trajectory towards optimum distance

Many general textbooks on classroom pedagogy begin with the assertion that *starters* (opening activities in a classroom session or series of sessions) are a cornerstone of good teaching and learning practice. It is widely held that they play a pivotal role in establishing a positive learning trajectory, building confidence and providing a solid basis for ongoing engagement. However, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL challenges some of these claims in its suggestion that comfort and familiarity stifle, rather than encourage, good learning engagement. Here, the discussion considers what kinds of opening classroom activities best

⁹⁴⁸ Howell, "Proleptic Pedagogy, Pluralism and Pedagogical Agility," in *Proleptic pedagogy: theological education anticipating the future* (eds. Matthaehi and Howell; Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2014), 8.

⁹⁴⁹ Howell, *Proleptic Pedagogy, Pluralism and Pedagogical Agility*, 13.

⁹⁵⁰ Howell, *Proleptic Pedagogy, Pluralism and Pedagogical Agility*, 10.

⁹⁵¹ Although *pedagogical agility* can reasonably be associated with ecumenism (addressed in 9.2.2.), the *agility* referred to here extends to *pedagogical methodology* and not only breath of denominational awareness.

give rise to *disruptive-inclusive* CAL and are most likely result in *optimum distance*. Following the pattern established in chapter 7, analysis is based on an illustration from practice.

1. The setting

The following illustration comes from the same course to which the Good Samaritan assignment belongs (7.3.3.), the core aim of which is to introduce the foundational concepts of biblical interpretation and a variety of approaches to the topic, equipping learners to identify and critically consider their own and others' opinions and practices. It was originally designed for a group representing a wide range of ages, social locations and academic levels. However, as almost exclusively members of Charismatic Evangelical congregations, the formation and delivery of its content material was informed by a deep awareness that even its very premise (that there is more than one appropriate way to approach the Bible) would likely pose significant theological challenges for many.

2. The activity

The opening activity focuses on an eighteenth century neoclassical French painting, Jacques-Louis David's 1787 work, *The Death of Socrates*. Offering no information about the painting, the session begins by asking learners to share their initial responses to the work in pairs and then, in turn, volunteers reflect their neighbour's impressions with the group. In my experience, this initial conversation rarely moves beyond general observations or basic opinions on the painting's overall style or, in some cases, a particular focus on one of the characters depicted. Then, learners watch a short video in which an art critic inducts learners in several ways in which the painting has been understood. The critic explains the setting of Greek philosophy that informs it; proposes techniques as to how its colours, shapes and patterns can be interpreted differently when read from left to right *or* right to left and

identifies how and where the painting was first, and has since, been received and influenced other artists.⁹⁵²

This is followed by an invitation for students to discuss with another partner the following, carefully worded question, “In light of this new information, what does the painting mean?” After several minutes of discussion, a final question is raised: “What does the painting mean to you?” and learners are asked to decide which question is “*correct*”, (or “*more appropriate*”, depending on the group’s response). The discussion at this stage is generally deeply impassioned and enthusiastic, even (and arguably, perhaps particularly) among those who initially expressed a complete disinterest or disinclination towards visual art. Often well into the coffee break, vociferous debate continues as to the significance of David’s double signature on the work and the function of specific characters.

3. Analysis

Every detail of the above exercise is carefully considered to create the optimum conditions for *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. Firstly, by requesting learners represent their neighbour’s opinions from the outset, student voices form a learning environment not dominated by a few, unqualified opinions but shaped by the accurate and respectful representation of a range of perspectives. The choice of neoclassical art as the central theme also makes *an unexpected other* the focus of the conversation, subverting learner expectations of potentially controversial and defensive discussions. As a topic on which no (or very few) students bring strong, pre-existing views, it allows for a framing of the overall discussion that avoids the emotionally charged, defensive postures easily adopted in conversations in which

⁹⁵² The Nerdwriter, "The Death of Socrates: How To Read A Painting," (2015).

much is deemed at stake. Finally, as a piece of visual art, *reading* a painting bypasses the unnecessary barriers to higher level critical engagement faced by those with Specific Learning Differences, low literacy or English as a Second Language when reading a written text.

In *disruptive-inclusive* terms, the pedagogical value of the activities described above is various. It is clear that when addressing what are likely to be highly *disruptive* topics, *optimum distance* is more effectively achieved when learners are unaware of exactly how disruption is occurring or when it is presented in an unforeseen way. In the above example, learners benefit from the fact that an experience of *optimum distance* precedes (and therefore provides a background and framework for) the potentially paradigm-shifting later discussions concerning biblical interpretation. In other words, learners are given the chance to participate in a discussion concerning the different approaches to biblical interpretation *before* they know it. When learners know, or are warned to expect learning disruption, it is more likely that they will adopt a defensive and self-protective rather than an open, engaged posture.

As developed later, this is not to say that learner cognisance is not desirable, but rather to highlight the benefits of learners experiencing disruptive learning and *then* being inducted into its understanding and explanation. In this case, the art exercise affords learners significant opportunity to explore the foundational merits and challenges of *behind the text*, *in text* and *in front of the text* interpretational modes without such terms first (or even, perhaps ever) being introduced into the discourse. If an educator does choose to later introduce such terms, the trajectory of meaningful, respectful discussion is already well under way and there is no need for the associated hermeneutical challenges to be passively

explained to learners, for they have not only already begun to explore and understand their implications, but also already participated in their establishing.

Furthermore, the above exercise leverages the fact that it is easier for class or cohort groups to access *optimum distance* together. Neoclassical French art functions as a suitable, joint entry point into the discussion in this case because all learners are (almost) equally, ignorant of and emotionally uninvested in the topic at the outset. This encourages collective empathy; a sense of exploring together rather than drawing attention to pre-existing differences in learner experience.⁹⁵³ Where learners may have otherwise postured their views on biblical interpretation in terms of ‘I’ versus ‘you’ or ‘us’ versus ‘them’, corporate engagement in a new topic means that ongoing dialogue is often premised by such phrases as, “When we were discussing the painting earlier” or, “I find it interesting that our conclusions about the painting ...”. This is not to suggest the conflation or disregard of learner diversity. Inversely, it highlights how its disorienting effects can be much more openly acknowledged and addressed from a position in which a group of learners contribute and thus share ownership over corporate progress. It makes it far less likely, that any learner will be easily excluded from, or side-lined in, the discussion.

4. Thematic evaluation: starting, risking and creating opportunities to rehearse CAL

It must be acknowledged that, in one sense, the above observations place *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in direct conflict with some generally-accepted, wider pedagogical wisdom and practice. Most specifically, the understanding that in order to avoid learner disinterest or disengagement, classroom sessions ought to begin at the point of maximum and most

⁹⁵³ It also minimises the shame associated with being wrong. See 4.2.

intuitive connection between learners and course content. For example, the opening chapter of Robyn Jackson's 2018 book on *The Principles of Great Teaching* is entitled, "Start Where Your Students Are".⁹⁵⁴ She asserts that learning ought to begin in a place of comfort for learners because it creates a positive feedback loop between the familiarity of the known, tried, tested and pleasing (further discussion of the relationship between pleasure and learning is found in 8.2.) and the potential risks associated with learning. She argues, "For many of our students, intrinsic motivation has to be developed. It comes only after they have experienced the pleasure of doing well and know the rewards of success ... it is so important to start with what motivates them and then, as they experience more success, help them transfer or become motivated by that success".⁹⁵⁵

At first, Jackson's logic seems to align with the fundamental claims of a *connected* pedagogical approach, and she represents many others who similarly suggest that the most effective pedagogical catalyst is consolation and familiarity. However, *disruptive-inclusion* suggests that reinforcement of existing feedback loops between comfort, familiarity and learning success makes breaking out of such cycles increasingly difficult and potentially after repeated consolidation, even impossible when inevitable and unavoidable learning disruption occurs. The claim of *optimum distance* is that, if carefully managed, a long-term trajectory towards ongoing learning progress is set far more successfully by experiences of positive engagement in an *unfamiliar* and emotionally unimportant topic or task. The best way to induct learners into patterns of connected learning is to demonstrate its benefits with low-risk material before progressing onto the challenges of potentially significant re-

⁹⁵⁴ Jackson, "Never work harder than your students & other principles of great teaching," (Alexandria, Va.: ASCD, 2018) chapter 1.

⁹⁵⁵ Jackson, *Never work harder than your students & other principles of great teaching*, 51.

configurations. The reinforcement of existing connections without their interrogation, makes effective CAL less, not more likely. In this regard, pedagogical *distance* between learner and subject material can be far more effective than pedagogical *proximity*, in encouraging long term learner *connection*.

However, in another sense, rather than directly contradicting the claim that CAL ought to begin with familiarity, the above example demonstrates how, over time, the aim of *disruptive-inclusion* is to help learners experience a level of familiarity when faced with the unknown and uncomfortable. As per previous chapters, rather than accepting a binary between the familiar and unfamiliar, the comfortable and uncomfortable, *disruptive-inclusion* engages *across* these categories and suggests that the best CAL occurs as (previously excluded) themes and styles find a place and function in the learning experience. Thus, in a significant way, *disruptive-inclusion* does not dispute Jackson's insistence to begin where *students are*, but simultaneously suggests that this *location* is not static, and so meeting learners in the pedagogical *in-between* is the most effective way to help them to keep moving!

Finally, the above example of a *disruptive-inclusive* starter activity demonstrates how the disruption of a *distanced* learning activity gives an educator far greater agility in navigating between the extremes that Howell identifies as "a pedagogy of natural selection" and "a pedagogy of protection".⁹⁵⁶ The first option resembles the metaphor highlighted as deeply unsatisfactory in chapter 1 in which learners are dropped in deep water: some drown and some survive, with the difference between learner outcomes solely dependent on

⁹⁵⁶ Howell, *Proleptic Pedagogy, Pluralism and Pedagogical Agility*, 13.

individuals' swimming abilities. The second option recognises the equally unhelpful tendency of some educators to become so involved in their students' learning experience that rather than facilitating learners' engagement, it is done *for* them. However, a topic that is equally (or as far as is possible) *distanced* from all offers an educator a higher baseline equality of engagement across a group of students, therefore allowing for easier and more accurate adjustment of disruption levels as the session progresses.

Taking up this theme in relation to chapter 2 discussions concerning the value of pedagogical boundary crossing (moving in and out of known and comfortable learning *territories*), the most effective, *disruptive-inclusive* starter activities increase learner opportunities to navigate at the 'edge' of their experience or comfort zones. Barrett and Harley explain,

Edge-places are not simply the boundary between one habitat and another, lines that you cross from one to the other like national borders. In these ecological borderlands, species from the two neighbouring habitats interact and intermingle, and a greater diversity and density of life is found there than in either of the two distinct habitats within themselves - making them places full of huge potential.⁹⁵⁷

In this case, the lower risk and shared space of the art exercise *interacts* and *intermingles* with the following discussions concerning biblical interpretation. The open, respectful, inquisitive and unencumbered tone of the conversation around neo-classical French art spills over into the subsequent topics, diluting any potentially overwhelming disruption and suggesting ways of navigating otherwise impenetrable pedagogical terrain. The above exercises focus on providing multiple, low-risk opportunities from which learners can then practise moving back and forward into potentially more highly disruptive learning spaces. Learners are presented with the opportunity to rehearse repeatedly crossing in and out of

⁹⁵⁷ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted: reimagining the church's mission from the outside, in* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 142.

disruptive learning territory: the chance to experiment on multiple, pedagogical 'dry-runs' before the stakes are raised.

In the language of Personal Construct Theory outlined in 4.2.1., before the learning risk becomes so fundamental it is detrimental to the overall shape and structure of the network, learners can gain experience in both the logic and associated emotions of the path ahead. However, it is equally important to recognise that just as the experience of a dry ski slope can only partially imitate and therefore also prepare the first-time skier for the condition of the Alps, equally, a learning *dry run* cannot, nor should mitigate all potential learning risks. To develop the skiing metaphor one level further, an effective, *disruptive-inclusive* starter activity should function as a pedagogical nursery slope. By providing safe ways to steadily increase levels of disruption, it should allow learners to become highly proficient (and not overwhelmed) at the various stages and transitions of the disruptive surroundings before the need for such skills and awarenesses is discovered on narrower and more demanding pistes.

5. Summary

In summary, the first activity of a CAL classroom session should optimise opportunities for learners to function at *optimum distance* by offering a 'way in' to a topic that is unfamiliar or unexpected. This creates opportunities to practise operating 'on the edge' of existing knowledge and build confidence and agility before the stakes are raised. It provides opportunities for learners to engage in disruptive learning together, not just observe each other participating as individuals and creates increased flexibility for educators to adjust levels of disruption according to learner response.

8.1.2. Re-centring the disruptive-inclusive classroom

Having examined the kind of starter activity that effectively inducts learners into a *disruptive-inclusive* posture in a CAL classroom setting, focus now shifts onto how the main body of teaching and learning sessions can consolidate and underscore the impact of this opening trajectory. In other words, what defines the centre (both literal and metaphorical) of a *disruptive-inclusive* CAL classroom experience? As per his transition into blindness and core to his argument in *What Prevents...?*, Hull understands a strong connection between learner awareness, the ability to articulate progress and CAL (see 4.2.1.). This raises the question as to whether the central aim of a *disruptive-inclusive* CAL classroom experience ought to be learner awareness or whether CAL can function effectively where learner cognisance is not possible or advisable? Is a core aim of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL to enable learners to identify and announce the impact of their learning in order to participate in it?

Where 8.1.1. began with an illustration from practice and then proceeded to its analysis and evaluation, this section moves in the opposite direction. Beginning by probing the roles of pedagogical consciousness and desire in *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, the discussion then proceeds to present an example from practice and associated analysis of its rationale to demonstrate how these themes could potentially shape Christian adult classroom learning practice.

1. Thematic evaluation: consciousness and desire in CAL

While I agree with Hull's general assertion that effective CAL replaces learner passivity with self-direction and regulation, I find the earlier-discussed concept of a one-way trajectory

from “sleeping consciousness ... awakened to life”,⁹⁵⁸ or “out of the obscurity of unconscious or semi-conscious influence ... into the conscious reflection of faith”⁹⁵⁹ too simplistic to express the heart of a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to CAL. Furthermore, although several elements of the argument for *disruptive-inclusion* to this point, in particular the earlier case made for *theopoetic* pedagogical characterisation, are not entirely incongruent with the claim that “Persons and communities are not fully present in a situation of disorientation until it has been brought to speech”,⁹⁶⁰ they strongly insinuate that such a claim requires significant nuancing.

Thus, rather than the heart of the *disruptive-inclusive* classroom experience designed to increase clarity of pedagogical understanding and articulation, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL suggests it is better defined (as presented in 6.2.) as *wrestling* or a perpetual, pedagogical tug-of-war. Just as disentanglement and simplification seem to have sufficiently dug in their heels to defeat confusion and doubt (and vice versa), there is a shift in momentum.

Facilitating participation in *this* kind of CAL requires a re-centring of classroom practice. Therefore, in a pattern already employed on multiple occasions, in place of Hull’s mono-directional understanding of a gradual increase in learner cognisance, *optimum distance* requires a dynamic fluctuation and interaction between the *known* and the *unknown* (as epitomised in 2.1.3. and 4.3. via the images of θύρα and Hull’s front door.)

As described in 8.1.1., pedagogical *edge-places* provide learners opportunities to practise creating connections between present, established, comfortable reality and that which

⁹⁵⁸ See 4.2.1., Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, viii and Hull, *The Ambiguity of Spiritual Values* and Hull, “Spiritual Development: Interpretations and Applications”.

⁹⁵⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 119.

⁹⁶⁰ Brüggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function*, 21.

cannot yet be explained or quantified. In fact, in another repeated pattern, I would go as far as to suggest that Hull himself postures this as an option (although inadvertently, perhaps). In 1991, he presents CAL as best likened to, “A method of dream interpretation. No consciousness is ever entirely false and no dream is ever entirely unconscious, otherwise it would not be experienced as a dream. In our dreaming state, we Christians toss and turn. I believe ... a pedagogy based on these factors”.⁹⁶¹ Without the space here to explore the impact of Marx and Freud on Hull’s developing pedagogy in the 1990s, pedagogical framing in terms of dreaming acknowledges that CAL occurs in the meeting of conscious cognisance, unconsciousness ignorance (and perhaps even unconscious cognisance), not in the exchange of one for, or over, another. This sense of *meeting* is critical to Hull’s understanding. In particular, his use of the phrase *toss and turn* explains how he imagines that, whether lying on the left or right side, the slumbering learner is no more or less asleep but oriented in a particular direction. This sums up a *disruptive-inclusive* CAL posture in that learning does not occur *only* in a state of cognisance or incognisance but in their varied and repeated connection and crossover. CAL takes place in the repeated *back-and-forth* between active learner cognisance and that which lies beyond it.

