

Chapter 2

Introduction: Drawing the Future into the Present



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Abstract This chapter introduces Volume Two of a two-volume series based on the double purpose of education: to help people to live well, and to help create worlds worth living in. Like Volume One, this volume presents stories that have emerged within a ‘listening project’, an international empirical project aimed at understanding different perspectives from various parts of the world, from children to adults, from across diverse communities, on what it means to *live well in a world worth living well for all*. The project especially pays attention to perspectives that are often marginalised, silenced, or somehow lost in the busyness and noisiness, power struggles, and preoccupations of our contemporary world. The chapter provides background information about the project and a glimpse of what the stories in the contributions in this volume reveal. It also highlights some of the important ways in which the experiences and perspectives shared in the contributions reflect a strong sense of agency, urgency, and hope, both in the face of personal, local, and/or global challenges *and* in people’s everyday efforts to actually create the futures they imagine.

Keywords Double purpose of education · Living well · Worlds worth living in · Logic of hope · Agency · Praxis

For an episode of the World Worth Living In Podcast connected to this chapter, please click here:
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6gqEy8a5GSyLy721djJpkl?si=42d6cdad8abc4001>

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We live in a time of tumultuous transformation. Conditions for the whole community of life on Planet Earth have been altered by climate change; we now live in the cataclysm of a climate emergency. Social and political conditions necessary to sustain human life and human rights are being ravaged by wars of aggression—including the October 7, 2023, attack on villages in Southern Israel by Hamas militants from Gaza and the devastating Israeli response it provoked, and the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia on February 24, 2022. Climate change and wars drive forced migrations of millions, bringing waves of dispossessed refugees to safe-haven countries. Social movements multiply in response to injustices everywhere, as happened, for example, in Iran with the protest movement ignited by the September 16, 2022, death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, held by Iran’s morality police for improperly wearing her hijab. In the USA, social movements have flared into existence around injustices such as the shooting deaths of Black men at the hands of police and vigilantes (#BlackLivesMatter), and the sexual violence associated with #MeToo. These movements have resonated with people and communities worldwide and moved beyond national boundaries. Within nations, political polarisation is spreading, not only in formerly social democratic nations and political unions (e.g. the European Union), but also in places where politically conservative or religiously fundamentalist groups have risen to oppose the moderate conservative, liberal, and progressive regimes that seemed relatively settled at the end of the twentieth century. In some parts of Europe, far-right political groups are waging a kind of war on migrants and multiculturalism gripped by regressive illusions of national and cultural (and even racial) unity. In the USA, polarisation was amplified by the 2016–2020 Presidency of Donald J. Trump. Among its many manifestations, Trump’s ‘Make America Great Again’ conservatism precipitated a majority-conservative Supreme Court that, in its decision in *Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health* (2022), overturned the constitutional right to abortion that had previously been established by the Court in its 1973 decision in *Roe v Wade*.

Some of these kinds of upheavals may seem to be beyond the control of everyday people; nevertheless, it remains true that human beings are both drivers and victims of most of the transformations that destabilise contemporary life.

In our troubled times, some people feel trapped, claustrophobic: that the world is closing in on them. Many feel disturbed, despondent, or depressed in the face of an unsettling global reality. Where twentieth-century modernity promised peace and prosperity, the twenty-first century has instead brought uncertainty and vulnerability. We find ourselves in the jaws of history at a moment of immense *disruption*.

And yet some profoundly human resources remain vital and amplify in the face of such challenges: the power to change things—*agency*; the commitment to act—*urgency*; the recognition that things *can* be better—*hope*. In 2018, then-15-year-old schoolgirl Greta Thunberg started the Friday Climate Strikes in Sweden that soon multiplied around the world, sweeping hundreds of thousands of school activists into the streets to demand immediate action for intergenerational justice and to save the planet. This volume gives voice to a number of people who, though not as famous as Greta Thunberg, also demonstrate agency, urgency, and hope in our current times of disruption: people who *live* agency, commitment, and hope.

