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Being at home
in business education
... *with* sustainability

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Abstract

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This inquiry is about business education. At first, the intention was that it would be about *sustainability* in business education, but the engagement with questions of sustainability left the idea of business with deep wounds that opened up for new questions of how to take care of them.

With post-qualitative inquiry I embark on a journey, along with educators working at Stockholm School of Economics, Copenhagen Business School and Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki. These business schools have committed to be in leadership of sustainability education through PRME (Principles of Responsible Management Education). Subsequently, we together reflect on possible ways to work with business and sustainability, simultaneously, in education.

One critical discovery in this (re)search is that most of the business educators, including myself, were educating students for something we did not want to be part of, once sustainability became a frame of mind. In *thinking with* sustainability, we got reminded of all the darkness of our common world through exploitation, inequity and inequality. What does it mean to educate others for something you do not what to be part of?

Through reading the work of Hanna Arendt, in particular her notions of evil, thinking and love, I use essayistic writing and poetic inquiry to inspire for ways in which business education can co-exist with sustainability. In other words, to search for possibilities where we can educate into a common world. I argue that active attention towards the practice of *thinking* will help us connect differently through our education.

This different connection I ally with a homecoming process with business education that requires an ontology of immanence; a *one-world-ontology*, where we become aware of our earth-bound relational existence and consequently where it becomes impossible to educate as something we fundamentally are not.

This thesis' aim and its contribution to the field of business studies is to lay bare and consider dangerous questions about business and its response-ability to serious sustainability troubles. Education might be the only place where those questions can thrive without the anxiety of needing to know in advance what the alternative should be.

Keywords: business education, critical thinking, homecoming, post-qualitative inquiry, Arendt, sustainability

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Dedicated to my children Eiríkur and Katla
… and all interrelated children of this common world, especially children in Gaza.
My thoughts are with you - every day.

Acknowledgements

The core of this inquiry is surrounded by a web of friendships, through being, writing, reading, talking, listening, and becoming together. For Hannah Arendt, friendship was a research method where you get a safe *in-between* space to educate yourself into human plurality and unpredictability. Friendship is the only place you can carefully practice and endeavour your judgements, and it reminds us that the world is shared.

Contents

Key notions

BEING…
Post-qualitative: Always empirical, always meta-physical.

Response-able: Staying with the trouble. Turning death to natality, critical hope. Undisciplined.

Essayistic: In constant trial, an endeavour. Discursive, informal, abstract.

HOME…

Curating: Chaos in harmony, slow judgement of 'no more' and 'not yet.' Letting go, allowing for.

Poetic: Grasping goodness, engaging with evil, slowing down, attention. Open up, in-between.

Education: Research and teaching. (Un)learning. Thinking. Relief.

WITH…

…SUSTAINABILITY…

Earth-bound

One-world

Thought to flesh

'[T]he electric ray paralyses others only through being paralysed itself.
It isn't that knowing the answers myself I perplex other people.
The truth is rather that I infect them also with the perplexity I feel myself.'
(Plato in Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 173)

'Which, of course, sums up neatly the only way thinking can be taught.'
(Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 173)
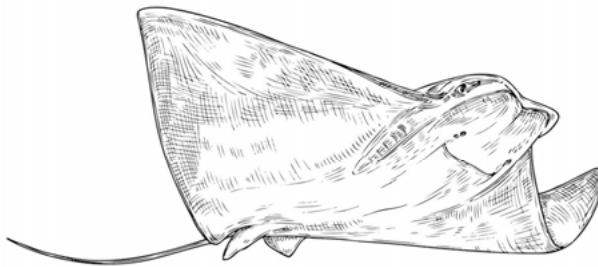
'… now it seems like we are creating a life that nobody wants.'
- Estrid, business educator

I want to invite you to 'stop and think'…

…just for a moment…

about what sustainability means to you…

– what is it you want to sustain?