There are several, key reasons why aligning the purpose of CAL with complete learner cognisance is incongruent with a *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. Firstly, and most simply, because I concur with Hull, who in referencing Ricœur, suggests that *total reflection* is a philosophical impossibility. Complete perspicuity in learning (or, in fact, in anything) is not a realistic goal, first and foremost because humans cannot fully and permanently escape the subjective limitations of their own perspective. He explains, “We cannot always think clearly and

⁹⁶¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, viii.

exhaustively about our ideological commitment, because it is on the basis of that commitment that we think at all".⁹⁶² Secondly, even if it were possible, and as demonstrated in 8.1.1., maximum pedagogical cognisance does not always facilitate optimum learning progress.

However, and far more important to this project's core argument, is that *disruptive-inclusion* is presented as an effective learning posture for Christian adult learners of all types, levels and ages because it does not require the ability to comprehend and explain complex pedagogical methodologies but relies on an openness of posture in challenging learning circumstances. This does not dispute the fact that conscious pedagogical understanding can have a positive impact (recalling particularly the argument from 5.2.1. of Freire's claim that conscious awareness equips for relational connection), but that it cannot be a basic (or even entry) requirement, otherwise it would exclude many who are either unable or as-yet unwilling to actively engage in the theory of a *disruptive-inclusive* (or any other) pedagogical approach. In short, *disruptive-inclusion's* efficacy depends on its ability to function for those who can understand and explain their own learning progress; those who have some awareness but cannot understand why or how change is occurring *and* those of whom (for multiple reasons) it is unreasonable or unrealistic to expect comprehension and articulation of learning.⁹⁶³

Epistemologically speaking, the extremes of the distinction between learning primarily occurring within the realm of human perception and knowledge (reason) and *beyond* the same (revelation) is expressed via the terms apophatic and cataphatic. The first suggests the

⁹⁶² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 67.

⁹⁶³ This is important in several regards but is particular pertinent in regard to those with Specific Learning Differences caused by physical or mental disabilities.

“Human being incapable to employ either her natural faculties or her senses in her effort to achieving knowledge of the divine”⁹⁶⁴ and that the only way to learn is by entering “the cloud of unknowing” and therefore “gaining the wisdom that the divine is beyond comprehension”.⁹⁶⁵ In contrast, cataphatic theology suggests that “Using the natural faculties such as the five senses and reason ... it is possible to achieve a partial understanding and knowledge of the divine”.⁹⁶⁶

Several strands of Hull’s work and this project’s arguments for *disruptive-inclusion* suggest that extreme apophatic and cataphatic pedagogies of CAL are problematic because what humans already know, can know and can never know are not easily extricated: “Ideological commitment is a mixture of conscious and unconscious elements. A person knows that he is a Christian, but he does not necessarily realize all of the subtle and profound ways in which that commitment has shaped the whole of the way in which he experiences his life”.⁹⁶⁷ We are partially aware of self and surroundings but never completely. A solely apophatic approach to CAL results in the kinds of passive, disconnected, instructional learning that this project strives to undermine. However, a fully cataphatic pedagogical approach is equally unhelpful and unrealistic because the limits of the human condition make it impossible to perceive everything clearly, all the time. Again, we arrive at a further example of how a *both-and* paradigm provides an effective foundation for CAL.

The concept that CAL occurs both *via* and *beyond* human perception evokes chapter 4’s consideration of Hull’s pedagogy as embodied in his experience of physical sight loss. In

⁹⁶⁴ Stenqvist, "Apophatic and Cataphatic," in *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions* (eds. Runehov and Oviedo; Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013), 114.

⁹⁶⁵ Stenqvist, *Apophatic and Cataphatic*, 114.

⁹⁶⁶ Stenqvist, *Apophatic and Cataphatic*, 114.

⁹⁶⁷ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 67.

2001, Hull explained how, “When one is beyond darkness and light ... the distinction between the conscious and unconscious life becomes vague”⁹⁶⁸ but if “This is a characteristic of God, to whom darkness and light are both alike ... without blind people, the religious experience of sighted people is not complete”.⁹⁶⁹ In 1991, Hull went further in declaring, “I believe that I now see more clearly than before”.⁹⁷⁰ Thus, emerges the deep sense in which Hull did not consider an inability to perceive as an automatic barrier to learning, but an invitation to accept human limits. Once a learner comes to terms with the fact that the best learning brings together the knowable *and* the realisation that much is (and some will remain) unknown, it is accompanied with a freedom to build connections, explore and engage without fear. Hull’s daughter, Imogen, sums this up beautifully in her recollection of her father’s growing confidence in navigating the world with his cane. She explains how he moved around with an assuredness that, “there’s only so lost you can get”.⁹⁷¹

Secondly, it is also appropriate to expand the earlier argument of considering biblical CAL on *poetic* terms, to CAL more generally. Sheila Stewart outlines the *poetic* as a meeting point for the knowable and unknowable; “Poised between the sentient and the social, a moment of dialogue”.⁹⁷² Thus, in simultaneously insisting upon and exposing the inadequacy of words, a *poetic* pedagogical posture epitomises the tension of learning disruption: grounded and measurable but also breaking into normal patterns. “[It] is like a holiday which, while it is a date in the calendar, is also a break in the sequence of days ... because it uses the elements

⁹⁶⁸ Hull, *In the beginning there was darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible*, 131-132.

⁹⁶⁹ Hull, *In the beginning there was darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible*, 132.

⁹⁷⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, vii.

⁹⁷¹ Spinney and Middleton, “Radio H: Notes on Blindness,” (2016).

⁹⁷² Stewart, “Poetry: Learning Through Embodied Language,” in *Sharing breath: embodied learning and decolonization* (ed. Wong and Batachary; Edmonton, Alberta: AU Press, 2018), 380-381.

of time, like rhythm and pauses, it gives us a means to reflect on time".⁹⁷³ Stewart concludes that the *poetic* is "A place of bodily knowing attempting to become words, with both unconscious and conscious aspects of mind engaged".⁹⁷⁴ *Poetic* CAL epitomises the way in which apophatic and cataphatic knowledge need not compete, but require each other to function optimally.

A final observation regarding the role of learner cognisance in *disruptive-inclusion* comes from Hull's 1999 suggestion, "in the place of consciousness, let us place desire"⁹⁷⁵ and his 2004 explanation of the pedagogical significance of "unconscious passion".⁹⁷⁶ In a discussion that introduces further examination in 8.3., and will yet require still further analysis beyond this project, understanding CAL in terms of affective inclination and devotion rather than cognitive ascent evokes Smith's work on "pedagogies of desire".⁹⁷⁷ As Smith repeatedly claims, rather than being conceived in terms of increasing understanding of a particular concept, CAL is better conceived as learners being moved by, or compelled towards, their greatest love or "ultimate vision of the good life".⁹⁷⁸

The potential connection between CAL and desire is particularly pertinent to the present discussion of cognisance because, as Smith explains, within a pedagogy of desire, "Habits, dispositions, internal inclinations that ... you acquire through being immersed in rhythm, rituals and routines, over time, train your loves, even at an unconscious or pre-conscious level, to be oriented towards something ultimate".⁹⁷⁹ While Smith is careful not to propose a

⁹⁷³ Sedgwick, "Read my mind: young children, poetry, and learning," (London: Routledge, 1997), 6.

⁹⁷⁴ Stewart, *Poetry: Learning Through Embodied Language*, 381.

⁹⁷⁵ Hull, "Adult Religious Faith: Some Problems of Definition, of Research and of Education", 45.

⁹⁷⁶ Hull, "Teaching as a trans-world activity", 103.

⁹⁷⁷ Smith, *Desiring the kingdom: worship, worldview, and cultural formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2009), 62.

⁹⁷⁸ Smith, *Desiring the kingdom: worship, worldview, and cultural formation*, 73.

⁹⁷⁹ Smith, *Higher Education: What's love got to do with it? Longings, desires and human flourishing*,

binary in which love, desire and emotion are pitted against cognitive understanding, he proposes that learning occurs on *an unconscious or pre-conscious level* as, over time, desires are *cultivated* in a different direction or “conscripted into a rival gospel” by regular, formative practices.⁹⁸⁰

The breadth and significance of the consequence of this claim are far too great to fully unpack here. However, as specifically relates to Hull’s views on CAL, they undermine his persistent scepticism regarding the pedagogical effectiveness of an “an emphasis on liturgy, authority and tradition” because, he argues, it leads to a simple moralism and “seldom any encouragement for the laity to ask fundamental questions”.⁹⁸¹ Where Hull relegates the pedagogical importance of practices he perceives as *going through the motions*, Smith promotes the pedagogical value of repeated practices that function beyond or outside cognitive understanding and articulation (or at least begin there). He argues that transformation occurs at the level of unconscious desire.

Jean Leclercq’s 1961 analysis of the pedagogical contribution of monastic culture draws together several strands of this discussion in identifying what he refers to as “le poème de la liturgie” (the poem of the liturgy).⁹⁸² Leclercq describes how, rather than constituting pedagogical obstacles to be overcome, the structure, words and music of liturgical engagement are vehicles of mystical, pedagogical participation. “In the liturgy, grammar was elevated to the rank of eschatological fact. It participated in the eternal praise that the monks, in unison with the Angels began offering to God in the abbey choir and which will be

⁹⁸⁰ Smith, *Higher Education: What's love got to do with it? Longings, desires and human flourishing*,

⁹⁸¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 16.

⁹⁸² Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture* (London: SPCK, 1978), 287-308.

perpetuated in Heaven. In the liturgy, love of learning and desire of God find perfect reconciliation".⁹⁸³

Leclercq's basic claim is that as opposed to distracting from the *real* learning Hull identifies as active questioning and subsequent clarified understanding, liturgy (which Leclercq defines as "all activities involved in prayer"⁹⁸⁴) is a vehicle for simultaneous growth in love of God and love of learning - as one develops, one feeds the other. Despite not developing his argument pedagogically, a major consequence of this observation is that it offers a suggestion as to how CAL might access divinely, rather than self-sustained pedagogical passion and momentum. As discussed in 4.2.2., the key distinction between *perfect* divine and human learning is that divine learning is not motivated by lack or need but sourced by its own perfectly dynamic character and joy-fuelled momentum. Leclercq's conception of the poem of the liturgy suggests that it functions as a gateway for (at least) partial participation in divinely sustained learning, allowing love of God to fuel ongoing progress. Returning to Smith's language, in liturgical learning (construed in the most general sense), "the conversion of the imagination" occurs on an unconscious level.⁹⁸⁵

In this process, learners do not engage new information but cultivate unconscious desire for learning – practising finding life in the interaction between reason and revelation; between that which can be seen and known and that which, as yet, remains hidden and thus can only be joyfully anticipated, not understood. As Rahner states, mystery is "Not a regrettable imperfection in theology, but rather that which is most proper to it of its very nature ...

⁹⁸³ Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*, 308.

⁹⁸⁴ Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*, 287.

⁹⁸⁵ Smith, *Desiring the kingdom: worship, worldview, and cultural formation*, 265. Smith takes this phrase from Hays, *The conversion of the imagination: Paul as interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005), and his arguments for Paul's *re-imagining* of Isaiah in 1 Corinthians 14.

Theology, then, is to be understood as the ‘science’ of mystery”.⁹⁸⁶ Or as Meijer quotes Hull as claiming at IRSEV in 2004, “The religious life is a *quest* for truth and not a confident *possession* of the entire truth”.⁹⁸⁷

2. The setting

As in 8.1.1., the best way to illustrate these arguments is via examples of classroom practice. One particular theme strongly evoked by many of the issues raised here is Trinity. Like no other theological topic, Trinitarian thought illustrates the insufficiency of a solely apophatic or cataphatic approach to CAL and powerfully demonstrates the argument that the educator’s task at the heart of the *disruptive-inclusive* classroom is not just to facilitate an increase in clarity of understanding but a growth in confidence at navigating the combination of *knowable* and *unknowable*. Below, is included an outline of a series of sessions taught by my former colleague, Lizzie Hollow that demonstrates these claims.

3. The activity

The first phase of engagement with the topic is designed to induct learners into the ancient Christian tradition that consists in “Centuries of human attempt to speak the divine, to say the Unsayable, to name the Unnameable”.⁹⁸⁸ After the shocking (for many) discovery that the concept of Trinity is not named in the Bible, discussion proceeds to early creedal expressions of divine three-in-oneness. In turn, this develops into a compilation of a list of

⁹⁸⁶ Rahner, *Theological investigations* (vol. xi; Baltimore, Md.: Helicon Press, 1974), 101-102. The phrase “the conversion of the imagination” has been recently used by Richard Hays to describe Paul’s use of the Hebrew Scriptures that he describes as a way “that summons the reader to an epistemological transformation, a *conversion of the imagination*. The fruit of such a conversion is described in this book’s culminating essay as “A Hermeneutic of Trust” Hays, *The conversion of the imagination: Paul as interpreter of Israel’s Scripture*, x.

⁹⁸⁷ Meijer, “The Text and Its Readings: But What About Truth?,” in *Religious education as encounter: a tribute to John M. Hull* (eds. Hull and Miedema; Münster: Waxmann, 2009), 99.

⁹⁸⁸ Harris, *Teaching and religious imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 16.

analogies used to encapsulate the divine, triune nature. From an egg comprising shell, white and yolk; a woman who is simultaneously mother, wife and sister; a plant as “a root, a stem, and fruit” or how intellectual activity requires “memory ... intellect ... and will”.⁹⁸⁹ One by one, the strengths and limitations of such metaphors are analysed and aligned with ancient Christian heresies.⁹⁹⁰

When all attempts at encapsulating the divine, triune nature using words have been exhausted, the second phase moves onto visual representations of the Trinity. Beginning with symbols such as the Celtic knot, class discussion addresses the differences between attempting to *image* (rather than explain) the divine nature and eventually progresses onto consideration of Andrei Rublev’s, fifteenth century icon of “three angels, exhibiting a shy tenderness”.⁹⁹¹ Learners are invited to analyse the image, suggesting who and what they think is represented and what they can glean from it concerning Trinitarian nature. It is always striking to me how emotive learners’ responses to these questions are. They often speak of how they have been moved, as much as informed by the painting, particularly in relation to how the angels are postured to connect with one another. Unsurprising then, that Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove refer to the image as “are one of the most poetic images in all of Russian art”.⁹⁹² The final phase turns to the focus on the role of Trinity in contemporary Christian worship, and particularly music. The group examines a study on the most common recent hymns and songs, considering pronouns, prepositions and verbs in

⁹⁸⁹ Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13.

⁹⁹⁰ In particular, learners enjoy a satirical video in which two pilgrims question Saint Patrick as to the nature of the Trinity and demonstrate the insufficiency of his various arguments. LutheranSatire, "St Patrick's Bad Analogies," (2013).

⁹⁹¹ Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*, 24. While likely the most famous image representing Abram and Sarah’s mysterious visitors in Genesis 18, it represents a much wider iconic tradition focused on this scene.

⁹⁹² Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*, 24.

their lyrics and opens a conversation as to the impact of the lack of Trinitarian language employed.⁹⁹³

4. Analysis

This (unconsciously threefold!) progression of activities reinforces many of themes considered earlier. Firstly, the module aims do not set out to offer unequivocal responses to questions concerning the divine nature. Rather, the session invites learners to engage with both the importance and ultimate insufficiency of attempts to fully understand the nature of God. Thus, it might be better considered as an exploration of how the Church throughout history has arrived at various appreciations of how the God of the Bible is understood and worshipped as Trinity. Invariably, the pedagogical disruption of the topic for many learners is that, in place of an easily understandable, evidenced and applicable idea, Trinitarian thought presents an opportunity to engage with the necessary insufficiency of words and images as “an attempt to express what is ultimately inexpressible”.⁹⁹⁴

Moreover, for Evangelical learners, the modes of pedagogical disruption are various. In the first phase, the re-focusing of attention from the self-authenticating biblical text to its wider, ongoing interpretation in and by the Church can be a challenging paradigm shift. Also, engaging with the ideas that “The approach to speaking about God ... entails a moment of affirmation as well as negation”,⁹⁹⁵ i.e., acknowledging the limits of reason, can be extremely disorienting. Secondly, the focus on *imaging* God can be either entirely unfamiliar to some or otherwise, entirely unpalatable to others, previously trained to avoid all visual representations of God. In the final phase, the disruption is *flipped* in that the mode of

⁹⁹³ Tapper, et al., "Painting in Full Spectrum," (2020)

⁹⁹⁴ Paul, *The Trinity: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 53. C.f. Romans 11:33-36.