Harvesting New Presents from Imagined Futures

This book is Volume Two of a series about the double purpose of education: helping people to live well in worlds worth living in (described in more detail in Chapter 2 of Volume 1; Kemmis, 2023). Volume One focused on present practices; the editors' intention was that this volume would focus on future practices. It turns out, however, that contributors to Volume Two have described futures that they and those whose voices they have listened to are already bringing into being through their research and educational action.

They have not deferred possible futures by envisaging them only in terms of things to come; on the contrary, by taking thoughtful, committed practical action in the unfolding present, they are already grasping, claiming, engendering, and realising transformed futures.

The research program that has yielded these volumes on the theme of 'worlds worth living in for all', began in 2007. It is part of the work of the Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis (PEP) international research network, which has initiated and conducted a 16-year research program aimed at understanding the notions of 'pedagogy', 'education', and 'praxis' as they are interpreted in the different intellectual traditions from which we come, including in Australia, the Caribbean, Colombia, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, and the UK. Participants have joined the program in order to examine the extent to which educational praxis (informed, morally committed action and history-making action; see Mahon et al., 2020b) is currently being enabled and constrained by living and working conditions within and across our participating countries *in practice*—and, in particular, in practices of teaching and learning, the professional development of teachers, leading and leadership in education, and educational research and evaluation (e.g. Kemmis et al., 2014; Mahon et al., 2020a). This wider research program frames the 'worlds worth living in for all' research program, of which these two volumes are products. The larger PEP research program has *descriptive, analytical, critical, and transformative* aims. PEP seeks to critically grasp and be active in transformatively changing the current realities of education and schooling in our countries. The 'worlds worth living in for all' volumes are intended especially to be contributions to the aspiration to *transform* education for contemporary times and circumstances.

The *World Worth Living In* project is not a unique enterprise. It is a continuation of a debate that has been in existence for thousands of years. It was evident in Greek antiquity, for example, in Aristotle's works *The Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Politics* from the Fourth Century BC. But it appears in other guises in other traditions also. In the Foreword to this volume, Uncle Doctor Stan Grant, Senior Elder of the Wiradjuri Nation in Australia, briefly explains the Wiradjuri concept of *Yindyamarra*. *Yindyamarra* embraces being deeply respectful, observing carefully, deliberating wisely, acting with commitment and caution, and being aware that all things—human and non-human—are connected. His family gave permission for the use of the phrase in the statement of the ethos of Charles Sturt University in New South

Wales, Australia (largely on Wiradjuri country): ‘*Yindyamarra Winhanganha*—The wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in’. In Chap. 1, our Foreword, Uncle Stan says

The specific words ‘living well in a world worth living in’ express an idea that is very ancient, and express part of what the Wiradjuri words *Yindyamarra Winhanganha* mean. Those words do not translate directly into English as ‘living well in a world worth living in’. But the phrase in English does capture a part of the spirit of *Yindyamarra*.

In our times, another advocate for ideas like ‘living well in a world worth living in’ can be found in Gert Biesta, for example, in his (2022) book, *World-Centred Education*. It is not a surprise, then, to observe that, around the world, systems of schooling work diligently to prepare rising generations to participate in the lives of their societies. School systems often focus especially on preparing rising generations for participation in economic life but most also aim to prepare citizens for active participation in the social and political life of their nations. Many intend, additionally, to prepare people to be environmental stewards capable of maintaining and enhancing sustainable forms of life in and with the community of life on Earth, along with the geophysical systems that sustain life.