Slow urgency based on wounds

Two open wounds captured my attention during this inquiry. One of those wounds emerged in dialogues with business educators; educators in business schools that have promised to be role models towards a sustainability transformation. Slowly I started to realise that there might not be a transformation going on. They did not see it; I did not feel it. I invited them to sit down and think about sustainability together with me, they generously engaged, one on one and in groups. What happened was that we were in fact not thinking about what sustainability is, our dialogues quickly turned into what sustainability in business education is not, and many of them all of a sudden started to describe an education towards something they did not want to be part of. Sustainability in business education turned into a raw wound as we realized that we educate for a field – business studies – in which we are separate ourselves *from* when it is hard to see the relevance of business within sustainability engagements. '[W]e are not a sustainability school,' says Karl. Sustainability was something different, almost unthinkable. How will it be possible to transform? 'Well, we don't,' says Frode. Perhaps we humans should 'disappear?' or 'die?' The earth might be better without us, wondered Sif and Gunhild. The wound started bleeding. How can we take care of it? My first question emerged after numerous attempts:

Where lies the possibility to be with sustainability in business education?

The other wound that started troubling me was felt in a conversation with myself at first, my own thinking, where I became two-in-one (Arendt, 1971/2003)[1]. The dialogue belonged to a special call from the field of education for sustainable development which emphasised the importance of actively encouraging critical thinking to enable sustainability education. What do we mean by critical thinking? This essence of education. I thought as I wrote, I wrote as I thought. I engaged with other educators and read into writing, until a wound came into view. A wound in the friction of thinking and critique. I and education had to give thinking a relief from critique to come closer into the inquiry. I had spent so much energy

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[1] Arendt wrote about thinking as *two-in-one* dialogue with oneself. It was to help us keep our attention to the fact that we are plural beings, not singular. This definition of thinking I will elaborate further throughout this thesis, but especially in *Essay VII* that I call *Thinking*.

in criticising business education, now I needed to be able to think with it. My second question became:

How to think with and explore sustainability in business education?

With a combination of impulse and curiosity, frustration and confusion, hasty judgements and slow emancipation, I managed to dwell on these questions for many years. They became my inquiry.

This inquiry is messy and undisciplined because it is a constant response to troubles. The inquiry is a practice of staying with troubles (Haraway, 2016). I found that sustainability requires, not adversarial but ethical engagement. An earth-bound ethic of reality that does not bring with it an anxiety to know (Boulous Walker, 2017, p. 58). We already know there is trouble.

I will now tell you the story of how the wounds have guided me in my quest for sustainability in business education. It will take time. Bear with me.

as a meandering
an unhurried reception
a reflection
a rumination
a meditative relation
a patience
a receptive attitude
  rather than activity, a mastery or a mobilisation.
as a feeling, and atmosphere or a mood
  rather than an academic exercise
as an attention, rapture, felicity, surrender or grace
  rather than the gravity of calculation

  (Boulous Walker, 2017, p. 33)

In this part of the thesis that I call *Initiation*, I dig further into these two wounds, introduced above. Firstly, I depart from a wound a discovered when I felt that me and the educators were separating ourselves from our business education while thinking about sustainability, at the same time as

sustainability has never been more about business. Secondly, I engage with the wound that emerges when the fundamental practice of *critical thinking* within higher education, takes our earth-bound relationship away with overwhelming focus on *critique* instead of the thinking activity itself.

It is here I invite you to become a part of this thesis.

The problems with estranged education

Whether sustainability is something you find important in the context of business education or rather you have gotten long sick of because it is often used in ways that are mostly outrageously ironic or make no sense at all, we can still say that it has something to do with a *good* state of the world. It is something about 'goodness'. Well balanced circulation of life, that is characterized by respect, peace, justice, equity, relationships and care rather than exploitation, war, dominance, polarity, alienation or competition.

However, it seems hard to engage with goodness. Who is to choose what is good and what is bad? It becomes easier to neglect it instead of naively believing that the world can be good, right? But what if we dare to hold on to a critical hope and ask; what is good business education then? Rhodes and Pullen (2023) raise this question along with the claim that business schools have 'failed miserably' in doing what should be the foundation of university education; to serve the purpose of the common good.

But sustainability is not only about goodness. It is also a *response* to troubles. And before we business educators disregard sustainability with what we often think is a tiny glimpse of content, or an empty signifier, we will first have to face the fact that sustainability has never been more about business, where 'winner-takes-it-all capitalism' must be rethought if we are to stand a chance at living a bearable life on this earth in the future (Rockström in Odelfors, 2023).