⁹⁹⁵ Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*, 14.

engagement (worship songs) becomes much more familiar to many learners, but the disruption takes the form of considering the theologically connected nature of such experiences through a new lens. Thus, in *disruptive-inclusive* terms, key to the session is the multiple opportunities created to observe others' attempts at and practise navigating *optimum distance*. Whether Trinity encourages learners to navigate the *edge-place* between Bible and Church, words and silence, understanding and desire, theology and worship, it offers numerous opportunities to practice moving *back and forth* and establish new connections.

Recently, I have considered that an appropriate final, additional phase to the above sequence would be to show a clip of the 2005 film, *Into Great Silence*, which depicts the everyday life of Carthusian monks. Despite being 162 minutes long, the film has very little dialogue: a few, brief interviews with the monks who speak of their motivation and views of life in the wider world. Without ever stating it, the film's use of "Scenic transitions, as well as cuts between individual shots ... governed mainly by a firm set of oppositions: still/moving, light/dark, silence/sound, work/prayer, interior/exterior",⁹⁹⁶ underlines the mechanism of mutual reinforcement argued to be at the heart of *disruptive-inclusion*. That which is dark and interior is presented in the film to play an active role in learning. Silence is not just what is left when the light, loud and exterior has proven insufficient. As Friedrich Büchner artfully expounds, "Before the Gospel is a word, it is a silence, a kind of presenting of life itself so that we see it not for what at various times we call it – meaningless or meaningful, absurd, beautiful – but for what it truly is in all its complexity, simplicity, mystery".⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁹⁶ Arthur, "Review: Into Great Silence," 32, no. 3 (2007), 72.

⁹⁹⁷ Büchner, *Telling the truth: the Gospel as tragedy, comedy, and fairy tale* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1977), 25.

8.1.3. Making the end a beginning

Finally, and briefly, where *starters* are designed to set a *disruptive-inclusive* trajectory towards *optimum distance* and the heart of learning ought to maintain and consolidate a pattern of crossing between the *knowable*, *unknowable* and as as-yet *unknown*, the ends of learning sessions also require a significant paradigm shift in order to be in support of a *disruptive-inclusive* learning posture. Firstly, it is important to recognise that in pedagogical approaches relying on disruption and disorientation, re-establishing interim points for marking progress becomes intrinsically important. In practical terms, learners need guidance and support in knowing what to celebrate and when and how to begin expressing their progress on different terms. For example, encouraging learners to note milestones of new topics engaged or old topics engaged from different perspectives, rather than only celebrating attainment-based pedagogical landmarks.⁹⁹⁸

Thus, my practical suggestion for a *disruptive-inclusive* ending to a *classroom* session that both undermines the pedagogical value of *arriving* but also recognises the need for re-defined progress markers, is a closing, reflective exercise in which learners are asked to identify:

- One thing that I know now that I didn't know before this session.
- One thing that I don't know now that I did know before this session.
- One thing that this session has taught me that I still need to know.
- One tension I am wrestling with as a result of today's session.
- One opportunity before our next session in which to consider this tension from another perspective.

⁹⁹⁸ For an interesting discussion of the *theological* nature of learning outcomes that recognises both their limitations and necessity, see Marsh, "'Learning Outcome' as a Theological Concept," 11, no. 2 (2014).

8.2. *Disruptive-inclusion* and the teaching sermon: towards better sounding CAL

The previous section focused on how *disruptive-inclusive* CAL can optimally function in settings that prioritise (or at least actively include) dialogical CAL engagement by traversing the boundaries of learner comfort, knowledge and understanding. However, as Hull repeatedly observes, for many Christian adults, their principal, formal learning opportunities occur in a format that does not easily allow for open interaction. Thus, this section develops Hull's thoughts on "the traditional sermon ... sometimes called a 'teaching' sermon",⁹⁹⁹ particularly his "gravest doubts about the educational value of the sermon",¹⁰⁰⁰ and argues that a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to sermonising assuages Hull's concerns.

Having established Hull's lifelong commitment to teaching and preaching in a variety of forms and settings in chapter 7, it would be entirely incongruent for his above comment to be taken as his call for an end to all sermonising. Rather, Hull's deep misgivings as to the pedagogical usefulness of the sermon are based in his fundamental concern with how the "restrained silence" in which much teaching and preaching takes place forms an individualistic and non-participatory CAL *format* that resists "any kind of personal exchange or dialogue".¹⁰⁰¹ Thus, Hull decries teaching sermons as an "Autonomous activity ... a neurotic obsessional substitute[] for learning ... pietistic practice"¹⁰⁰² in which learners' assumptions are "taken for granted not realized"¹⁰⁰³ because they remain "unexamined ... they do not attract our attention as being debateable".¹⁰⁰⁴ In short, Hull's dismissal of the *teaching sermon* as an appropriate, pedagogical format rejects the passive, individual

⁹⁹⁹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 18.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 18.

¹⁰⁰¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 18.

¹⁰⁰² Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 134.

¹⁰⁰³ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 177.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 55.

engagement created when one individual provides a larger group with a teaching monologue and the mutually-reinforcing pedagogical disassociation created by an *instructional* posture to the biblical text (and the homiletical task more broadly).

Before going further, it is important to state that although discussion of Hull's above claims cannot avoid straying into the realm of homiletics, their analysis is included as the clearest example of Hull's rejection of individual and *disassociated* CAL practice, not as a wider claim concerning the pedagogical (or even theological) value of homiletics per se. That said, for several reasons, I entirely disagree with Hull's assertion that a traditional teaching sermon is an unsuitable vehicle for *connected*, interactive, CAL and will aim to demonstrate here how it can avoid the various disassociations Hull considers as pedagogically restrictive and create unique opportunities for communal, interactive and participative learning.

Following a pattern that has become almost customary, my presentation of an alternative position to Hull's begins in his own arguments. Although it is fair to say that the following comments are mentioned, rather than fully developed in *What Prevents...?*, Hull clearly acknowledges the possibility that "A process of dialogical introspection (exploring one's own Christian memory in company with others) ..." is not only possible but key to CAL.¹⁰⁰⁵ In other words, connected CAL does not always necessitate active, group engagement and can take place introspectively *within* individual learners.

Secondly, and again despite Hull's consistent criticism of the *disassociated* and individualistic learning patterns he identifies as dominating the traditional sermon format, he leaves the door slightly ajar to other possibilities, stating, "One *can* learn alone, although even with a

¹⁰⁰⁵ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 82.

book one is not entirely alone”.¹⁰⁰⁶ Thus, the basis of my argument is that, regardless of whether the format of CAL and its associated practical circumstances allow for live, dialogical exchange, there is a variety of ways in which a teaching sermon informed by *disruptive-inclusive* pedagogy can create opportunities for dialogical and interactive CAL – the two principal mechanisms for which being story and imagination. The following sections explain how story and imagination function together pedagogically in *disruptive-inclusive* CAL; examine some of the specific techniques by which they can be employed in the teaching sermon and then demonstrate these points via an example.

8.2.1. Re-stor(y)ing the pedagogical imagination through disruptive-inclusion

The role of story in theological views of human understanding and reflection is well established and widely documented.¹⁰⁰⁷ However, analysis of particular ways in which “Stories can serve important ... functions in support of learning processes” as relates specifically to theological learning as well as learning more generally, increased significantly in the closing decades of the twentieth and opening decades of the twenty-first centuries.¹⁰⁰⁸ Stories are recognised as fundamental to human experience: “We are soaked to the bone in story”, “thoroughly desensitized to their weird and witchy power” ...

¹⁰⁰⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 17.

¹⁰⁰⁷ N.T Wright bases his declaration that “Stories are one of the most basic modes of human life” Wright, *The New Testament and the people of God*, 38 in Frei, *The eclipse of Biblical narrative: a study in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974). See also Alter, *The art of biblical narrative* (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 2011), Ricœur, *Time and narrative* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Hauerwas and Jones, *Why narrative?: readings in narrative theology* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1997), MacIntyre, *After virtue: a study in moral theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), Milbank, “Theology and social theory: beyond secular reason,” (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). In the world of Philosophy, see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical investigations. Philosophische untersuchungen* (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1958).

¹⁰⁰⁸ Slabon, et al., “Learning by restorying,” 42, no. 4 (2014), 507. Ruard Ganzevoort notes the wide-ranging theological disciplines shaped by narrative in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Ganzevoort, et al., “Religious stories we live by: narrative approaches in theology and religious studies,” (vol. 19 of *Studies in theology and religion (STAR)*; Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 2.

“chugging away beneath our awareness”.¹⁰⁰⁹ Therefore, story has both a levelling and invitational pedagogical effect. Humans are all similarly helpless but to be drawn into narrative learning participation.¹⁰¹⁰

As relates to *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, the pedagogical power of story is a necessary element of this discussion given that, as Jonathan Gottschall observes, story and disruption are inextricably intertwined concepts, “Regardless of genre, if there is no knotty problem, there is no story”.¹⁰¹¹ By definition, story depends on unexpected twists and turns; it requires disruption to exist. Thus, returning to Smith’s work, if CAL is best characterised as “living into a story”,¹⁰¹² *disruptive-inclusion* can be considered a particular means of *pedagogical restor(y)ing*, it displaces the learner from the story in which they had hitherto participated (or, at least, perceived their participation) and introduces an alternative story (in terms of both content and shape).

The full implications of this claim are more clearly appreciated in contrast to the alternatives. As examined in earlier chapters, many contemporary learners are far more familiar with models focused on instruction and problem-solving than any sense of *storied* learning.¹⁰¹³ As earlier demonstrated via examples from neuropsychological research, when considered as a one-way journey towards *the* correct answer, learning progress is measured in terms of proximity to error-free performance. On the other hand successful learning conceived in

¹⁰⁰⁹ Gottschall, *The storytelling animal: how stories make us human* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 2, 18 & 5.

¹⁰¹⁰ Gottschall, *The storytelling animal: how stories make us human*, chapter 1 offers an excellent example of how this works.

¹⁰¹¹ Gottschall, *The storytelling animal: how stories make us human*, 49.

¹⁰¹² “Restor(y)ing the imagination: part 1”.

¹⁰¹³ Chapters 2 and 3 outline how *disruptive-inclusive* CAL exchanges the idea of arrival at the correct answer for agility in exploration of the ideas concerned. Chapter 5 develops some of these ideas and then chapter 7 consolidates the Bible’s role in this sense of pedagogical pilgrimage.

terms of story, takes into account that very rarely is the optimum path direct and uncomplicated. As Gottschall notes, this is well illustrated via the well-known story, *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy's journey does not become successful when she arrives back in Kansas, her progress was facilitated (not diverted) by the unknowns of the Yellow Brick Road and the Emerald City. From a variety of perspectives, it is difficult to conceive of a more effective vehicle for *disruptive-inclusive* CAL than well-crafted story.

One reason why the distinction between *storied* learning and an *instructional* or *problem-solving* pedagogical approach is important, is that the latter cannot be practised. Learning by transfer of information is, by definition, a one-time event. There is only one occasion on which an objective fact can go from being *unknown* to *known*, or a particular problem can be *solved*. Following this model, subsequent learning practice becomes a process of recalling or further developing pre-existing ideas. This limitation of learning practice is hugely problematic because CAL is difficult, particularly disruptive and theological CAL, and therefore, with only one chance to *learn* a particular lesson or fact, it is unsurprising that many do not proceed beyond a certain level.¹⁰¹⁴ Story, however, finds its identity in the practice of its varied re-telling - a point clearly demonstrated in the dialectical relationship between the Church and the biblical story: "We seek story because we enjoy it. But nature designed us to enjoy stories so we would get the benefit of practice".¹⁰¹⁵ Therefore, the most effective and enjoyable stories, are those most widely *practised*. Whether, in the form of folk tale, fable, Gospel, biography, cartoon or advertisement, stories reveal the repetitive, broad and participative nature of learning. "Practice is important. People practice ... in low

¹⁰¹⁴ Particularly in reference to Fowler's observation that it is unusual for learners to progress past Stage 4 before mid-life. See 5.2.3.

¹⁰¹⁵ Gottschall, *The storytelling animal: how stories make us human*, 59.

stakes environments so that they will perform well ... when the stakes are high ... story is where people go to practice the skills of human social life".¹⁰¹⁶

However, story's pedagogical function is not limited to its varied repetition, but also its naturally communal nature - a point that addresses Hull's unease concerning his individualist view of the nature of teaching sermons. Therefore, although sermons may appear to be individualist and passive learning formats, a *storied* approach reveals that, in fact, they provide opportunities for highly interactive, engaged and corporate CAL. Brad Strawn and Warren Brown refer to this as a collective, narrative Christian identity formed in how "Frequently, others help us narrate our lives and the stories others tell us about ourselves".¹⁰¹⁷ Paul Fairfield also notes how the pedagogical function of story "provides knowledge of what actions are acceptable and in what circumstances ... In other words, narratives instil norms and shape our understanding of what we and others are doing".¹⁰¹⁸ The key element of the above observations is that story is an unavoidably *connected* pedagogical activity. Whether directly or indirectly, story always addresses *someone*, rather than presenting as abstract theory. Even if you engage story in your own company, learning through story is "A form of inclusion of what is outside of oneself, and for the sake of something larger ... you are never truly alone".¹⁰¹⁹ In summary, the structure and mode of story, and *storied* learning, is deeply relational, inviting communal participation and response.

¹⁰¹⁶ Gottschall, *The storytelling animal: how stories make us human*, 57. This is interesting to consider in relation to the formation of the biblical canon, given that inclusion in the final collection was partially dependent on the breadth and longevity of any, given book's oral popularity. Where stories had a long and wide heritage of re-telling and copying, it was considered to qualify a particular story's authority.

¹⁰¹⁷ Strawn and Brown, "Enhancing Christian life: how extended cognition augments religious community," (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2020), 139.

¹⁰¹⁸ Fairfield, "Education, dialogue and hermeneutics," (London: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2011), 33.

¹⁰¹⁹ Strawn and Brown, *Enhancing Christian life: how extended cognition augments religious community*, 124.

The basic repetitive and collective characteristics of *storied* learning provide a strong basis for how a traditional sermon format is able to facilitate dialogical learning participation. However, to fully understand *how* this is possible, alongside the relationship between learning and story, we must also consider the second key theme noted above: the relationship between learning and imagination. For many, imagination is uniquely correlated with the fictive. However, as we saw in the earlier discussion of play, when children take the roles of nurses, police officers and parents, the stories they rehearse do not exist in a vacuum but are embedded in lived experience. Their re-imaginings of an arrest, medical appointment or childcare arrangements are undertaken as if they had real consequences, “Children’s play is not escapist ... play is deadly serious fun. Every day, children enter a world where they must confront dark forces, fleeing and fighting for their lives”;¹⁰²⁰ the *reality* of which provides children the opportunity to explore the jeopardy of adult life scenarios without the associated consequences.

Furthermore, in the context of earlier arguments regarding learning at *optimum distance*, Harris argues that imagination is the ultimate tool by which teachers can help learners inhabit *edge-places* that facilitate their repeated *crossing over* in a variety of different ways. One example is her argument that imagination occurs on a pre-conscious level and as such “it is as natural and near as breath” and yet simultaneously, a “more concrete activity employed in the poetic art”.¹⁰²¹ In another sense, she also argues that imagination is “A faculty of the mind and essentially a faculty of the body at the same time”.¹⁰²² Finally, she outlines how imagination is where “Understandings of depth, ultimacy and meaning are the

¹⁰²⁰ Gottschall, *The storytelling animal: how stories make us human*, 32.

¹⁰²¹ Harris, *Teaching and religious imagination*, 8.