But this intention can also be riven with tensions, contradictions, and contestation. As *institutions*, schools and other educational institutions are intended to nurture the *practice* of education. Philosopher MacIntyre (1981, p. 181) argues, however, that institutions are intended to nurture the ‘internal goods’ of practices (like the goods of knowing the past that only the practice of history can accomplish, or the good of health that practices of medicine aim to accomplish), but institutions can also threaten practices, since they are preoccupied with ‘external goods’ like money, power, and status. Similarly, Mahon et al. (2020a) suggest, contemporary schooling sometimes—often—fails in its aspiration to nurture the practice of education. The people who manage and administer the institutions of schooling have a surfeit of ideas about what rising generations need to know and do, at every level from pre-school to tertiary education, and thus impose exacting and ‘overstuffed’ curricula on teachers and students. Under such circumstances, the deep, delicate human engagement necessary for education is dislodged by curricula, pedagogies, and assessments that function as surrogates for individual and collective human development and flourishing.

In an era of schooling, education risks being diminished into repertoires of instrumental strategies and techniques for accomplishing what curricula, pedagogies, and assessments control and regulate *within* the institutions of schooling (at every level), frequently to the point where they disengage from the everyday lives and circumstances of students. Under such circumstances, schoolwork becomes a form of alienated work that alienates students and the work of school learning (Lave & McDermott, 2002). And, under such corrosive circumstances, schoolwork becomes a form of *artifice*—*artificial* education—that displaces *authentic* education undertaken in the interests of individuals and societies, the biodiverse community of life on Earth, and the geophysical processes necessary to sustain life on Planet Earth.

In response to such challenges, the contributors to these volumes are intentionally re-awakening the practice of education within and beyond the institutions of schooling. In doing so, they do not offer a detached, ‘anthropological’ view of what the people involved in their respective projects think a world worth living in might be like. On the contrary, they show how they are building partnerships to transform those worlds and thus bringing new worlds into being. They collectively make those new worlds real in the everyday lives of those with whom they have built those partnerships.

The Logic of Hope

A logic of hope suffuses the stories of worlds worth living in captured in this book. This echoes the logic of popular culture and song that invoke different worlds: worlds of comfort and pleasure that transcend servitude and pain; worlds of beauty, belonging, and love that transcend ugliness, alienation, and hate; worlds of democratic unity and peace that transcend division, dissension, and strife; and worlds in which social participation and social movements allow people to transcend the suffering and injustices of existing social orders, the establishment, the *Ancien Régime*.

This logic of hope impels a sense of agency for the actors in the stories told in this volume: an urgent commitment to make not only enabling and fulfilling individual lives but also enabling and fulfilling shared societies. The logic of hope has alerted them to their own powers of individual and collective history-making. They sense its dangers, but they grasp and overcome them rather than settle for current distorted ways of thinking, distorted material circumstances, and distorted ways of relating to others and the world. More or less hesitantly, they are coming to understand that they can create worlds that might dislodge the distorted worlds they will otherwise inherit. Their words not only evoke but also invoke transformed worlds. Their actions hesitantly bring new worlds into being, to be lived, through changed ways of doing things in the here and now, and to realise more humane, caring, just, and democratic ways of relating to others and the world.

The same kind of logic impelled the philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer Omar Khayyam (b. 1048 AD; d. 1123 AD) of Nishapur in Persia in the time of the Seljuk Turk empire (O’Connor & Robertson, 1999), who wrote (FitzGerald, 1889/1965, p. 200):

Ah Love! Could you and I with Him conspire
 To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
 Would we not shatter it to bits – and then
 Re-mould it nearer to the Heart’s desire!

We might note, in passing, that, towards the end of his life, Khayyam was regarded as suspect, perhaps heretical, by the strict conservative Sufi Islamic religious leaders of the time. Forced to retreat to his estate, he lived out his days in

seclusion (Teimourian, 2016). Today, Khayyam's Persia is part of Iran, where the conservative theocratic regime is now suppressing the thousands of contemporary Iranians who protest the death of Mahsa Amini.