Let me share a number in need for urgent attention: it has been claimed that one-third of all higher education graduates of this world, the whole world, have a business degree (SSE, 2022). There are around 14.000 business schools in the world, and counting (Parker, 2018; Adolphus, 2023). What are we educating all these people to become?

How can you even believe?
that such a thing as teaching business students to behave well
is even possible in a business school
I don't have the image of THE world as such
in a way that assumes a better world
where everybody is each other' brothers and sisters
and where we have completely reconfigured our patterns of consumption
I do not believe in it.

- Erik, business educator

Through dialogues with business educators, mostly in Scandinavian business schools, schools that have committed to be Champions of sustainability in business education (PRME, 2018), I inquire into vulnerable issues around business education and its relationship to the world.

We live in troubled times.

For me, these words have never been so relevant. Nonetheless, they have appeared at the beginning of many inquiries before this one. 'To live at all, in any age, is to face troubles' (Mustain, 2011, p.1). But today, as perhaps never before, we are facing huge socio-economic and climate crises. This is to state the obvious and business education cannot ignore it any longer. Thus, business schools are increasingly acknowledging their important role in the transformation towards sustainability and you see it everywhere: academic conferences have it as their main theme (AoM, 2022; Fekis, 2019; 2022), and the elite business schools have committed to being champions of sustainability (PRME, 2018) – of this transformation which everybody is talking about, but few are able to navigate (Blasco et al., 2022). Sustainability has been placed within all sorts of terms within business (Bansal & Song, 2017) and treated as an any other 'management trend' (Sahlin-Andersson, 2006) hijacked by the economic paradigm (Banerjee, 2003). Even if this 'trend' is relatively new in business schools, sustainability threats have been with us for decades, and scientists, as well as philosophers, have been warning us since long before I was born (Pisani, 2006).

The concept of sustainability has its origins in many different 'roots' or movements from the 1950s onwards that have slowly merged together into a one concept. From ecological capacity to resource and environment, as well as a call for awareness of the importance of biosphere, towards critique of technology, progress and growth movements, among others (Kidd, 1992). However, and despite all these efforts, ecological thinking under the name of sustainability 'has been watered down to once again make the material demands of the human species the primary test of what should be done with the Earth' (Pisani, 2006, p. 93), hijacked by the economic paradigm (Banerjee, 2003).

The underlying issues that sparked all these different movements range from physical considerations, such as climate change, to problems of governance, as well as the compelling evidence for the correlation between economic growth and environmental degradation (Kopnina, 2012). With sustainability having its main origin in physical and ecological considerations connected to planetary boundaries and limited resources (Rockström et al., 2009), increased acknowledgment has been given to the role sustainability plays around social issues such as inequity and inequality (Kopnina, 2012). Due to this ambiguity, throwing sustainability as a concept 'out there' and 'into' business education to be 'handled' thus becomes hard to deal with. Sustainability is a wicked issue, in a sense that sustainability problems have no 'simple solutions' and cannot be dealt with through 'problem-solving' (Churchman in Rieckmann, 2012, p. 127). '"Wicked" problems can't be solved, but rather dampened and harmonised. Increasingly, these are the problems strategists face—and for which they are ill equipped' (Camillus, 2008, p. 1).

There are strong requirements for teachers and researchers in higher education to focus on highly technical and innovative processes when implementing sustainable development in education. This requirement is understandably difficult for business educators to get their heads around, since social scientists are usually not trained in technical or natural science (Biasutti et al., 2018). Thus, the field of business has had a difficult time connecting to sustainability questions, considering it as something that belongs to the natural sciences; when in fact, sustainability should be more

about the economy than anything else (Rockström in Odelfors, 2023, January 25th). This means that business education cannot turn a blind eye to these problems and have to rethink their connection not only to knowledge, but to the world itself.