¹⁰²² Harris, *Teaching and religious imagination*, 8.

primary considerations” and yet also belongs to the realm of “*mystery, the numinous, and mysticism*”.¹⁰²³

Many contemporary, theological references to *imagination* either rely on or develop Charles Taylor’s work on *Modern, Social Imaginaries*.¹⁰²⁴ Beth Green offers a helpful elucidation of how Taylor’s work connects to CAL,

The social imaginary is a concept tied to the question of how Western modernity understands itself. Taylor writes that ‘The differences amongst today’s multiple modernities need to be understood in terms of the divergent social imaginations involved’ (pp. 1-2). Taylor is not using the word ‘imagination’ here to refer to fiction, fantasy or to the inner world; as in ‘she has an active imagination’ (Smith and Cooling 2017). Taylor is using it to refer to the way people understand the world they live in, how they fit into that world alongside others and what assumptions inform their expectations about what is normal.¹⁰²⁵

Therefore, returning to Hull’s earlier suggestion that interactive CAL can occur via “dialogical introspection”,¹⁰²⁶ all of the above point to the ability of *storied imagination* to create a sense of *back-and-forth* within individual learners and across groups of listeners as a whole, providing a pedagogical alternative to live, learning dialogue. As Strawn and Brown explain:

A critical factor in the power of stories is that, in order to understand the actions in the story, the hearer must create in their imagination a simulation of the actions and interactions described in the narrative. To say within a story, “he climbed the mountain” is to cause to occur within the hearer’s brain systems a quick partial simulation (a mental thumbnail action sketch) of climbing a mountain. Otherwise the hearer cannot adequately appreciate what is being said. Recent brain research has shown activation of the same brain areas in a listener that would be activated if the listener were doing the actions being described in the story.¹⁰²⁷

¹⁰²³ Harris, *Teaching and religious imagination*, 15.

¹⁰²⁴ Taylor, *Modern social imaginaries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004),

¹⁰²⁵ Green, “Present Tense. Christian Education in Secular Time,” in *Innovating Christian education research: multidisciplinary perspectives*(ed. Luetz and Green; Singapore: Springer, 2021), 22, quoting Taylor, *Modern social imaginaries*.

¹⁰²⁶ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 82.

¹⁰²⁷ Strawn and Brown, *Enhancing Christian life: how extended cognition augments religious community*, 137-138. The particular research referred to here concerns how literary fiction causes readers to “feel and think along with the characters” Nijhof and Willems, “Simulating fiction: individual differences in literature comprehension revealed with fMRI,” 10, no. 2 (2015), 1.

Thus, in terms of brain chemistry, as *storied imagination* occurs (i.e., learners imagine themselves participating in a story, or even consider the personal implications of potential participation¹⁰²⁸) learners *are* actively participating as if they were engaging in the imagined conversation or performing the imagined action, there is no difference in neural activity. Physiologically, humans cannot resist imaginative participation in story and as Harris summarises, as we do so, “we can alter our existence”.¹⁰²⁹

As well as uniquely associated with the fictive world, many hold imagination as a uniquely solo activity. As Banner and Cannon declare, “You can’t depend on anyone else for imagination. It is the most private and interior of human faculties”.¹⁰³⁰ While I concur that imagination comes in as many forms as there are learners (i.e., it cannot be prescriptive in form or content), Harris’ above use of the first-person plural aligns with my earlier arguments concerning the collective nature of storied learning. It is *our* existence that is altered in the changing of *our* imagination and therefore I endorse Harris’ assumption of a pedagogy driven by “communal imagination”.¹⁰³¹ This communality exists in so far as, by participating in imaginative, storied learning, disruption occurs at such a fundamental human level, that some form of shared experience is impossible to avoid, even if only in its sense, not its nature. As Büchner puts it, “The distances between the inner world that each of us is,

¹⁰²⁸ The key point is that empathy is exercised. As Mark Allan Powell explains in relation to biblical engagement, “Empathy is a primary mode to connect the meaning of the biblical stories with meaning in their own lives” Powell, “What do they hear?: bridging the gap between pulpit and pew,” (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2007), 64.

¹⁰²⁹ Harris, *Teaching and religious imagination*, 4. Even when considered from a scientific perspective, Milbank argues that stories and understanding are inseparable. He explains, “Science does not rid itself of narrative, and indeed, it is just as possible to tell a story in which the characters are atoms, plants, animals, or quasars, as one where they are human beings. Moreover, these stories are always necessarily – however disguised this may become – stories of our human interrelationships, and our social relationships to the natural world”. Milbank, *Theology and social theory: beyond secular reason*, 269.

¹⁰³⁰ Banner and Cannon, “The elements of learning,” (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 69.

¹⁰³¹ Narvaez, *Neurobiology and Moral Mindset*, 331. This communality works across time and space, as demonstrated in 7.3.

are greater in their way than the distances between the outer worlds of interstellar space, but in another way, the world of all of us are also the same world".¹⁰³² Where Hull understands multiple, individuals learning in parallel, *disruptive-inclusion* understands a shared, communal learning experience.

Ultimately, this means that *storied imagination* is open to the participation of all learners who self-identify as human! Hull argues specifically in relation to CAL, "Education becomes ecclesial when it is appropriate to the whole body of Christ, when it deals with the solidarity of the Church within the solidarity of humanity".¹⁰³³ There is a growing body of evidence concerning the roles of story and imagination in the formation of learners across the age range as well as those with Specific Learning Differences and neurological disorders.¹⁰³⁴

Where learners are unable to recall information, understand and organise concepts, develop problem-solving techniques, or are not pedagogically cognisant, participation in *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is still possible by imagining a different story, a different *kind* of story or a familiar story re-told in a different way or place.

In line with the argument for *playful poetics* in 7.4.2.,

In genuine works of art, the individual does not feel as an observer of a separate and discrete object; the individual feels a participant within the making of the object itself. Expressions that one feels "taken over" or "sucked in" or "overwhelmed by" or "immersed in" are easily dismissed if taken to be metaphysical explanations; they are something else when interpreted as metaphorical expressions. In the presence of the work of art, some-thing new is created within the self.¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰³² Büchner, *Telling the truth: the Gospel as tragedy, comedy, and fairy tale*, 3-4.

¹⁰³³ Hull, "Karl Marx on Capital: Some Implications for Christian Adult Education", 26.

¹⁰³⁴ For example, see Christer Hydén and Örvulv, "Interaction and Narrative Structure in Dementia," in *Telling Stories: Language, Narrative, and Social Life* (eds. Nylund, et al.; *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics Series*; Washington, DC.: Georgetown University Press, 2010) and Locher and Gyax, *Narrative Matters in Medical Contexts Across Disciplines* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), on the role of imaginative narrative for those with Dementia and Autism respectively.

¹⁰³⁵ Crick, "Democracy & rhetoric: John Dewey on the arts of becoming," (*Studies in rhetoric/communication*; Columbia, SC.: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 171.

Through imaginative story, all learners are presented with active opportunities through which, “Movement, uncertainty, and vulnerability can become tools that generate new meanings, new imaginations, and new forms of becoming human”.¹⁰³⁶ In the imagining and re-imagining of stories, a learner, “Fully embraces feelings like ‘I don’t completely belong in one or the other’ because it embraces the unpredictability of becoming human. It embraces the perpetual suspension between the past (being) and the future (non-being). It thrives in learning to abide in the present moment, in the possibility of becoming something, someone new”.¹⁰³⁷

Over time, whether consciously or otherwise, entering into this practice of imaginative storytelling allows learners to not only get used to the tension of learning at *optimum distance*, but come to associate it with their own identity: to be a *storied* Christian learner, is to be defined by the fact that, “The journey or process of ‘unfinishedness’ is at times contradicting and painful but can also be blissfully peaceful. To be human is to experience and embrace this dialectical relationship between pain and joy, self-love and love for others, difference and commonality, and as much as we don’t like to talk about it, life and death”.¹⁰³⁸ In short, my concluding suggestion here is that, (developing Hull’s argument from *What Prevents...?* that divine learning does not occur out of necessity but as an outpouring of joy as per 4.2.2.) storied imagination not only makes *disruptive-inclusive* CAL possible in situations where conscious, live dialogue is unavailable, but is the means by which it is undertaken not out of duty, but enjoyment and delight.

¹⁰³⁶ Tario, "Critical Spirituality: Decolonizing the Self," in *Decolonizing the Spirit in Education and Beyond: Resistance and Solidarity* (eds. Wane, et al.; Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 189.

¹⁰³⁷ Tario, *Critical Spirituality: Decolonizing the Self*, 189.

¹⁰³⁸ Tario, *Critical Spirituality: Decolonizing the Self*, 189.

8.2.2. *Re-stor(y)ing the imagination via the teaching sermon*

The first guiding lens for how *storied imagination* can be encouraged via teaching sermons comes from the work of Powell, who understands the format as an invitation for teachers to *cast the scriptures*. In line with several of the themes already explored here, Powell's strategy is based in the proposal that the preacher imagines casting a particular biblical text as a play.¹⁰³⁹ Who would play the roles? How would lines be delivered? Against what kind of backdrop does the action take place? However, Powell also suggests that just a single imagining of this type is not sufficient. Rather, in a move deeply suggestive of *multiplicity of vision*, he suggests that the preacher ought to "Force yourself to empathize with a different character and to experience the story from that character's point of view".¹⁰⁴⁰ Although Powell does not specify whether the aim is empathy with a character from within the story or with a character from the story's potential audience, both can be effective in helping "Us to discern polyvalence, to identify a fuller range of options by which audiences can and do create meaning for themselves out of the raw materials the text provides".¹⁰⁴¹

By this process of multiple re-castings, Powell argues that the empathic power he seeks to leverage is best achieved by both casting self in the play (personally engaging in imaginative performance of the story) and casting an understudy who plays the part very differently.

This way, *optimal distance* means that the play's invitation to the audience is to its repeated, varied performance, not consumption or mimicry. As Brüggemann recognises of the

¹⁰³⁹ Specifically, the language of a play resonates with earlier references to Wright, *Scripture and the authority of God*, Smith's claims that "We act in the world more as characters in a drama than as soldiers dutifully following a command" Smith, *Imagining the kingdom: how worship works* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013), 127 and Ricœur's suggestion that "To participate in the mystery of incarnate existence means to adopt the internal rhythm of *drama*". Ricœur, et al., *Freedom and nature: the voluntary and the involuntary* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 2007), 17.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Powell, *What do they hear?: bridging the gap between pulpit and pew*, 61

¹⁰⁴¹ Powell, *What do they hear?: bridging the gap between pulpit and pew*, 61

prophetic voices of the Hebrew Bible, “The preacher is deeply embedded in the YHWH narrative”,¹⁰⁴² thus the message cannot be delivered from *without*, because “teaching is the incarnation of subject matter”.¹⁰⁴³ visceral and visual *re-imaginings* of what the unfolding of God’s story looks like. Far from denying personal implications and interpretations, *disruptive-inclusive* teaching understands them as a constituent part of the much greater *communal imagination* referred to earlier. Explaining how seventeenth century poet John Donne inspired her own practice, Davis refers to this greater imaginative learning backdrop as teachers choosing to illuminate rather than illustrate.

He would read it [the biblical text] in relation in any and every other verse of Scripture – roaming through the two Testaments as he might have strolled through London, observing with familiarity and endless fascination the particularities of the language and the local characters. Repeatedly, Donne reminded his audience of their stories, and when he used a contemporary illustration, it was drawn in just a few words. Its purpose was to engage his hearers directly with the scripture witness and thus enable them to see their own lives more clearly.¹⁰⁴⁴

Acknowledging another of her significant homiletical inspirations, Krister Stendahl, Davis concludes her advice: “Be careful about using an example that is too good, too “unforgettable”. If your preaching is doing what it should do, then people probably won’t remember what you said, and it doesn’t matter. Your goal should be that the next time they turn to that part of the Bible, *it will say a little more to them. The purpose of preaching is to give the text a little more room to shine*”.¹⁰⁴⁵ The evocative nature of Davis’ language demonstrates her understanding that stories in teaching sermons exist not to adorn the text but to draw attention to its existing, compelling beauty.

¹⁰⁴² Brüggenmann, “The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word,” (Lanham: Fortress Press, 2012), 14.

¹⁰⁴³ Harris, *Teaching and religious imagination*, 41.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Davis and Dennis, *Preaching the Luminous Word: Biblical Sermons and Homiletical Essays* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2016), 15.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Davis and Dennis, *Preaching the Luminous Word: Biblical Sermons and Homiletical Essays*, 15.

This is not to suggest that every biblical text is easily appreciated as *beautiful*, rather that an element of *restorying the imagination* invites a richer, deeper, more tension-filled definition of beauty. In *The Hospitality of Listening*, Karmen MacKendrick explains this sense of re-defined beauty so eloquently, it is worth including here in full. She argues that as we pay attention and listen,

What we hear will be strange, as our words and others' and the world's echo and redouble one another, offering both praise for the world as it is and petition for the world as it ought to be, for beauty mourned ... To attend with care, as if to beauty, is not only to discern strangeness, but also even to *make* strange, to force oneself out of the known and the familiar – even in the face of the known and the familiar. This is what art often does, transforming rather ordinary objects and sounds and movement by the very act of presenting them for our attention. In this, in fact, is some important part of the long shift of our aesthetic sensibility away from the classical sense of an ordered and symmetrical beauty and toward a broader sense of the interesting, the surprising, the arresting ... To welcome beauty is to welcome that making-strange, looking again at what was boringly familiar; the strangeness of art, of philosophy, of madness, of love. Even what we already saw, already knew, may hold the possibility of something else, of beginning again in wonder.¹⁰⁴⁶

MacKendrick thus claims that without denying the pain and challenge of certain biblical passages, the *beauty* of any given text or interpretation of it is not solely contained in or defined by the words on the page, but in the readers'/listeners' embrace of *the interesting*, *the surprising*, *the arresting* and *the strange*. The very possibility that we may learn to perceive any given idea or story differently over time (or perhaps, that it might grow in/with us) is, in itself, beautiful. Thus, returning to Davis' call for the text to be *illuminated* by preachers, even the most, seemingly inflammatory words and ideas need not be apologised for or smoothed over, but their evolving *strangeness* and enduring challenge embraced. In short, Davis presents the teacher's role as facilitator of a (sometimes strange and tension-

¹⁰⁴⁶ MacKendrick, "The Hospitality of Listening," in *Phenomenologies of the stranger: between hostility and hospitality* (ed. Kearney and Semonovitch *Perspectives in continental philosophy*; New York, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2011), 105. MacKendrick's reference to wonder here links to a similar discussion in chapter 5.

filled) conversation between the listener and the biblical text itself, not an agent who represents the text and speaks on its behalf.

While I stand by my earlier disagreement with Hull's claim that effective CAL is uniquely and directly correlated with the ability to articulate learning progress, this is not to suggest that words are anything other than of imperative, pedagogical importance: their quality, timbre, cadence, quantity, tone and lack, powerfully shape pedagogical experience. In fact, two of Hull's most-quoted sociologists, Berger and Luckmann make the seminal twentieth century argument for this in *The Social Construction of Reality*.¹⁰⁴⁷ Thus, it is appropriate to summarise both Powell and Davis' basic positions as claims that "In the art of preaching...language is framed in such a way that the congregation is allowed to enter into a new experience".¹⁰⁴⁸ Acknowledging, but also putting aside, the significant lack of diversity in preachers in the Church as a whole, we must also recognise that the traditional teaching sermon format only allows for one preacher at a time (or at most, a very small group). Thus, *any* preacher must use language carefully to actively invite diverse others into learning, rather than force them into passivity. In both their approach to the task and choice of words, a preacher communicates whether they perceive themselves as the *first* contribution to the conversation, *a* voice among many in an ongoing conversation, or the *only* voice in the conversation, imagined, or otherwise.