The Organisation of This Book

The contributions to this volume reveal a variety of different ways in which the logic of hope is expressed, and how it is translated into reality by different groups in different places and circumstances. Like the first volume, *Living Well in a World Worth Living in for All: Current Practices of Social Justice, Sustainability and Wellbeing*, this volume presents the findings of what Kaukko et al. (2023) described as a 'listening project' (p. 4). This volume also presents the findings of researchers who have deeply and actively listened to babies, young people, and adults to hear (or with the babies, infer) their views and perspectives about worlds worth living in, which improve on our current worlds in one way or another. Like Khayyam, they too envisage 'grasp[ing] this sorry scheme of things entire', 'shatter[ing] it to bits—and then, Re-mould[ing] it nearer to the Heart's Desire'.

Most chapters report research with children, young people, or adults who shared their insights into what a world worth living in is and can be. In doing the research, the researchers entered engagements with these people in which they envisaged and evoked worlds worth living in, in ways—in the human and social interactions that constitute the research—that realised in practice the forms of recognition and respect that participants regard as features of worlds worth living in. The researchers approached their task with a kind of humility; a recognition of the danger of presuming to know how other people are viewing and experiencing the world, and of presuming that an understanding of other people's stories can be complete or neutral. As you read these chapters and their stories, you will hear resonances of the three themes we mentioned earlier: the participants' power to act—their *agency*; their commitment to action—*urgency*; and their belief that they can bring better worlds into being—*hope*.

In Chap. 3, Rauno Huttunen and Hannu L. T. Heikkinen challenge us to think about wellbeing from an expansive, more-than-human perspective. A world worth living in for humans, they write, must also be a world worth living in for the rest of nature; we cannot make false separations or hierarchies between the human and the rest of nature. The chapter introduces a new interpretation of praxis as planetary wisdom: 'deliberative human action, aiming at human wellbeing which is acknowledged to be intertwined with planetary wellbeing, including the wellbeing of present humans, future humans, and non-human nature' (p. 21). Education needs to take this planetary perspective so that we can ensure there is both a present and a future.

In Chap. 4 Katina Thelin and Anette Forssten Seiser invite readers to join them in engaging with the future by exploring the notion of living well in a world worth living in for all from the perspective of school principals. The authors ask Swedish school principals, who they regard as 'important promoters of educational as well

as civic change’ (p. 31), not only to consider what this expression means, but also the part they play in the realisation of a world worth living in for all in local school and pre-school settings. With the help of the theory of practice architectures and ‘Theory U’ (a theory of transforming the future by learning not only from the past but also the emerging future; Scharmer, 2018), the authors highlight ways in which the 16 principals participating in their project both understood their roles, and were, in varied and important ways in their ongoing and emerging practices, making the world better and enabling others to do the same. The chapter includes principal reflections on how the project itself inspired action aimed at realising the aspirations alluded to.

In Chap. 5, Fiona Longmuir explores the views of high school students at an alternative school in Melbourne, Australia. The students had ‘internalised the micro-aggressions’ (p. 45) they had previously experienced in mainstream schools whose structures and practices excluded them, in effect ‘disfranchising’ them from education. Longmuir uses Appadurai’s notion of ‘capacity to aspire’ to frame the way this alternative school engaged students by making sensitive, supportive, and tailored pedagogical responses to their individual circumstances and needs. Listening was central to the teachers’ work: encouraging students’ voices to discover ways to ignite and sustain their agency. In turn, the students reported that their voices were heard, and their needs and circumstances were taken into account. Longmuir says, ‘In this alternative education setting, central tenets of relationships before rules..., student voice (even when dissenting), and agentic choice making were foundational to repairing the damage students had experienced in prior schooling settings’ (p. 31). Given the school’s support, these students discovered their own agency and found their own paths to learning and development.