There is, however, another side to this story – a parallel narrative about how businesses have successfully managed to connect with sustainability, so well that the whole notion of sustainability has become one big business idea. With time, sustainability in education has gained plural characteristics, where resilience and conservation of the environment have been forgotten under various ideas around progress and new technology (Scott and Gough, 2006; Vare and Gough, 2007), with a 'strategic turn' towards other ends than ecological or social well-being (Bansal and Song, 2017). These often-conflicting values, of ecology and economy, are clearly illustrated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015), which have become the master narrative for sustainability. The SDGs have high emphasis on systematic navigation and institutional orientation (Rockström et al., 2009) with focus on 'green growth' and 'inclusive economic development', where management and technology solutions are at the forefront of potential reaction towards various sustainability issues (Kopnina, 2020). One could say that the economic paradigm has thus co-opted the character in the conservation, despite the promise of a paradigm shift among nations, businesses and higher education institutions all over the world. In this strategic shift, sustainable development is placed with other buzzwords that sit on the shoulders of economic thinking (Kurucz, Colbert & Marcus, 2013), not only as an innocent 'management trend', but as a concept that transforms nature into 'environment' as well as 'colonise(s) spaces and sites in the Third World, spaces that need to be made "efficient" because of the capitalisation of nature' (Banerjee, 2003, p. 143). In this story, where economy is the main character, we have trouble seeing sustainability as a way towards a common good because 'egoistic rationality is treated as something obvious, almost as given of "human nature"' (Chrostowski and Kostera, 2019, p. 20).

In this inquiry, I observed a dance between these two perspectives on sustainability in business education; between sustainability as out of scope

(belonging to natural sciences) or as the key to success. In my conversations with educators in elite business schools around Scandinavia, business schools that have committed to be Champions of sustainability (PRME, 2018)[2], it became evident that sustainability brought a certain ontological insecurity within them, where business became difficult to be with simultaneously. Jasmine B. Ulmer (2017) describes ontology as an 'existence[s] that shape our everyday relationships to ourselves, to others, and to the world' (Coole and Frost in Ulmer, 2017, p. 202) and has observed how many academics feel 'a growing sense of ontological insecurity' from 'a loss of a sense of meaning in what we do and what is important in what we do' (Ball in Ulmer, 2017, p. 201). In a similar way, Arendt stresses that we should slow down and think about what is really meaningful to us.

When trying to integrate sustainability in their education, the educators were putting more focus on getting 'others' on board in the work, while with a certain 'rationale' that sustainability would always have to be in parallel to what they refer to as traditional business education[3].

> *A way of winning acceptance in the faculty*
> *is to have it parallel*
> *Sewing the threads together*
> *So, in the future*
> *We have clothing that perfectly fits together*
> *But we are not a sustainability school*
> *This is not education on sustainability as such*
> *You need to be a chemist or biologist*
> *In order to understand*
>
> - Karl, business educator

It was seemingly hard to imagine sustainability to be part of business education, so much so that those who consider themselves sustainability educators detached themselves to a great extent from what we call business. Once I felt this detachment, I asked them to close their eyes and think about a business person. What were they detaching themselves from?

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[2] You get to read more about them in Essay III called *The Encounters*.
[3] Based on economic theory, with subjects such as marketing, finance and accounting, organisation and management, as well as international business and entrpreneaurship.

I see someone in a uniform
Dark uniform
I see a man in a suit
Quite busy
Dealing with the external world
It is limiting
He is not thinking very much
A financial magician
He wants to get a job in London
International-oriented person
A neutral person
Not someone who stands out
Completely normal
I have never been a businessperson
These people are not very reflexive
Not interested in deep understanding
Very specialised
I look at the MBA population
It is rather depressing
It is a person working for a profit-making company
It is limiting
It is not me

- Chorus of voices of business educators

What does it mean to educate for something you do not want to be part of?

This question guides an attempt of this inquiry to explore a search for sustainability in education, not as a 'buzzword' but as a new mode of existence. This is, of course, not an easy task because sustainability as a mode of existence, or a 'frame of mind' (Bonnet, 1999), requires business studies into dangerous questions[4], where 'each essence has to pay the price in the hard currency of change' (Latour, 2012, p. 6).

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[4] Even though in its literal meaning, *sustainability* means conservation – but of what? (Banerjee, 2003).

The fundamental question [of sustainability]
is so dangerous
that it is illegitimate to ask in a business school

- Harald, business educator

Sustainability education is namely not only to innovate for technological solutions as a response to the extreme global challenges that we are facing (Vare and Scott, 2006), nor is it solely about measuring pollution in the natural environment or melting glaciers, but also to help us unlearn the 'world as it is' (Arendt, 1954/2006a, p. 186) and renew a common world that we seem to have lost sight of (Stein et al., 2021). In crises like this, Hannah Arendt inspires us to think with rapt attention about the role of education in the search for a different mode of existence;

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable.