As was also true in the previous section, pre-defining learning *before* a teaching session or sermon, to make learners feel comfortable, only serves to re-inforce fear of the unknown

¹⁰⁴⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), "Language ... is the most important sign system of human society", 51.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Achtemeier, *Preaching as theology & art* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1984), 52.

and make it more difficult for learners to move beyond the safety of the framework set out by the expert voice. As Sarah Travis unpacks in relation to the de-colonialization of biblical interpretation, “A strategy of colonizing imagination has been employed by colonizers in order that colonized subjects might view themselves according to colonial representations. In this sense, colonizing discourse has interfered with the right of colonized peoples to narrate their own histories and identities”.¹⁰⁴⁹ The teacher has a choice as to whether their words will re-enforce *their* rights and privilege to be heard, *or* to speak in a way that acknowledges the gaps in the conversation created by those who cannot, or do not presently speak. Will they speak as one who has *mastered* the subject matter and wider learning space, or present in a way that declares, “subject matter is being and has been reformed, indeed reinvented for the future with a life of its own”?¹⁰⁵⁰

I appreciate that the suggestion of speaking on others’ behalf, especially in relation to the underrepresented and discriminated groups is highly problematic and no substitute for diverse voices being welcomed into full participation in both imagined and actual conversations. However, it must also be recognised that rather than necessarily being a limiting factor, a *disruptive-inclusive* teaching sermon offers some reassurance to those for whom open questioning and dialogue is simply too costly or dangerous in a given moment. Full imaginative participation is far more pedagogically effective than little or no verbal interaction. If a learner knows they will not be called on for a comment or question, while the risk of passive disengagement remains, the opportunity for full engagement in the world of storied imagination is arguably, significant increased.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Travis, *Decolonizing Preaching: Decolonizing Preaching The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 25.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Harris, *Teaching and religious imagination*, 37.

Practically, this seems an impossible tightrope to walk. How can a preacher be a participative cast member who models active participation without crowding the imaginative space so that those who do not contribute to the conversation *out loud*, are still afforded maximum opportunity to engage in the world of *storied imagination*? How is it possible to provide sufficient disruption, but not too much? I conclude here with several concrete observations and suggestions, Firstly, *storied imagination* relies on the idea that learning is more “aesthetic than analytic”¹⁰⁵¹ and as such, its transformative potential functions via form as well as content. Therefore, *disruptive-inclusive* teaching should not shy away from aiming to sound *beautiful* (as per MacKendrick’s previous definition of being presented with the interesting, surprising, arresting and strange). However, this does not mean that words are unimportant. Well-crafted sentence structure and verb choices can function in teaching like a jeweller’s choice, polishing and setting of stones in a piece: nobody comments on the symmetry of the angles cut into the stone or the proportions of the claws but they do appreciate the way these allow light to pass through the stone in superior ways. Language is capable of painting evocative pictures and transporting listeners to experiences both familiar and unfamiliar. Therefore, a “subversive conversation about the nature of reality”¹⁰⁵² need not repeatedly ask, “and how do you respond to this?” or “what does this mean for you?” Where language is carefully chosen to re-story imagination, it makes participative demands on listeners, there is no need to repeatedly re-state the need to draw connections. Others’ storytelling skills can be used to help in this process. Interweaving a range of stories creates opportunities by which the listener cannot avoid questioning the implications of placing the unexpected other in the centre of the story.¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁵¹ Smith, *Imagining the kingdom: how worship works*, 174.

¹⁰⁵² Brüggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word*, 14.

¹⁰⁵³ These facets are demonstrated in the example in 8.2.3.

Secondly, imagined as a circle, a *disruptive-inclusive* teaching sermon should *either* take learners far enough around a first *loop* that the pedagogical trajectory is set but ultimately, learners are given the task of joining the dots on their own, or accompany learners all the way around their first revolution and then a little further. In the first case, learners gain a sense of unfinished story that needs continuing and/or a sense of empowerment having been drawn into full storied participation. In the second, the first revolution acts as a model, *dry-run* on which ongoing learning can be based. The power of this is eloquently demonstrated by Bono, U2 frontman, who, on the thirtieth anniversary of the album, *The Joshua Tree*, made the following comments about one of its most definitive tracks – *Where The Streets Have No Name*:

Musically it's great and the band deserve credit for that, but lyrically it's just a sketch and I was going to go back and write it out ... Half of it is an invocation, where you say to a crowd of people 'Do you want to go to that place? That place of imagination, that place of soul? Do you want to go there, cos right now we can go there?' To this day when I say those words you get hairs on the back of your neck stand up because you're going to that place.

He continued in explaining that producer Brian Eno had reassured him that "Incomplete thoughts are generous because they allow the listener to finish them". Bono explained that Eno's challenge brought him to the conclusion that, "As a songwriter I have to realise that the greatest invitation is an invocation".¹⁰⁵⁴ Not offering all the answers – the deliberate presentation of something open-ended in a way that invites imaginative participation is a pedagogical skill both encouraged and demanded by *disruptive-inclusion*.

My final observation about *disruptive-inclusive* teaching, particularly in sermon format, is that the combination of the sublime and the ridiculous should produce humour. In speaking

¹⁰⁵⁴ "Bono says 'Where The Streets Have No Name' is 'unfinished'", <https://www.nme.com/news/music/bono-unfinished-streets-name-2113648>

about the participative nature of learning games, Reddie points out, “The use of laughter and comedy is often deliberate because history has shown us that it is often in times of great distress and emotional turmoil that the sharpest and most incisive forms of humour emerge”.¹⁰⁵⁵

Reddie’s point is that there is a very fine line between the *serious* and the *light-hearted*. In fact, often there is significant overlap between the two. Let me specifically clarify however, my suggestion here is *not* that preachers should include more jokes but that as teachers dare to blur boundaries, disrupt categories, re-tell stories and include new topics, people and places in the conversation, humour results either from an ensuing empathy, discomfort or a mixture of both. In the sermon that follows, stories of Mr. Bean and Star Wars, Tiger Woods and my coffee preferences intermingle with the resurrected, victorious Christ, his bride and the whore of Babylon. This gives permission to learners to explore what Revelation 19-20 (in this case) evokes for them. The comic effect this creates demonstrates that, although deeply challenging, *disruptive-inclusive* need not be seriously dull and is designed to function best when nothing is excluded. Büchner explains, “Sin and grace, absence and presence, tragedy and comedy [dare I add disruption and inclusion?], they divide the world between them and where they meet head on, the Gospel happens. Let the preacher preach the Gospel of their preposterous meeting as the high, unbidden, hilarious thing it is”.¹⁰⁵⁶

8.2.3. Practising the re-stor(y)ing of the imagination: a disruptive-inclusive sermon

As has been the case for every section of chapters 7 and 8 so far, 8.2. concludes with a practical illustration of its arguments. In this case, a teaching sermon is offered, first written

¹⁰⁵⁵ Reddie, "Theologising Brexit: a liberationist and postcolonial critique," (*Routledge new critical thinking in religion, theology, and biblical studies*; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 161.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Büchner, *Telling the truth: the Gospel as tragedy, comedy, and fairy tale*, 71.

and delivered the year this research began. It is not intended to promote any particular reading of the portion of Revelation concerned, but rather, as per the argument already made several times, to not only offer a demonstration of the above approaches to biblical pedagogy but also an experience of them. Depending on the reader's religious commitments and previous experiences, this experience may, or may not, be *disruptive* in the extreme. However, regardless of how its content is received, my encouragement is to notice and embrace the tensions it raises. After the sermon, a brief analysis is included of its particular *disruptive-inclusive* ideas and functions that may help any readers particularly disoriented or distressed by it, to identify and wrestle with their own responses. Finally, sermons are designed to be heard and not read. Therefore, should you prefer to listen to the following sermon, an audio file is available online, accessed via the link below.¹⁰⁵⁷

1. Imagining a different kind of victory: Revelation 19:11-21:1

We have reached the final scene of the film. The audience holds its breath as the hero steps up to take on the villain in the deciding dual. Will good win out or will we be left with a cliff-hanger as she literally teeters on the edge? I hate it when directors force us to wait for the sequel to discover what happens. Well, Revelation doesn't make us wait much longer for answers. Our reward for persevering through 19 chapters of the Bible's final book is a gloriously satisfying ending – but perhaps not in the way we may have been expecting. I'm afraid that by this point, it's too late for a spoiler alert. The author of Revelation isn't holding back anymore, this passage is unapologetically saturated in the most convincing victory anyone could imagine – the victory of God the Almighty.

¹⁰⁵⁷ 8.1. Practising the re-stor(y)ing of the imagination audio file: <https://vimeo.com/589071111>

As chapter 19 begins, I am transported back to the famous beach scene in Chariots of Fire – where Eric Liddell runs through the surf and the iconic soundtrack kicks in. Every time, I have an emotional reaction. My hope rises at the prospect that this unlikely hero might achieve his goal. Everything about that scene is designed to make me feel that way (or maybe that song makes you think of Mr. Bean at the London 2012 Olympic ceremony¹⁰⁵⁸ – as I say, either way, spine-tingling!). Now, given that there is no surviving soundtrack to the book of Revelation, its author has to find an alternative way to point out the significance of the story’s progression as we reach chapter 19:11. Unless you read very carefully, it’s easy to pass right by: “then I saw heaven opened” is as loaded with significance as The Imperial March is to Darth Vader’s looming presence in Star Wars or how Indiana Jones’ theme music announces his impending success. Openings are everywhere in Revelation – angels open seals and scrolls, bottomless pits are opened and temples, and mouths and books open everywhere. However, the heavens only open twice in Revelation – right at the outset of John’s visions in chapter 4 and here. This opening announces the beginning of the end. The author declares as clearly as is possible – pay attention! The God who began all of this, who opened the heavens in the first place, now opens the heavens for a final time to usher in the new heavens and new earth finally revealed in chapter 21. The victory we’ve all been waiting for is about to be unveiled. We should get the same tingling sensations as we do from Chariots of Fire ... or Mr. Bean!

Interestingly however, the fact of Jesus’ victory is given short shrift by the author: there is no epic battle sequence or drawn-out description of the enemies’ state at the end. Rather, a few short, matter-of-fact statements. “The beast was captured” and “the rest were killed”. Jesus’

¹⁰⁵⁸ If you missed it, you can watch it here: <https://youtu.be/CwzijmBLfrQ>

victory is not a reality that only becomes apparent at this end point of the story, but it defines its entire shape and understanding. There is no big reveal at the end, but like those films that begin with the ending and then work back through how the characters arrived to that point, the author of Revelation is far more interested in explaining how Jesus is victorious, rather than merely establishing its fact. The author's central interest is – what does it look like for Jesus to overcome?

I think our first clue comes in the inclusion of the righteous rider on a white horse (19:11). Victory isn't a passive, spectator sport – it is not something done to the people of God. All the parties involved in this passage have agency – their actions produce a specific effect. As we've seen on a few occasions in Revelation, horseback is where the battles are won and lost (which is interesting when we come to Palm Sunday, but that's a different sermon). And so, in chapter 19, it's pivotal to notice who gets to ride. The rider on the white horse strides out first but then in 19:14, the armies of heaven, wearing fine white linen follow him out on their own white horses. Again, this image may not instantly strike us as particularly sensational, but it conveys an incredible idea – Yes, Jesus is lead rider here, but he is no lone ranger, he is flanked by the armies of heaven. It seems that the power, authority and agency we see embodied in the differently coloured horses that appear in the front line of battle in Revelation 6, is now under control of the armies of heaven. As those who ride in victory alongside Jesus, the people of God are co-agents of that victory, not observers. Neither is there room for a hierarchy of participation among the riders. In the curious side-scene in 19:10, the author notes an exchange with an angel who rebuffs attempts to be worshipped. The message is stark – in Jesus-style victory, the only distinction made is between God who is worshipped and those who are gifted the privilege of worshipping. As all creation moves back

towards the peace and wholeness of its original design, there is no space for competition anymore. As a fellow rider with Jesus, the model set is that of participatory worship.

So, Jesus' victory is not about waiting for something to happen – it requires that we take seriously our agency as those who reign with Jesus and whose lives and actions testify to God. However, it's not just important that God's people participate, but it matters what kind of victory that we think we're participating in – and this can be challenging, because the view of victory we're given here is contested by many we see in contemporary culture. An example: in March 2013, Tiger Woods regained his place as the world's number 1 golfer (don't worry – you don't need to know or like golf to follow this story!). He had fallen in the rankings in the preceding years after admitting to a range of affairs that broke up his marriage. His sponsor, Nike (a word that interestingly means victory in Greek) celebrated his return to the top of the game with an advert that had the strapline: winning takes care of everything. Nike thought that a good way to promote their brand was to let Woods' victory put the other recent events of his life back into proper perspective - as unimportant. In other words, Nike promotes the kind of victory that is a distraction from the realities and responsibilities of family life rather than the kind of victory that actually gives access to a better quality of life. If you can win on the golf course, then who cares if you don't win anywhere else. There's no attempt in this slogan to pretend that being successful at golf might actually address Woods' personal problems but rather, that for a minute or two, going around 18 holes in one stroke fewer than the next guy might distract from the pain, and make his mistakes somehow seem diminished.

In Nike's defence, they're not alone in pushing this concept of victory – on the whole, media culture sells the kind of victory that is exhilarating but also temporary; it guarantees a big

adrenaline rush but is ultimately just a distraction from other difficulties, not an answer to them. Recently, in response to the latest US election, social commentator Stephen Colbert said that “worrying about winning has become a poison in our society” and I don’t think we have to look far to see that he’s right.

Revelation 19 paints a vivid picture of the differences between this kind of victory and the way God wins, through two key characters: the whore of Babylon and the bride of Christ. In a quick re-cap from chapter 17 – remember that the whore is described as clothed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls – holding in her hand a golden cup. Her outward appearance is a metaphor for the kind of victory she represents. The whore’s victory is opulent and calculated in tangible terms – in the eyes of the world, winning is about what you have to show for your own efforts at the end of the day. This contrasts sharply with the bride of Christ who is simply described as clothed in fine linen, bright and pure (19:8). However, there is one detail above all the others that John mentions about the bride that gets to the real heart of the difference between these two female characters. In 19:8, the bride’s clothes are described as having been ‘granted’ or given to her. All that the bride has, has been gifted her. The difference between victory and defeat is not marked by what the women have but who they understand as the source of what they have.

This distinction is reinforced in the name given to the rider of the white horse – faithful and true. Often, I think, with these ‘fruits of the spirit’ related words, we have a tendency to think of them as abstract, spiritual theories but, faithfulness and truth here represent deeply practical ideas. Here, Jesus’ faithfulness in victory helps us understand its deeply counter-cultural implications. In practical terms, faithfulness is acting in a consistent way that confers high value on something or someone else. For example, my preference for a certain coffee

shop and my repeated patronage of that coffee shop adds value to them on several levels. Apart from the financial profit they make from my purchases, my consistent rejection of all other coffee shops sends a message that I value their product and over time, they are right to grow in confidence as their reputation builds. Although I obviously benefit from this process, overall, the value flows from me ... towards them.

Think back to Nike's version of victory. Others are obstacles to my attempts to hold onto or increase my own value and ultimately victory is achieved despite or at others' expense. Value is denied others in order to be concentrated in me! In demonstrating true faithfulness, Jesus models a pattern of victory for the people of God that doesn't need to desperately snatch value away from others by stepping on them but Jesus-shaped victory looks like conferring value on others in the consistent process of giving value away! This backwards conception is epitomised in what is probably the most well-known verse in this passage – 20:4. Leaving discussions of the meaning of 1000 aside for now, those whose testimony had previously seen them lose their lives for God's cause come to life and reign with Christ. Similarly to chapter 12 where those who "did not cling to life in the face of death" are those who conquer, these weighty ideas see death and life come together in baffling ways.

Like the disciples in Matthew 16 who struggle to understand what Jesus means when he says that to save your life, you must lose it, the resurrection and reigning of the dead in Revelation 19 is difficult for us to understand because we like clear lines between gain and loss, victory and failure, life and death. Jesus though, doesn't seem to respect our desire for control over these categories. Jesus-style victory came to earth as a refugee baby before it came as a mighty ruler, Jesus rides a donkey before a white horse, victory took the form of a criminal's execution before an empty tomb. It required Jesus to cry 'it is finished' before the 7th angel

could cry 'it is done' and involved the drinking of the cup of wrath before it could be poured out to end the enemy's existence.

Now, importantly, I'm not saying that Revelation 19 paints a picture in which Jesus' style victory is about grinning and bearing through every awful thing that happens – just hoping that everything will turn out well in the end. When we see evil in the world, often packaged as the kind of victory Nike is selling, as representatives of Christ, the Church's role is to provide an alternative witness ... to tell a different kind of story. But I do sense that maybe the biggest lesson of Revelation 19 and 20 for us is a reminder that Jesus-style victory is so immense, rich, and complete, that of course, it cannot be constrained by human categories and often breaks into our experience way before we're able to recognise it as anything we might expect. I agree with the analogy that Brian Blount makes in his book, "Can I get a Witness? Reading Revelation through African-American Culture" He compares the visions and hymns of Revelation with the "music of the Black Church tradition" – its story is not just "a mere accompaniment to the liberative history of the Black Church tradition; it is the vital life force that paces the beating of its struggling, idealistic, weary, and yet indefatigable heart".¹⁰⁵⁹ He's saying that in the example of what he calls the 'spiritual blues', as the songs speak of coming victory, they're not just prophetic in foretelling future victory, but in some beautiful, mysterious way, they inaugurate, they usher in, God's victory in their singing.