In Chap. 6, Andi Salamon, Leanne Gibbs, and Mandy Cooke explore rights-based approaches to Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Australia. The chapter discusses three case studies: educational leadership in ECE; educators taking risks in supporting children’s play; and infants’ agency in the enactment of ECE pedagogy. It explores the interdependencies between practices of leading, teaching, and researching in the cases, and concludes that democratic ECE pedagogy

fulfils an aim of educational practice to initiate learners into acting and interacting with others (and the world) in ways oriented towards the good for each person (individually) and (collectively) the good for humankind ... and promotes the work to be done together to live well in a world worth living in (p. 61).

Democratic ECE pedagogy makes the logic of hope *practical*: it shows how rights-based approaches to ECE can and do bring into being more caring, sustaining, and democratic forms of life in early childhood settings.

In Chap. 7, Mervi Kaukko, Jane Wilkinson, and Nick Haswell bring us into a conversation that bridges the gap between the present and the future. The authors use video data collected by 21 primary school students in Finland and Australia who come from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The video data used is that of the children’s free play in outside spaces. Their play is often about imagined, future identities and worlds; yet it is in the present, in the here and now, as the children create and negotiate

and practise, that they bring into being their there-and-then worlds worth living in. The authors remind the reader that play is integral to education, and the young people demonstrate how play can help us to live well in the present and in preparation for the future.

In Chap. 8, Nicole Brunker reports on a small project collecting creative responses from 11 children (4–14 years old) about their experiences of life in and outside school now, and about how these experiences will influence their lives in and out of school in the future. The children's responses revealed their awareness that school shaped them to be 'good students', alongside a parallel awareness that their school lives were rather different from life outside school. The students were aware of something more, something missing, something beyond the highly constrained lives they live in school: something absent in school but present and tangible in their wider lives now and into the futures they envisaged for themselves. The chapter thus highlights that while children view life in school as constrained, they still hope that school can help to prepare them for larger, fulfilling lives outside and beyond school.

In Chap. 9, Linda Mahony considers what it means to live well from the perspective of families experiencing separation and/or divorce. Through interviews, 12 Australian mothers discuss the aspirations they have for their families, as well as their experiences of communicating and collaborating with their children's teachers, schools, and early childhood centres. While each family's situation and needs were unique, families were best supported when there was a shared sense of responsibility—between families and educational institutions—for the wellbeing of the children. This collective responsibility helped families and educators focus on providing proactive support rather than reacting to crises.

In Chap. 10, Gørill Warvik Vedeler, Merete Saus, Tatiana Wara, Hilde Sollid, and Astrid Strandbu consider the experiences of young people living in a remote Arctic region of Norway. The authors facilitated dialogue café sessions with 64 first-year pre-service teachers, all under the age of 25, to learn what thriving means for young people, who are choosing to live in the Arctic. The young people discuss their sense of identity and how identity is formed through relationships to the region, the environment, and the culture. Living sustainably is central to the Arctic, and it is part of how young people enact their understandings of living well. Yet these dialogues reveal tensions that challenge the idea that there will be only one uniform way to live well and sustainably into the future.

In Chap. 11, Leila Khaled makes a case for an online Special Religious Education (SRE) class for Australian students who are Muslim. This is part of Leila's doctoral studies and sets the stage for the implementation and evaluation of such a class. Leila shows how SRE has the potential to promote student wellbeing, social cohesion, and a sense of resilience. SRE for Muslim students has a particular connection to the project of this book since, as the chapter notes, the primary purpose of education in Islam is to benefit individuals and societies and to remove them from harm—that is, to help them live well in a world worth living in for all.

In Chap. 12, Kristin Elaine Reimer shares reflections of graduates of an alternative entry university pathway program. The program, offered at Monash University, Australia, is designed for mature-aged students who have experienced disruption

to their formal education. The chapter provides a rich account of seven graduates' perspectives, gleaned through post-program learning circles facilitated by Kristin, also an educator in the program. Despite facing various challenges in their formal education journeys prior to entering the program, the graduates highlight the myriad crucial ways in which education can make a positive difference to people's lives. Their stories of the pathway program and life experiences not only illustrate some of their views on the importance of education, but also how they have capitalised on opportunities to create alternative futures. The graduates' insights, interpreted through the lens of Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence, lead Kristin to conclude that formal education can provide experiences of manageability, comprehensibility, and meaningfulness, which make it possible for people to thrive, even when faced with challenges and hardship.