And education too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, not to strike from their hands the chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.

- Hannah Arendt (1954/2006a, p. 193)

Earth–bound condition to critical thinking

> The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with the habitat in which they can move and breath without effort and without artifice. […] For some time now, a great many scientific endeavours have been directed toward making life also "artificial," towards cutting the last tie through which even man belongs among the children of nature. […] (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 2).

By reading this thesis you will discover that it is accompanied by conversations I have had with Hannah Arendt's texts around responsibility, judgement and education.

Hannah Arendt was a German philosopher and a Jew who began her academic career by examining the concept of *love*. The result of that inquiry was a PhD thesis called *Love and Saint Augustine* (Arendt, 1929/1996), which she wrote under the supervision of Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers (Scott and Stark, 1996). It was the start of her theorising, which would later turn to darker themes such as *evil*. Being a German Jew in the 1930s, life for Arendt became more and more dangerous over time, where she finally fled Germany and became a refugee. She eventually made her way to America, where she applied her talent of writing as thinking and thinking as writing to topics such as totalitarianism and its consequence of 'the banality of evil'[5], which she argues drives dominating ways of being, at the cost of plural ways of engaging with the world. Her harsh political reality that had affected her so deeply, eventually pushed her to abandon philosophy and take on political theory instead (Arendt & Gaus, 1964 in Stack Altoids, 2013). She, however, never gave up on love in her political theorising, which for her was a core part of the process of *thinking*. She defines thinking as a 'two-in-one' conversation, an internal dialogue with oneself which she was convinced could prevent people from doing evil (Arendt, 1971/2003). And although Arendt describes thinking as an individual act,

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[5] My use of evil as a concept is inspired by this concept of the 'banality of evil'. Arendt's most famous case study coined the concept when she observed the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a Nazi SS officer, in Jerusalem in 1961. I will address her case better throughout the thesis, mostly in the Essay V called *Towards one-world-ontology*.

done in solitude, after many readings of her texts, you start to see that what she really means is that thinking describes an in-between space, where *the other* eventually becomes part of your own perspective (Arendt, 2006a, p. 217; Young-Bruhel & Kohn, 2001, p. 227), once you finally get the time and inclination to 'stop and think' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 4). She stressed the importance of acknowledging a certain freedom within the human condition, beyond work and labour (Arendt, 1958/2018), that she called *action*. For her, thinking is a prerequisite for action – *action* not as we in business studies often mean it, as in 'fabrication' (Holt, 2020) that is a process of consumption and production. It is *action* that sustainability requires from us, but in which seems that we in the field of business studies have lost in translation. Arendt was worried about where we were heading with our scientific encounters.

> This future man […] seems to be possessed by a rebellion against human existence as it has been given, a free gift from nowhere. […]. We do not yet know whether this situation is final. But it could be that we, who are earth bound creatures and have begun to act as though we were dwellers of the universe, will forever be unable to understand, that is, to think and speak about the things which nevertheless we are able to do. […] If it should turn out to be true that knowledge (in the modern sense of know-how) and thought have parted company, then we would indeed become the helpless slaves […] thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 3).

Thinking is a key in sustainability education that is most often explored within the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). ESD is commonly described as having two main goals: (1) promoting an understanding of and capacities in technical *sustainability solutions* (ESD 1), based on facts and insights from natural sciences, and (2) promoting *critical thinking* (ESD 2) (Vare and Scott, 2006). However, it is evident that in the field of business there is a much stronger focus on ESD 1, on the solution-oriented and strategic approach (Banerjee, 2003, 2011; Kurucz, Colbert & Marcus, 2013; Bansal & Song, 2017). Ghoshal (2005) and Grey (2004) express their concern with this development and suggest that business schools should make an effort to rethink traditional theories instead of seeking effective techniques and solutions that often decouple business and economics from moral values. Ackoff (in Grey, 2004) proposes that

'[e]very single aspect of the educational process ought to be questioned and systematically denied and the consequences explored', for sustainability to be realised.