Let me finish with a personal example. This time last year, I had just started a new job, one that I had felt God had gone to great lengths to prepare me for. On paper, it was miraculous provision – every detail seemed made for me. However, very quickly the reality of the day-to-

¹⁰⁵⁹ Blount, *Can I get a witness?: reading Revelation through African American culture* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 93.

day situation became unbearable. Unable to cope, I was forced to quit. On the one hand I could dismiss the whole scenario as a failure and despair at why it wasn't successful. However, I find that Revelation 19 and 20 challenge me to engage with the idea that in God's process of redeeming all things back to their best, sometimes victory comes disguised as weakness and defeat. Maybe this season takes its place as part of God's victory in and through me, in ways I just am not yet able to see? It reminds me of Leonard Cohen's famous lyric – "there's a crack in everything: it's how the light gets in".

So, I suppose if we're looking for a bumper sticker version of God's victory in Revelation 19 and 20, it's this: expect the unexpected. Don't write something or someone off because they don't immediately look like what you've been taught to expect. In fact, sometimes the lines between gain and loss, victory and failure, life and death become so intertwined that losing everything as the only way to gain anything at all, starts to make a bit more sense. Notice this week the number of times you perceive God's victory breaking through in people and situations that the world dismisses as losers. The hero does win in the end, but in a way that is far better than we could ever imagine.

2. Reflections on experiencing a *disruptive-inclusive* sermon

The first important acknowledgement regarding the above sermon is that (similar to the recognition in 8.1.1.) even before any particular pedagogical method is applied, the *content* of learning already provides the basis for significant disruption. In this case, Revelation's "Misogynist reputation and ... penchant for graphic violence" means that many do not have to dig deep into the imagery of chapters 19-20 to experience disruption.¹⁰⁶⁰ In fact, many of

¹⁰⁶⁰ Blount, *Can I get a witness?: reading Revelation through African American culture*, viii.

its aspects sit comfortably in Phyllis Trible's categorisation of *Texts of Terror*.¹⁰⁶¹ However, as Schüssler-Fiorenza states, the contemporary interpretational challenges of Revelation are not limited to any particular type of reader, "The Book of Revelation remains for many Christians a book with 'seven seals', seldom read and often relegated to a curiosity in the Bible".¹⁰⁶² For the vast majority of Christian adult learners, the overarching difficulty of the final book of the Bible is not limited to any one particular, element but well summed-up in the paradox, "Revelation obscures".¹⁰⁶³

However, for exactly this reason, Revelation is a deeply intuitive choice via which to demonstrate the potential of a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to *teaching sermons*. Firstly, as referenced in 3.2.2., Michelle Fletcher's suggestion that Revelation ought to be considered in terms of a biblical *pastiche* highlights it as an excellent (and perhaps also extreme) methodological example of the Bible's *inner-connectivity*. Defining *pastiche* as "A specific practice of imitation and combination that sits somewhere between original and copy, parody and homage, and collage and mosaic",¹⁰⁶⁴ Fletcher posits that Revelation's complex intertextuality need not be apologised for (as if a kind of *contaminated* product) but considered as an opportunity to participate in a "complex multivocal text" that makes little attempt to hide its identity as such.¹⁰⁶⁵

Secondly, as Craig Koester recognises, from Justin Martyr to Augustine, from Luther to John Darby, (for better or worse) the book of Revelation, "Has inspired countless sermons and

¹⁰⁶¹ Trible, *Texts of terror: literary-feminist readings of Biblical narratives* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1984).

¹⁰⁶² Schüssler Fiorenza, "The book of Revelation: justice and judgment," (*Twentieth century religious thought*; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998), 13.

¹⁰⁶³ Blount, *Can I get a witness?: reading Revelation through African American culture*, 1.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Fletcher, *Reading Revelation as pastiche: imitating the past*, 48.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Fletcher, *Reading Revelation as pastiche: imitating the past*, 47.

theological treatise, artistic works, and musical compositions ranging from the triumphant 'Hallelujah Chorus' to the gentle strains of 'Jerusalem my Happy Home' ... it has fed social upheaval and sectarian religious movements ... Attempts to control the effects of the book by ignoring it or dismissing it have not been successful".¹⁰⁶⁶ Moreover, "There are those whose reading of the Apocalypse has inspired them to seek freedom from the captive and justice for the oppressed, whether in South Africa, South America, South L.A., or elsewhere".¹⁰⁶⁷ Thus, Revelation provides a particularly rich interpretational heritage from which to explore *inter-connectivity* in CAL.

Finally, as recognised by Hays, Gorman and Eugene Peterson, Revelation "throbs with theopoetic energy"¹⁰⁶⁸ and therefore not only easily lends itself to a *disruptive-inclusive* approach but arguably the extreme *otherness* of Revelation also expedites the process. As particularly highlighted when Revelation is approached as a *puzzle* or *problem* to be pulled apart, its multiple levels of interwoven complexity mean that the dissected result often quickly reveals itself as "a cadaver rather than a living text".¹⁰⁶⁹

Reflecting on specific ways in which the above sermon adopts a *disruptive-inclusive* approach to the text: firstly, it opens with a familiar format to many, a basic hero and villain scenario. However, it subverts expectations by beginning at the end. Thus, without having to make a methodological claim that the biblical text models a pedagogical pattern of

¹⁰⁶⁶ Koester, "On the Verge of the Millennium: A History of the Interpretation of Revelation," 15, no. 2 (1995), 128.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Gorman, *Reading Revelation responsibly: uncivil worship and witness: following the Lamb into the new creation*, 8. As well as contemporary examples of this, Brian Blount outlines the role of interpreting the book of Revelation in the history of African American culture. Blount, *Can I get a witness?: reading Revelation through African American culture*.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Gorman, *Reading Revelation responsibly: uncivil worship and witness: following the Lamb into the new creation*, 35. *Theopoetics* is explained further in 9.2.2.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Reddish, *Revelation* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2005), 230.

disruption, the opening paragraphs of the sermon demonstrate the text as exactly that. Listeners experience the text, and not the preacher, as the source of the subversion and disruption of expectations, which in turn, functions at the beginning and not the end of the learning conversation.

Another key, *disruptive-inclusive* mechanism used in a variety of ways, is the concept of *crossing over* or inhabiting *edge places* between two concepts or arenas. Throughout the sermon, listeners' imaginations are moved from the 1920s to 2012, from Star Wars to Mr Bean, from golf to Indiana Jones, from multi-million-dollar advertising strategies to my personal coffee preferences. As demonstrated at various stages of chapter 7, the Bible's pedagogical *connectivity* encourages learners to hold diverse perspectives, styles of expression and communication, times and even interpretive approaches in tension. Learners are invited to move between the everyday and the lofty, the individual and the systemic, the *part* and *whole* and between different modes of imagination, sights, sounds and memories. In the language of John 10, rather than asking learners to permanently locate themselves on one side of the θύρα, they are encouraged to move back and forward between the various images and *try on* ideas that may be more or less familiar, more or less comforting and challenging.

Finally, *disruptive-inclusion* is also worked out through what is absent in the sermon. It resists drawing a clear distinction between the interpretation and application of the text. Rather, at the end, it draws attention to how the whole presentation is premised on the *crossing* back and forward between the two. Therefore, (as discussed in 8.2.2.) no formal invitation to participate is required, i.e., there is no closing question, "So, what does this mean for you and your context?" However, the assumption is embedded from the outset

that there are more connections to be made and that those listening are engaged, active participants in the *connective*, interpretative process.

8.3. *Disruptive*-inclusion and pandemic-shaped CAL: challenges and opportunities

Chapter 4 presented Hull's transition to blindness as the quintessential embodiment of *disruptive-inclusion* CAL. The discussion noted how Hull's requirement to *re-learn* how to do everyday tasks led him to question, "Whether it is the case that adults only learn (or learn best) when the structures of life are upset; when the crises of life come upon us. Is that the case? Is it the mere stability and perhaps conventionality of much of church life, which prevents Christian adults from learning? ...".¹⁰⁷⁰ Undoubtedly, the biggest *upset* to the structures of life during my lifetime has been the widespread changes to everyday life made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 that could not have been predicted at the outset of this research in 2017.

Particularly pertinent to this study, continuing all forms of education during times of national lockdown and social distancing has required creative thinking, unprecedented reliance on technology and a re-shaping of priorities. From nurse schools to universities, theological training institutions and churches, learners and educators in all settings have faced extraordinary and wide-ranging disruption. As this thesis nears completion in 2021, there has not yet been sufficient time for a full analysis of the pandemic's implications for education or any other sector of society. However, given the prolonged and significant upheaval, few surmise that educational practice and structures will simply return to pre-COVID 'business as usual', with most anticipating that some methods and approaches

¹⁰⁷⁰ Hull, *North West and Mann Learning and Development Network: The Learning Church*.

implemented during the period in which educators, learners and worshippers have been unable to gather in person, will be retained in the long term. This project opened by explaining how this research was inspired by a particular moment in my learning experience. So too, it seems appropriate that it should conclude by offering some initial reflections on how experiences during the period of pandemic-shaped learning might inspire fresh levels of insight and analysis for the future of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL methodology and practice.

As has been demonstrated from a variety of perspectives, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is fundamentally concerned with the growth and enrichment of learner *connection* – with self, others, the wider, diverse learning environment and God. On the most obvious level, the physical isolation required by the pandemic has significantly reduced many opportunities for *connected* learning. However, interestingly, I have found that alongside the physical separation and compartmentalisation caused by social distancing, some actions taken to continue teaching and learning despite these conditions, have had the opposite effect. In attempts to mitigate against separation, many pedagogical distinctions and boundaries have, at best, become blurred, and at worst, been completely obliterated. Returning to the terms of John 10 discussed in chapter 2, the shepherd's voice still calls out to the sheep, but the landscape in which they roam has changed beyond recognition. The sheepfold's familiar fences are no more. If the pedagogical pastures that bring life, can still be said to be navigated by *going out* and *coming in*, the practical implications of such a claim needs *re-mapping* against the recent backdrop of COVID-19.

8.3.1. Disruptive-inclusive, online learning

Although use of online technologies is only one element of pandemic-shaped pedagogical practice, it has unquestioningly played a fundamental role in the boundary blurring

mentioned above and raises a range of issues that impact CAL more widely. In 1985, despite not only approaching the conversation from a pre-pandemic standpoint but also a pre-digital standpoint (to give some context, Windows version 1.0 was released a few months after *What Prevents...?*), Hull's discussion of individual and corporate forms of learning, briefly addresses the particular challenges of facilitating *koinonia* (and thus, CAL) faced by the "electronic churches" of America which have no congregational or corporate reality, but exist as a network of individuals watching television".¹⁰⁷¹ Although Hull's comment does not imagine an online, interactive classroom but rather a selection of people watching the same television channel, his scepticism regarding the potential for *connectedness* when learners are not physically gathered offers an insight into how *disruptive-inclusion* might apply to online learning formats.

Firstly, Hull's identification of the lack of *congregational and corporate forms of learning* highlights the role of corporeality in online CAL. What role does physical presence play in CAL? On one hand Deanna Thompson begins her theological understanding of corporate, online engagement from the position that, as the Church, "The body of Christ has always been and will always be a virtual body", and thus online engagement is just another phase in its ongoing development.¹⁰⁷² On the other, although not specifically addressing online learning, theological anthropologists, Brown and Strawn's 2012 exploration of the nature of church raises questions about the particular nature of online *connectedness* for churches:

A particular church cannot be the Body of Christ if it is no more than a loose association of independent Christians, because there is no organized and dynamically interconnected network that could correctly be designated a body." They continue that *this* kind of body requires, "Long-term and high-quality interactions ... among its members. Ideally, these interactions are characterized by flexibility, adaptability, and

¹⁰⁷¹ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 15.

¹⁰⁷² Thompson, "The virtual Body of Christ in a suffering world," (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2016) Chapter 2.

interdependence leading to a form of cohesion that is neither rigidly enmeshed nor passively disengaged".¹⁰⁷³

How the body of Christ can engage in *connected*, online CAL by any means (never mind *disruptive-inclusive* means), requires significant, further research as the peak of the pandemic subsides and new, long-term pedagogical patterns and practices emerge.

However, the above comments highlight the fundamental, theological significance of the relationship between learning *connectivity* and corporeality. While it is only appropriate to make some very initial suggestions as to the potential direction of the future conversation here, similar to the pattern adopted in chapter 7 of *re-casting* binary frameworks, a good starting point for bringing *connected* CAL to bear on online CAL is Harry Jenkins' identification of three *gaps* that define virtual pedagogy.

Jenkins argues that the *participation gap*, the *transparency problem* and the *ethics challenge* all need to be addressed in, "Any attempt to provide meaningful media education in the age of participatory culture". In short, he highlights an inequality of access, a poverty of ability to reflect on both the short and long-term formational impact of online engagement and a lack of emotional and ethical maturity needed to cope with a complex and diverse social environment online.¹⁰⁷⁴ In short, educators cannot take for granted that all have access to resources and skills made necessary by "the transformation from networked communication to "platformed" sociality; from a participatory culture to a culture of connectivity".¹⁰⁷⁵

¹⁰⁷³ Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church*, 125.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Jenkins, "Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: media education for the 21st century," (*The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital Media and Learning*; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009), 15.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Van Dijck, *The culture of connectivity: a critical history of social media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4-5. Another line of enquiry for future development in this regard is the theme of *corporeal presence* in *theopoetics*. For example, Callid Keefe-Perry claims that *theopoetics* demonstrates the importance of "Championing the body and experience as an essential component in knowing and thinking". In turn, this, "Not only affirm[s] our incarnational nature" but also "challenge[s] those systems and worldviews that attempt to

In line with the *both-and* paradigm repeatedly employed in this project's presentation of *disruptive-inclusion*, Angela Williams-Gorrell highlights the growing importance of "the interplay between the online and offline dimension" in CAL methodology and practice.¹⁰⁷⁶ However, she could not have anticipated the extent to which the relationship between offline and online engagement has moved far beyond *hybridity*: practically entirely conflating during the pandemic. As Williams-Gorrell points out, the collapsing of offline and online categories results in an "always on" mentality, or at the very least, always in the same mode.¹⁰⁷⁷ Thus, when *movement* (both physical and metaphorical) between various learning modes and settings is impossible, learners also lose associated opportunities to cross back and forward between the formal and informal, the familiar and unfamiliar. *Going out* and *coming in* all becomes *staying put*.

At the height of the pandemic, almost all social, learning, economic and religious activity occurred in an online space hosted in learners' homes. This meant that kitchens served as classrooms and sanctuaries, collapsing any *space* between breakfast, assignments and gathered worship. Building on the discussion from 2.2.3., the *narthical* learning space between the working day's last meeting and making dinner, normally provided by the bus, train or car ride home, is no longer. Even the thirty seconds of silence in the lift between floors to gather thoughts and re-set for the next task is eradicated. As a result, opportunities

operate as if the flesh can be ignored, or worse, *should* be ignored." Keefe-Perry, et al., "Way to Water: a Theopoetics Primer," (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock. 2014), 55-56. For more on *theopoetics* see 9.2.2.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Lindgren, *Hybrid media culture: sensing place in a world of flows* (vol. 114; London: Routledge, 2014), 2.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Williams Gorrell, *Always on: practicing faith in a new media landscape* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2019), 48 and 65.

to operate at *optimum distance* while passing between different life settings, learning modes and spaces are severely limited and need active replacement.¹⁰⁷⁸

A further example of this is the merging of *formal* and *informal* learning opportunities. One of the main elements of a physical classroom session that is almost impossible to re-create in an online, video-conferencing scenario is the ten minutes before and after a session and the communal coffee break. Particularly in formal, adult learning settings, these *in-between* spaces provide opportunities for learners and educators alike to segue between the various elements of life and responsibility. Learners discuss the pre-reading or assignment choices, ask questions of their peers' understanding and educators have one-to-one conversations that meet individual learners' needs: a pedagogical narthex is created that enables a practice of *coming in* and *going out*. On the other hand, in online settings, instantaneous *crossover* is granted at the click of a button. *Optimum distance* is difficult to practise and maintain when only facilitated by clicking 'join' and 'leave'. Lingering in the *in-between* becomes almost impossible.