In Chap. 13, Katrina Thorpe, Cathie Burgess, and Christine Grice report on an initiative introducing teacher education students (also known as Early Career Teachers, ECTs) to the *Learning from Country* project at the University of Sydney. This is a unique initiative that engages student teachers with important Indigenous ideas of *Country* while studying in a large city. The *Learning from Country* program aims to enhance the application of Aboriginal curriculum and pedagogies in the daily teaching practice of ECTs. The Australian Aboriginal notion of *Country* has many layered meanings and requires us to consider all things—all living things, the water, and the land—and connects these things 'to each other and multiple spiritual and symbolic realms' as Aunty Laklak Burarrwanga explains (in Wright et al., 2012, p. 54). The teacher education students participate in *Learning from Country* with local Elders and knowledge holders who introduce them to their *Country*, on *Country*, and introduce them to some of the kinds of Aboriginal knowledges that are grounded in those places. In turn, these teacher education students try the *Learning from Country* pedagogy with some of the students the ECTs work with within schools. *Learning from Country* is a powerful opportunity for place-based education that creates spaces for sharing knowledges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. Aboriginal ECTs report the satisfaction of seeing Aboriginal knowledges respected, and non-Aboriginal ECTs report the satisfaction of learning to 'see' *Country* with new eyes, and appreciating the Aboriginal knowledge that relates to *Country* in particular places. The chapter shows the benefits of this sharing of knowledge and experiences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, across the boundaries between educational institutions and the communities around them, and across generations.

In Chap. 14, Stephanie Garoni, Jo Lampert, and Lutz Hoff present the views of four early career teachers who are graduates of LaTrobe University's Nexus program, which prepares teachers for hard-to-staff regional schools in the Australian state of Victoria. The students participated in an intensive seminar about praxis in education, immersing them in the idea of education for living well in a world worth living in. Despite difficulties, challenges, scarce resources, bureaucratic demands, and institutional resistance, their stories reveal that these new teachers did find, in their own situations, ways to live well by teaching well, and to help bring into being worlds

worth living in not only in and for their students' futures, but also in their everyday lives in classrooms.

In Chap. 15, Susanne Francisco and Ela Sjølie report on findings of their research based on interviews and journal-writing by university academics (14 academics in Australia and 16 in Norway) in the first years of the global COVID-19 pandemic. One of the principal values in the teaching and research work of these academics was to bring into being better worlds for their students and societies. Accomplishing this in their own working lives, even despite the challenges of the pandemic, also helped them to bring into being better worlds for themselves and their colleagues. Some of the key components of living well in worlds worth living in these researchers identified were: social justice and equity for all; a sustainable environment; a sense of community, and associated relationships; and ongoing professional and personal development. For them, this included 'a sense of agency associated with guiding [their] own direction deliberately and knowingly, as well as fighting/working for a just society, a sustainable future, and a professional life that is rewarding and challenging but not overwhelming' (p. 225).

Chapter 16 is the conclusion, brought together by Sally Windsor, Mervi Kaukko, and Stephen Kemmis. They point to how the chapters and projects included in this series not only explore possible futures, but actively work to make real those future worlds worth living in. Through the various *World Worth Living In* projects, education is disrupted and transformed, as educators, students and researchers see, make and fight for new forms of education. Windsor, Kaukko, and Kemmis draw upon the past and the present, to help us see the change that is already underway, creating new and different futures.