While the field of ESD has emphasised the importance of *critical* thinking in sustainability education, it has been done with a vague focus on what is actually meant by thinking other than perhaps adding on other sorts of important thought processes, such as emancipatory thinking, system thinking and anticipatory thinking (Rieckmann, 2012), to name a few. When we add on different ways of thinking, we forget to pay attention to the thinking activity itself. Arendt's theorising on thinking can contribute when we stop categorising *thinking,* but inquire into it instead. She dedicated most of her philosophy (or what she herself preferred to call theorising[6]) to the questions around *pure* thinking and of whether the activity of thinking as such could condition 'men from evil-doing' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 160). However, engaging with evil in business studies the answer: 'Not I but the system did it in which I was a cog' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 31), shifts the responsibility. Thus, it is only possible to consider these questions to the extent of the circumstances 'of whatever a man of flesh and blood did' (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 58), thinks or speaks. Thinking is earth-bound, in a sense it realises that we are not just *in* this world, we are *of* the world (Arendt, 1958/2018).

We tend to talk about *critical thinking* in higher education in general terms. However, *critique* can put *thinking* in trouble, because it destroys something fundamental in the process of thinking that is flux and not fixed. Arendt accompanied me through a process of moving from critique to thinking; a process that can be named *from control to care*, first by helping me to confront 'the banality of evil' in what I felt and had observed for many years around the wounded friction of the combination of business and sustainability. She inspired a shift in my approach, which began with an attempt to conceptualise critical *thinking*, in a postcritical matter. In thinking, you

[6] Arendt did not like to call herself a philosopher, and she did not create theories. She identified herself as a political theorist (interviewed by Gaus, 1964 in Stack Altoids, 2013). She said that the blurred distinction between theorising (i.e. thinking) and theory, which is often thought of as some kind of outcome or end result of thinking, 'is among the shibboleths of modern thought', where the common world vanishes (Young-Bruehl and Kohn, 2011).

allow the other to become part of your perspective, in a way that it always is *us*, and never *them*, because thinking is always a dialogue of two. *Two-in-one*. Whether it is within yourself or with others. This is a quality that I had not understood in my conceptualisation of *critical* thinking, which tends to be the opposite, where you distance yourself from the other. The Icelandic word for critique: 'gagnrýni', literally meaning 'beneficial review', but that also has gotten lost in translation towards a negative sense of the word, despite its positive description, got me wondering about what we might have lost in our ways of engaging with critical thinking. Rita Felski, a post-critical scholar, was concerned with how critique in her field of literary studies, but still expending it to critical theory in general, has become a style of 'suspicious reading that take their bearings from Freud and Foucault, Marx and Butler' where people are confronted with 'dizzying array of theories and frameworks' with a shared sense of 'scepticism, knowingness, and detachment' that she calls a certain prevailing ethos 'of *againstness*' (Felski, 2017, p. 4). In a different way…

> …"[p]ostcritical" refers to ways of reading that are informed by critique while pushing beyond it: that stress attachment as well as detachment, that engage the vicissitudes of feeling as well as thought, and that acknowledge the dynamism of artworks rather than treating them as objects to be deciphered and dissected. "Post" acknowledges a reliance on the thing one is questioning: a dance of dependency and difference rather than a simple opposition (Felski, 2017, p. 4).

Fleming et al. (2022) claim that 'critical thinking in business schools has reached a decisive and alarming impasse' with 'extreme neoliberalism' and where the institutions that 'critical scholars call home' are no better (pp. 1-2). How to be with critical thinking under these circumstances?

Cator (2022) joins me in my conviction that Arendt's conceptualisation of *thinking* as public realm can renew the hope that active engagement with critical *thinking* in business education could potentially make a practical difference. This is what I call critical thinking as earth-bound.

Why this thesis and how to read it?

In this thesis I will invite you to embark on a journey with me in an attempt to take care of these two wounds, those wounds that have captivated my attention throughout the years of writing as thinking and thinking as writing, about business education. Through staying with the trouble, this thesis aims to open up questions and understanding of how we can begin to be *with* sustainability in business education. My reading of Arendt gave me hope in education as a space for healing these wounds. She made me feel at home with questions about sustainability in education, where I was reminded that the essence of education is always the common good. And that is my entry point.