On the surface, video conferencing recreates the physical classroom setting in a virtual space (and various companies' approaches reveal a variety of underpinning pedagogies), but regardless of the format, as demonstrated above, it is very difficult for an online 'room' to recreate the porous boundaries (previously referred to as *in-between spaces* or *edge-places*) of a physical classroom. It is far more difficult for both learners and educators to *ease into* disruption or for disruptive CAL to begin before learners are aware of it. In short, the learning mode associated with practice or dry runs outlined in 6.1.2. and 6.1.3. becomes far

¹⁰⁷⁸ Perhaps, however, it is better understood as the displacement of learning disruption given that that which formerly defined the familiar and comfortable is now forced into a different function, re-defining it as disruptive?

more challenging to outwork. Side conversations, informal chitchat, and general relationship building is harder because “Attention online is not elusive; rather, it is conclusive. There is evidence”.¹⁰⁷⁹ In other words, the multi-layered, multi-focal engagement of live, *disruptive-inclusive* classroom engagement is much more difficult to achieve in an online setting that requires tight restrictions on a single person speaking at once; in which potentially not all participants can always see one another and there is a far greater awareness of the gathering being dictated by clock and calendar.

However, the collapse of pre-existing pedagogical categories associated with online CAL is not entirely incongruent with *disruptive-inclusive* learning. In particular, the reinforced connections between mental, physical, social and economic wellbeing reinforce the arguments for pedagogical connectivity that are central to this project. Yet, the claims outlined above represent a larger pattern in which I suggest that, considered through the lens of *disruptive-inclusion*, the biggest implications for CAL caused by the pandemic, have not been due to the need to create disruptive learning opportunities, rather their ubiquity.

As the lines between offline and online, home, study and work become increasingly blurred there can be no *entering into* disruption, because there is no escaping it!¹⁰⁸⁰ Taking the boundary between online and offline as a good example, their increased overlapping “extends suffering that occurs in physical spaces into digital spaces”,¹⁰⁸¹ a pattern that is felt both in personal and wider systemic senses. Referring back to 2.3.2., which argued that *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is based on the premise of positive self-inclusion - virtual learning

¹⁰⁷⁹ Williams Gorrell, *Always on: practicing faith in a new media landscape*, 76.

¹⁰⁸⁰ This connects to questions of the pedagogical significance of lines in 5.2.2.

¹⁰⁸¹ Williams Gorrell, *Always on: practicing faith in a new media landscape*, 3.

environments create significant learning disruption for many, in the fact that it is far more difficult to avoid engaging with self. Whether this takes the form of seeing one's own face in a video call, reading one's own contributions to online discussion or being expected to adopt a more self-directive and reflective pedagogical posture, invariably, the role of self is far more prominent in online than face-to-face learning modes.¹⁰⁸²

Secondly, although online learning can be said to remove some logistical barriers to equality of participation (i.e., for those with physical disabilities or unable to travel for other reasons), it must also be acknowledged that it also consolidates (and in some significant ways exacerbates) the discrimination and inequalities ingrained in 'live' societal engagement. For example, despite a range of initiatives to address the issue, online racial abuse of (particularly) Black people in the public eye, specifically professional sportspeople, has seen exponential increase. *Anonymity* and *invisibility* have been identified as key tenets of online engagement that result in the kinds of expressions of hatred and discrimination (particularly racial) against sportspeople, far more rarely expressed in face-to-face settings.¹⁰⁸³

There is a third way in which the blurring of lines between online and offline learning modes has wrought disproportionately disruptive effects on a particular group of learners: those for whom technology is inaccessible. Although perhaps not instinctively considered under the term *suffering*, during the pandemic, those who do not have either the finances or skill to participate in online learning have been at a significant disadvantage to their better-resourced and skilled peers. In early 2021, the British Academy's initial assessment of the impact of the pandemic on education, was that it, "will not be felt equally" and will likely,

¹⁰⁸² Although, certain platforms do allow users to turn off 'self-view'.

¹⁰⁸³ Kilvington and Price, "Tackling Social Media Abuse? Critically Assessing English Football's Response to Online Racism," 7, no. 1 (2019)

“Entrench aspects of existing inequality, impede intergenerational mobility and constrain young people to education and career binary paths, limiting their options and reducing the agility of the labour market”.¹⁰⁸⁴

Although beyond the scope of the above report, this entrenchment is not limited to young people: all without appropriate equipment or internet connection (or ability to use them) are barred from online learning opportunities (as well as a variety of other areas of life). Therefore, whether it takes the form of facing self in learning, the consolidation of discrimination in a variety of forms, or the logistical and technical challenges associated with online learning, the blurring of lines between offline and online pedagogical worlds can itself provide extreme disruption for many learners, even before the question of learning content is addressed.

In summary, many of the following suggestions for further research arise from the ways in which the pandemic has revealed the extent to which learning practice is primarily understood in terms of *form*, as opposed to *function*. For example, the first area that I would suggest requires further analysis is the question of how pedagogical *edge-places* (or *optimum distance*) can be optimised for online learning. As above, where learning *spaces* do not have naturally porous boundaries or easily lend themselves to interactive participation, can *imaginative story* be used to replace some of the pedagogical functions of live classroom discussion? As Eugene Lowry claims, strong narrative structure in learning aids progress through multiple levels of learning connection.¹⁰⁸⁵ Inversely, where structure is absent,

¹⁰⁸⁴ British Academy, "Shaping the COVID decade: Understanding the long-term societal impacts of COVID-19," (London: The British Academy, 2021), 93.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Lowry, *The homiletical plot: the sermon as narrative art form* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

whether because learners do not have regular classroom time with educators or because more flexibility is generally required to accommodate learners' schedules and other responsibilities, the narrative function traditionally provided by regular, face-to-face contact with learners must be reproduced through other means. In summary, further research is required as to how offline and online learning activities, modes and forms can combine to best allow learners to practise re-imagining their own story in light of ongoing learning.

Another area requiring exploration is a development of my earlier suggestion regarding the nature of a potential *disruptive-inclusive sweet spot*. For example, online learning engagement in and of itself results in some learners already operating under maximum tolerable disruption. However, as presented in 2.3.2. and 5.1., *disruptive-inclusion* does not result from necessarily lessening disruption (especially given that much disruption is beyond educators' and learners' control) but matching disruption with opportunities for *re-ideologization* – i.e., there is a simultaneous undoing and re-formation constantly occurring. How can curriculum modes, structure and content optimise this pedagogical process of continual unpicking and reforming without learners becoming so settled that it is too difficult for them to respond dynamically or so destabilised that connected, storied learning is impossible?¹⁰⁸⁶

8.3.2. Resisting the allure of 'new normal'

My final observation is based in how the changes necessitated by COVID-19 have been widely understood as the move to a 'new-normal' (presumably, from an 'old-normal'?) Just as 4.1.2. highlighted via Hull's transition into blindness that, after his awareness of the

¹⁰⁸⁶ Some of these questions are addressed in recent learning concerning *unlearning* that "Insinuates a kind of originality and invention, of finding something new and discovering something old within the new for the first time." Dunne, et al., *The Pedagogics of Unlearning*, 13.

darkness had faded, he found that the transformation he had undergone meant that actually, any 'new normal' could not be even vaguely similar to before, so too I am sceptical how realistic, or even helpful, progress towards any post-pandemic 'new normal' may be.

When it became apparent that the pandemic's impact would be wider and longer lasting than many initially hoped, language of 'new-normal' has been "deployed almost as a way to quell any uncertainty ushered in by the coronavirus".¹⁰⁸⁷ The World Economic Forum criticises the framing of present reality as a progression from one state of familiar, stability to another because, "Far from describing the status quo, evoking the 'new normal' does not allow us to deal with the totality of our present reality. It first impedes personal psychological wellbeing, then ignores the fact that 'normal' is not working for a majority of society".¹⁰⁸⁸

Particularly as relates to *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, the concept of a 'new normal' perpetuates the idea that learning progression is concerned with locating stability by ignoring, avoiding or overcoming disruption as opposed to learning how to optimally function in unknown and unpredictable conditions. Therefore, perhaps the most fundamental question raised by the COVID-19 pandemic is whether, rather than a desperate quest to inaugurate a 'new normal', *disruptive-inclusion* may be the means by which this period of turbulence might invite a valuing of pedagogical instability? In many ways, to articulate how many have experienced the pandemic, we must turn to the language of abuse and trauma. In her work on the subject, Barbara Glasson beautifully articulates the paradigm shift I am suggesting here,

The call to make places of stability in which there is safe enough space for stories to be told, appropriate boundaries negotiated, diversity honoured and creative relationships

¹⁰⁸⁷ "There's nothing new about the 'new normal'. Here's why.", <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/theres-nothing-new-about-this-new-normal-heres-why/>

¹⁰⁸⁸ There's nothing new about the 'new normal'. Here's why.

formed, is not simply so that damaged people can have a chance to flourish but so that the whole of life can be different... We will be given a clue as to how to transform our society and our earth so that we can all live in a different way.¹⁰⁸⁹

We must create safe *enough* learning spaces for stories to be told, but we will only find the clues to wider and ongoing transformation in the embrace of ongoing disruption as the *normal* pattern of CAL.

Referring back to *What Prevents...?* a final time, Hull replaces any monolithic pedagogical goal with the prospect of an approach, “More aware of itself, more coherent, more integrated, more supple, readier for further change and better related to the reality which faith confronts today”.¹⁰⁹⁰ Rather than transferring from one static pedagogical approach to another, what if the lessons learned during the seasons of COVID-19 could function as the basis for a greater natural dynamism and *readiness for further change*, so that future disruptions can be more easily embraced as integral to learning rather than obstacles to be overcome? In sum, cultivating such a pedagogical dynamism and agility is the only way that CAL methodology and practice can move from reactive to responsive and be best positioned to model good practice whatever future disruptions present – whether personal, community, societal or global.

To pick up the World Economic Forum’s earlier comment, the reason that this is so important is that the ability to forge stability (or at least feign it) is far more accessible to those with financial, political and social resource. In other words, the societally and global poor and disenfranchised feel the greatest, negative impact when systems or methodologies are slow to respond. As discussed in 5.2. and 5.3., this form of pedagogical agility could be a

¹⁰⁸⁹ Glasson, "A spirituality of survival: enabling a response to trauma and abuse," (London: Continuum, 2009), 110-111.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, 82.

way in which hitherto *peripheral* voices take their rightful place in the centre of the theological-pedagogical conversation. At the heart of social justice movements that extend way beyond the Church, such as Black Lives Matter and MeToo, are cries for a disruptive learning experience to be allowed to do its work on central, underlying structures. The demands of anti-racist and anti-sexist campaigners are ultimately pedagogical. They insist that the perpetuation of learning according to the *old normal* or fashioning of a *new normal* (*inspired by the old*), will be incapable of breaking down the brutal inequalities that suppress the voices of those pushed to the edges. As Eve Parker has expressed, true pedagogical inclusion cannot be achieved by simply placing a few more chairs around the existing table.¹⁰⁹¹ Something entirely different is needed.

Perhaps the mistake is therefore the assumption that the sheepfold to which Jesus facilitates proper entry and exit in John 10 is static or concretely defined? Does my privileged imagination simply pin it down when its constant shifting becomes inconvenient to me? What might it look like for the future of CAL to be shaped by those whose bodies or social or geographic locations do not afford them the opportunity to avoid learning disruption – the refugees of war and of the Church who are now best practised in navigating *disruptive-inclusive* theological learning in our communities? What might be the results if we leave the post COVID-19 desire for *normality* unquenched and instead, continually push out further into the life of God only experienced at *edge-places*? If any of this is possible, even in some small measure, as the final lines of Hull's final book suggest, perhaps the potential benefits

¹⁰⁹¹ Parker, "Respondents' Panel" (paper presented at Dismantling Whiteness: Critical White Theology. 17/04/2021, 2021).

of *disruptive-inclusion* extend far beyond individual Christian adult learners or even the Church and might somehow contribute to “the alleviation of the suffering of the world”?¹⁰⁹²

¹⁰⁹² Hull, *Towards the Prophetic Church: A Study of Christian Mission*, 248.

Chapter 9: setting a precedent for further construction. Postlude and invitation to ongoing engagement

As outlined in 1.2.2. and repeatedly demonstrated since, one of the key methodological distinctives of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL is the fact that the medium is the message. Thus, the conclusion presented in these final sections does not present a conclusive formula for *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, but 9.1. offers a summary of how the responses already offered in previous chapters address the research question. As outlined via Hull's interpretation of John 10 and experiences transitioning from sighted to blind person; in analysis of the themes of *What Prevents...?*; via engaging *disruptive-inclusion* with the pedagogical language of *pilgrimage*, *home* and *horizon* and consolidated in discussions concerning the nature of relationship between theory and practice, *disruptive-inclusive* CAL has been demonstrated to resist the idea of *arrival* in favour of improved, dynamic connectedness. Thus, in the hope that others will build their own structures inspired by *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, 9.2. suggests some initial ideas arising from this project which invite further research. Finally, just as the opening chapter concluded with a reflection on the personal experiences that provided the catalyst to this project (1.3.1.), it is fitting that this closing chapter should likewise end with some thoughts on the *disruptive-inclusive* process experienced during its creation.

9.1. Summary of the implications of disruptive-inclusive CAL

This project set out to address the following research question from a variety of consolidating perspectives: How does framing and applying Hull's work on Christian adult learning (focused on, but not limited to the 1985 publication, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*) in terms of *disruptive-inclusion*, clarify the contribution and potential implications of Hull's approach? At the end of chapter 1, this question was claimed as legitimate and worthwhile on three, primary grounds:

Firstly, a cohesive analysis of the argument of What Prevents...? on its own terms is needed to encourage sustained engagement in Hull's arguments on how CAL might be understood and practised. Secondly, Hull's inter-disciplinary, compelling resistance to overly simplistic, compartmentalised approaches to Christian Education in What Prevents...? is capable of providing a different starting place for a richer, more nuanced and joined-up discussion concerning the nature and aims of Christian Education in its many forms. Thirdly, such a paradigm shift in contemporary research is required to underpin, long-overdue improvements in CAL practice.¹⁰⁹³

The intervening chapters have sought to prove these claims via analysis of Hull's interpretations of John 10; in relation to the theme of learning *in-between*; the contents and setting of *What Prevents...?*; its roots and the subsequent development of Hull's *disruptive-inclusive* ideas on CAL examined; the role of the Bible in *disruptive-inclusive* CAL methodology and practice and finally the potential look, sound and feel of *disruptive-inclusion* in a CAL classroom setting, from the pulpit and most recently, during the significant changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section summarises some of the key implications outlined in previous chapters as they relate to the above claims.

9.1.1. Disruptive-inclusive implications for the understanding of Hull's work

Firstly, a cohesive analysis of the argument of What Prevents...? on its own terms is needed to encourage sustained engagement in Hull's arguments on how CAL might be understood and practised.

Despite being first published more than thirty-five years ago, some initial reviewers' scepticism and Hull's later downplaying of its significance, *What Prevents...?* has been proven to provide an insightful basis from which to assess contemporary CAL methodology and practice. Specifically, presenting Hull's idea through the lens of *disruptive-inclusion* draws attention to the ongoing need to address the following themes:

¹⁰⁹³ Final paragraph of 1.3.1.

In terms of Hull's foundational theological pedagogy, his approach demonstrates that analysing the relationship between Christian faith and education primarily through a methodological lens, need not ignore questions of learner/educator identity, pedagogical content and purpose but rather acts as a catalyst to a rich, interconnected treatment of the subject. As outlined in 2.2., despite primarily offering *how?* and *why?* answers to the question, Hull's inter-disciplinary approach in *What Prevents...?* naturally overflows into other arenas and perspectives and avoids concerns that discourse addressing learning (rather than education) lends itself to vagueness, abstraction and emptiness.

In relation to the role of *What Prevents...?* within Hull's wider legacy, this project has demonstrated that its potential contribution extends far beyond "preparation and ... intensive reading into the social sciences"¹⁰⁹⁴ and the laying of foundations for later arguments and offers an insight into the most pedagogically intense period of Hull's life. In conversation with twenty-first century biblical scholars, systematic theologians, philosophers, social anthropologists, literary critics and even jazz musicians, the major themes of *What Prevents...?* have been demonstrated as offering a relevant and substantial contribution to CAL dialogue.