Contradictions of Education Versus Schooling and Educational Research Versus Schooling Research

Much educational research in the world today might better be described as 'schooling research'. It aims to refine and improve schooling—the life and work of educational *institutions*—so they more effectively and efficiently meet national goals of education: first, education for economic participation; then, to a slightly lesser degree, for civic political participation; and then, even less, for participation in the world's ecosystems in ways that sustain life and the geophysical processes that sustain life on Planet Earth. The contributors to and editors of this volume, as with its predecessor, aspire to unleash more *educational* forms of educational research: research into *educational practices* and their double purpose of helping people to live well and helping to bring into being worlds worth living in for all.

People become interested, animated, and inspired when we talk to them about the *World Worth Living In* project. They want to read and to participate in forms of educational research that can transform educational practices (and theory, and policy) in ways that will engage, inspire, and enable rising generations, and help to forge more

safe, sane, humane, just, and democratic futures for everyone, everywhere. Like us, though, they recognise—as do the contributors to this volume—that different people and groups, in different places and circumstances, have different views about what worlds worth living in are like, on the ground, in *their* here and now, and for *their* futures.

This volume and its predecessor are thus contributions to a global conversation about what education can and should be like in the twenty-first century, beset by the particular contemporary challenges we face, and fuelled by new hopes for the world. These volumes are thus *invitations* to join this global conversation.

Educators and educational researchers are often captured by the literature of schooling research, with its instrumental notions of school ‘development’, ‘improvement’, and ‘learning outcomes’. Like Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2018), we believe that those discourses, and their research practices, can be lethal for education. They can squeeze the life out of the living practice of education, and the joy, the pleasure, the capability, and the surprise that education brings—for students and for societies (Biesta, 2013).

In *The Human Condition*, philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) distinguished three forms of human activity: labour, work, and action. Labour is the basic mechanical activity that people must do in order to survive (e.g. eating, grocery shopping, physical care). Work makes the more-or-less permanent material objects that allow us to survive and thrive (e.g. tables, buildings, books, poems). Exploring Arendt’s distinctions, philosopher Paul Voice (2014, p. 39) says, ‘What work produces is an objective world that constitutes a shared human reality’. In Arendt’s view, however, action is the most important form of activity for human beings: it is the social and political activity that creates the conditions under which we live together. Unlike the *viva contemplativa* which has preoccupied much of the history of philosophy, Arendt wanted to articulate and enable the *viva activa*, in which people create the conditions of their own collective social and political life. Voice (2014, p. 47) says:

an action can be described as a moment of origination that discloses the individual actor within a plurality of others who constitute an audience and who are bound to the actor by a common world. These characteristics of action lead to the centre of Arendt’s discussion of action, which is the idea of freedom. Human freedom is exemplified and perhaps constituted by actions. To be free is to act in Arendt’s very specific understanding of action. Moreover, to act is to be human in the highest sense of the *vita activa*. For Arendt, the purpose of life is not to lead a “good life” in the Aristotelian sense but to be free in a sense much closer to the existentialist view of freedom. The opposite of freedom is necessity, and action, in Arendt’s view, escapes both the necessitations of labour as well as the necessitations of means-end thinking that constitutes the instrumentality of work. Freedom through action thus promises the possibility of transcending the limitations of our embodied selves and the mechanical thinking of instrumentality. Freedom through action brings meaning to human lives.

The editors of this volume and stewards of the *Worlds Worth Living In for All* project believe that this is the principal task for education: to prepare people not only for the necessities produced by labour, or the material and social realities produced by work, but also for action and the *viva activa* that Arendt envisaged. And as we review the chapters that form this book, we see human beings whose activity was devoted to labour or work *and* to action in Arendt’s sense: not only in pursuit of the

good for *humankind*, but also (as Huttunen and Heikkinen argue in Chap. 3) for the community of life on Earth, including by preserving the geophysical conditions that make this community of life possible. As part of the editorial team for this volume, we believe that the people whose work this book presents have acted in this kind of freedom, to bring better worlds—worlds of freedom—into being for themselves, for others, for the community of life, and for the planet.

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