Finally, despite the passage of time, many of the observations Hull makes in *What Prevents...?* concerning the specific challenges faced by CAL methodology and practice (particularly in the UK) either remain valid or have grown in pertinence in light of intervening developments. For example, questions of the pedagogical problems created by individualism, passivity, unwillingness or inability to learn with and from the *Other*, the fear of being wrong, 'electronic' learning and questions related to divine identity and learning, all

¹⁰⁹⁴ Bates, *John Hull: a critical appreciation*, 17.

either remain deeply relevant to contemporary discourse or have grown in relevance in ways Hull could not have imagined. As Chater's recent book on the *meeting* of theology and pedagogy recognises and Ford's foreword underlines, Hull's multifaceted, "provocative wisdom" at the intersection of Christian faith and adult learning still has a role to play in the ongoing discourse.¹⁰⁹⁵

9.1.2 Disruptive-inclusive implications for contemporary UK, CAL methodology and practice

Secondly, Hull's inter-disciplinary, compelling resistance to overly simplistic, compartmentalised approaches to Christian Education in What Prevents...? is capable of providing a different starting place for a richer, more nuanced and joined-up discussion concerning the nature and aims of Christian Education in its many forms.

This project has demonstrated (particularly, but not exclusively in chapters 7 and 8) various and significant implications of *disruptive-inclusion* for the methodology and practice of CAL in UK theological training settings and churches. In particular, the overarching pattern has moved away from *disconnected*, compartmentalised approaches and towards the mutual engagement of diverse (and sometimes apparently conflicting) approaches on multiple levels.

Firstly, *disruptive-inclusion* has demonstrated a need for *joined up* thinking and practice in terms of learning skills. Increasingly, educators cannot control the flow of information to learners, nor their exposure to disruptive experiences. Therefore, the key to effective CAL is not protecting learners from disruptive challenges but preparing and equipping them (and learning communities) to identify and isolate the pedagogical value inherent in the challenging, unforeseen and unpredictable and offer opportunities for them to be re-defined and co-opted in support of learning progress.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Chater, *Jesus Christ, learning teacher: where theology and pedagogy meet*, xii.

Secondly, *disruptive-inclusion* claims that *joined up* thinking and practice is required across a range of academic disciplines: disruptive CAL opportunities are created when different ways of engaging with the world are allowed to inter-inform. The clearest example of this offered in this project is the relationship between theology and education, however, *disruptive-inclusion* makes the case that only a committed, multidisciplinary approach is capable of raising the kinds of questions that in turn create optimal opportunities for disruption on multiple levels. By extension, this also applies to *joined-up* thinking and practice between the church and academy, or perhaps more broadly, academic and devotional theology. In response to the *translation problems* that exist between the various approaches to *Christian Education* and shape of the lived experience of many Christian adult learners, Hull's work has the potential to act as a *trans-world interpreter* that neither downplays the inherent tensions nor suggests that meaningful conversation is impossible.

Finally, this project's argument for *disruptive-inclusion* has demonstrated the need for *joined up thinking and action* across the Church. As argued in relation to biblical CAL in chapter 7, both in relation to the connections between the historical and contemporary Church and across denominational and cultural boundaries, CAL thrives in diverse learning environments where learners and educators represent a range of ages, genders, cultures and theological convictions, enabling learning to occur in *edge-places* or *optimum distance*. Again, differences need not be downplayed but can be leveraged in creation of rich, disruptive learning exchange.

9.2. Opportunities for further research

Thirdly, such a paradigm shift in contemporary research is required to underpin, long-overdue improvements in CAL practice.

As is inevitable in a project of this size, particularly as it relates to the intersection of a wide variety of disciplines, multiple areas for further research have been repeatedly noted. As a demonstration that *disruptive-inclusion's* response to Hull's question: *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* also addresses questions relating to the *something*, the *reasons* and the *someone* (i.e., the content, purpose and relationships, as per Biesta's language), 9.2.1. details a representative (although by no means exhaustive) list consisting of three themes and two potential, methodological developments to this research. In particular, it demonstrates how *disruptive-inclusive* CAL calls for fundamental paradigm shifts in who the best learners and teachers are believed to be, how the Bible functions as a pedagogical tool and what exactly the overall aim of CAL is. As regards methodological considerations, 9.2.2. addresses alternative and supplementary methodological approaches that could be adopted to further strengthen the case for *disruptive-inclusive* CAL: taking an ecumenical or theopoetic point of view.

9.2.1. Themes

Disruptive-inclusion has a range of implications for multiple academic disciplines and CAL methodology and practice. I have gathered some of the most significant into three themes below, suggesting that the claims of this project call for a significant re-definition of learners and educators, the Bible's function in learning and the fundamental conception of the aims and objectives of CAL.

1. Further disrupting the definition of the quintessential teacher and learner

Firstly, as relates to the *someone* of *disruptive-inclusion*, there are significant, further questions to be addressed in regard to the claims of *inside-out* CAL (see 7.3.3.). As Reddie's

chapter in the 2009 volume created in Hull's honour suggests,¹⁰⁹⁶ it is not that Black Christian Education has some peripheral relevance to discussions concerning CAL, but in a variety of regards, could (and ought to) play a leading role in the necessary paradigm-shifting of CAL discourse. Even a cursory glance at Reddie's claims reveals areas of synergy with *What Prevents ...?*, particularly regarding "Encountering Self and the 'Other'".

As also outlined in 7.3.3., those considered *peripheral* or inferior learners or learning communities based on social, political, racial, gender and other inequalities, are *re-cast* by *disruptive-inclusive* CAL as *lead learners*, having far more experience at navigating unknown or hostile learning spaces than their white, or straight, or male, or economically privileged counterparts. Thus, the challenge is for both the Church and theological training institutions to purposefully create CAL spaces in which the voice of the (formerly) *peripheral* learner is central, both in terms of content and structure.

In short, how can *disruptive-inclusive* CAL and particularly, a *disruptive-inclusive* posture to biblical interpretation contribute to the necessary disruption of white, male dominance in academic theology and specifically in theological education? Given the focus on the Fourth Gospel as an example of *disruptive-inclusive* biblical interpretation, one example would be analysis of various readings of the Fourth Gospel. Do readings originating from the Global South or other *peripheral* learning communities more easily and naturally draw out patterns congruent with *disruptive-inclusion* than those of the Global North or other dominant,

¹⁰⁹⁶ Reddie, "Encountering the Self and the Other: Black Christian Education as Inter-ethnic and Anti-racist Discourse," in *Religious education as encounter: a tribute to John M. Hull* (eds. Hull and Miedema; Münster: Waxmann, 2009), 73.

interpretive groups?¹⁰⁹⁷ Using the work of Paul Anderson as a backdrop to the potentially, puzzling, riddle-like nature of the Fourth Gospel,¹⁰⁹⁸ it would be worthwhile to investigate whether certain communities' readings more easily embrace its tension and disruptive effects, rather attempt to solve them.

2. Further disrupting the definition of the Bible's pedagogical function

Building on the previous point concerning disrupting the traditional identification of the quintessential teacher and learner and particularly on Hull's arguments that having experienced both sighted and non-sighted worlds, he was able to perceive the world in a way previously inaccessible to him, to what extent might the same category of *trans-world interpreter* be applied to the Apostle Paul as he straddled significant identity transition after meeting Jesus? Love Sechrest's observation that "Scholars now recognize that the composition of many of the early New Testament documents took place in an atmosphere of boundary testing and identity formation",¹⁰⁹⁹ further consolidates the links with *disruptive-inclusion*. As Paul is caught in between the *worlds* of his Jewish identity and his new, as yet unidentified self, Sechrest suggests that Paul's contributions to the New Testament are strongly influenced by his *in-between* or emerging identity: finding himself in both the Jewish, and another *camp* simultaneously. More research is required as to the impact of reading Paul's pedagogy as occurring (at least, partially) at *optimum distance*? Can some of his later developments in thought be explained as Paul becoming more comfortable and settled in his new identity?

¹⁰⁹⁷ For example, chapters in Dube and Staley, "John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space, and Power," (*Bible and Postcolonialism*; London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002) focus on themes such as *moving beyond* and *border-crossing*.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Anderson, *The riddles of the Fourth Gospel: an introduction to John* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁹⁹ Sechrest, *A former Jew: Paul and the dialectics of race* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 10.

Finally, in relation to the Bible, further work on the themes of 7.2. is required to build a more comprehensive picture of exactly how different biblical books and genres contribute to the diverse, *disruptive-inclusive* community of the biblical canon. In short, the earlier claim concerning how the Bible “Does not pull me out of this world to some other world; rather, it changes what it means to be in this world”¹¹⁰⁰ requires further nuancing. How does biblical history and poetry function differently in this regard? Do all the gospels *disrupt* and *include* the reader similarly or differently? What about apocalyptic and prophetic books? Are there themes that are common to all biblical books or does each make a unique contribution?

3. Further disrupting the definition of learning success

The final theme highlighted here as requiring further consideration refers to the practical, educational outworking of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL. How can both learners and educators track, measure and assess *disruptive-inclusive* CAL? What kind of assessment tasks offer learners optimum opportunity to demonstrate their *disruptive-inclusive* learning posture? What fundamental challenges does *disruptive-inclusion* offer in terms of measuring learning progress? How can development be gauged? How can appropriate, both short and long term, goals be set if learning progress often seems chaotic and destructive before anything else? Although the focus of this project is not on children’s learning or those who do not profess faith, before considering the appropriateness of *disruptive-inclusion* for such learners, the above questions would need to be addressed.

¹¹⁰⁰ Veling, *Practical theology: "On earth as it is in heaven"*, 206.

9.2.2. Methods

Two methodological considerations for further research are considered here: one, a development of existing ideas, and another that would require a distinct, methodological shift.

1. Embodying a poetic pedagogy: the potential of theopoetic CAL?

In development of the argument in 7.4.2. concerning *poetics* and CAL, the burgeoning discipline of *theopoetics* offers a valuable insight of how an *in-between, edge-place* discipline functions in purposefully aiming to do two things at once and embed its method in its presentation. The term was first used by Stanley Romain Hopper in 1971 and in 2009, Callid Keefe-Perry recognised the beginnings of a *theopoetic* subdiscipline that functions not as “another theology” or “an aesthetic move towards writing about religion in verse. Theopoetics is an invitation to begin to ‘read’ the entirety of experience as scripture, until daily life itself become infuse with heirophany and a call to faithfulness”.¹¹⁰¹

However, while the substance of theopoetic argument adds significant value to the discussion of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, it is included here in a methodological sense, in that, the biggest methodological challenges I found in producing this project are raised in Veling’s foreword to Keefe-Perry’s, *Theopoetics primer* in which he claims, “Theopoetics is a difficult topic to write ‘about’. Callid is aware of this. He worries that his book may be too much ‘writing about theopoetics’ rather than an exercise in theopoetics itself, the very topic he is passionate about”.¹¹⁰² Similarly, I have wrestled to produce research here that not only talks about *disruptive-inclusive* CAL but also offers an opportunity to experience it and I have

¹¹⁰¹ Keefe-Perry, "Theopoetics: process and perspective," 58, no. 4 (2009), 579 and 597.

¹¹⁰² Keefe-Perry, et al., *Way to Water: a Theopoetics Primer*.

taken every opportunity to allow the reader to practise *disruptive-inclusive* learning as well as learn about it. Therefore, perhaps Keefe-Perry's model of a *theo-poetics primer* sets a good precedent for future work on *disruptive-inclusive* CAL?

2. Comparing and contrasting different, denominational approaches

In response to the earlier reflection that *disruptive-inclusion* requires *joined-up thinking* across denominations, it would be a valuable exercise to gather data on the existing role (and potential reception of) *disruptive-inclusive* CAL across a range of different Christian denominations. To this end, a variety of educators from across the theological spectrum could be consulted to identify if and how the themes of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL are observed in their practice. This would be particularly interesting to consider in relation to Higher Education institutions who identify within particular, Christian traditions and the relevance of some of the issues raised here for the teaching of religious studies and theology could be analysed.

From a church-based learning perspective, similar parameters could be applied to an analysis of the role of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL in ecumenical learning settings. How do various denominations work together? Do Christian traditions have different thresholds for and reactions to disruption? Do those learners and educators who choose to work and learn in ecumenical environments expect (and more openly invite) learning disruption and if so, what impact does this have on teaching and learning methods? For those who teach and learn only with those who belong to their denomination or share their theological values, does CAL disruption occur? If so, how? Understanding more about the kinds of environments in which *disruptive-inclusion* is both welcomed and resisted will help to identify how it can be most effectively encouraged and maintained.

9.3. Closing personal reflections

A significant element of my experience in creating this thesis (and perhaps, in itself, another avenue for further research) has been that, even when deeply immersed in the ideas of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, thankfulness for (or even awareness of) the *disruptive-inclusive* CAL processes and resources with which I have been gifted during its writing, have not always been in the front of my mind. However, as I reach its conclusion, I recognise the following, significant *disruptive-inclusive* influences, which despite appearing to varying degrees in its substantive arguments, have profoundly shaped its creation.

While my position within The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education may have officially changed from student to staff member during this project, my regard for the extended learning community's commitment to embrace disruption in learning has only grown. From the diverse, research seminars addressing topics as different as Ethiopian Church architecture, Ancient Near East use of soft furnishings and collaborative decision-making in the Church of Pakistan, to wide-ranging staff research interests, I have benefited greatly from belonging to such an outward-facing and varied assemblage of scholars. Thus, it has been a significant loss to not have been able to be physically present to my research colleagues during the COVID-19 pandemic. Equally, it has been a great loss not to be able to physically meet with my supervisors during the last few years of this project. However, undertaking this research under the guidance of such a diverse supervisory team, representing such a broad range of expertise (including feminist, Practical Theology, intertextual Biblical Studies and educational and developmental Psychology) has immeasurably improved its quality and scope.

Further, I recognise the role of *The Source, Derby* as a (both literal and metaphorical) *table of extension and expansion* around which *disruptive-inclusion* was conceived, has developed in my imagination and found life in the lived reality of our community. It is my firm expectation that many of the themes worked out in this project will be the focus of our nurturing and wrestling for years to come.

Finally, and in quintessential, *disruptive-inclusive* fashion, I recognise the role of all those with whom, and from whom I have learned and those I have taught, who, for a variety of reasons, do not recognise the value of *disruptive-inclusive* CAL, and in fact, find it deeply problematic. Dissenting voices (whether through published content, Zoom calls, academic conferences or garden chats) have made this work possible and I will need to hear their continuing contributions and objections moving forward. Thus, having begun this project by introducing its premise and catalyst as a particular disagreement with my Pentateuch professor, it is appropriate to also end there:

Bizarrely, and in distinct contrast to the Professor's seeming distaste for student input in earlier sessions, in the final lecture of the *sink or swim* Pentateuch class outlined as a catalyst to this thesis in 1.3.1., all students were asked to prepare a brief reflection detailing what we had learned from and about the first five books of the Hebrew Bible during the term. I conclude with the final paragraph of my reflection from that day. My words, even at such an embryonic stage in my thinking, betray the fact that I, like Hull before me, refused to identify a single source of, or response to, the obvious challenges of CAL. In the process of the class, I had found that the message of the biblical texts, the various cultures, attitudes and beliefs of educators, fellow-students and the shared learning environment had inextricably converged into a multi-layered CAL experience. As I re-read the below, I recognise my very earliest

attempts to understand and articulate the pedagogical and theological convictions this thesis has presented as fundamental to understanding Hull's approach to CAL and critical to the development of its future research and practice: *disruptive-inclusion*.

The Pentateuch has taught me that it's not *just ok* to not know an answer or even be able to hazard a guess in the right direction - it's absolutely necessary in life to stumble through the darkness on occasion, if only as a reminder that we're not the ones in control.¹¹⁰³ The Pentateuch makes me want to be the kind of teacher who constantly points to the stars while also simultaneously acknowledging that sometimes the stars might be too much to try for today. Some days, the best learning we can do is to hold on tight, pray like never before, keep our eyes fixed for promises appearing on the horizon and dare to believe that God is as good as God claims to be.¹¹⁰⁴

¹¹⁰³ The irony of my use of the phrase *stumbling through the darkness* is stark. It is fascinating to note how significant the concept of darkness should be in my explanation of my own learning process, given my minimal exposure to Hull's ideas at this stage.

¹¹⁰⁴ From my student notes, November 2012.

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