My passion for business education was borne from a hurtful experience throughout years of economic education (which in Iceland is merged with business education in many ways), where I observed my peers on an 'apolitical' journey towards exploitation. I knew from the very beginning of my studies that this would not be my path in life: to be an economist at the Central Bank of Iceland, which was a dream of so many that sat around me in the classroom, or to be working in a bank, banks that had just made our country nearly bankrupt. They had just robbed us.

I started studying economics in 2008 when the financial crisis hit. People wondered – do your textbooks still hold? I did not know. The teachers did not know. So, they continued as usual. However, I did not pay much attention to the textbooks; I was in economics to learn about politics. After the financial crisis hit, I wondered if I should stay in the program or if I should go. After a week in the first semester, I found I was pregnant, 21 years old, and felt that I had no time to waste. I needed to finish what I had started. At the end of the first school year, I was sitting with econometrics exams, even though I was supposed to be giving birth. My son was so comfortable in the womb that he allowed me to finish the semester. During this time, I remember thinking, while stroking my stomach with one hand and trying to solve econometrics problems with the other, why am I doing this?

After becoming an *economist,* without really understanding what that entailed, I changed paths and dedicated my time to advancing in philosophy. They have the same thinkers but slightly broader interpretations. Now, I am here in business education, where I am privileged with a broad space for doing research. Eventually, this inquiry process has come together in a thesis divided into four main segments. The first part you just read is called:

Initiation, where I introduce the main points of this story and initiate a long post-qualitative research process in the hope that you will join me further. The second part I name:

Troubling is where I dive into troubles in business education that might make it hard for us to connect to sustainability. This section includes five essays. In *Essay I*, I engage with the existential crisis that business education has suffered with sustainability. Should we dominate or disappear? Following this, in *Essay II*, I enter into a world of business schools and tell you why I felt it was important to speak to educators. In *Essay III*, called *The Encounters,* I explain my post-qualitative existence in the inquiry and what that entails.

Simply put, what you are about to encounter by reading further into a mysterious 'methodology', how my inquiry went about, who was in my company, and how we engaged together with questions around sustainability in business education. *Essay IV* is about *the Crises and promises of business education*, and *Essay V* is about my struggles in *Towards one-world-ontology.* These essays are about my *response* to *struggles* with various ontologies within business studies that led me to the third part of this thesis:

Composition, which is composed in three different essays, makes up the framework of this contention. *Essay VI* I call *Evil,* where I attempt to define sustainability through the other end. Instead of trying to figure out what sustainability *is*, I would rather engage in what we think it is not. Here, notions of 'No more' and 'not yet', which simultaneously mean *renewal,* are discussed (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 187). I take the concept of Evil from Arendt, not to make particular judgments about Evil,

but rather, I use it as a metaphor to give the sustainability troubles the urgency they deserve. Following Evil, *Essay VII* is dedicated to the conceptualisation of *thinking,* where I show, along with empirical findings, why thinking needs momentary relief from critique. Lastly, I land in *Love; Essay VIII* gives me the strength to wonder what it takes for education to reconnect to the common world. In the last part, I suggest a process for this reconnection that I call:

Homecoming. This process is not towards a physical place but is rather based on a hurtful separation I and the educators made from business while at the same time educating for it. We were educating away from ourselves, away from home. Similar to Jenny Helin (2023, p. 393), when she seeks a 'home in time' with writing, I seek a home in business education with sustainability. In this final *Essay VIII*, I wonder what it takes to reconcile ourselves to the reality of business education, that is, 'being at home' (Arendt in Biesta, 2016), and with that, understand that what we educate actually makes a difference.

In all the essays of this thesis, my conversations with business educators are braided with theorising about education and its relationship to responsibility and judgement, which is mostly on my dialogue with Hannah Arendt, where I read her texts into writing (Cixous in Boulous Walker, 2017, p. 157).

I use *essayistic writing and reading* to slow down the urgency of this topic but, at the same time, practice judgements so we are able to move on with sustainability in business education. Essayistic reading gives an in-between space for you and me to think together with the text that can emerge in different ways. Each essay starts a thought process where I invite you to make your own interpretations but in the hope that it creates questions that you can take with you, assuming that you are concerned with business education of some sort. Business education is where I place my attention because, to me, it is personal! However, not only that. Business education educates most people in this world who decide to engage in higher education, placing a lot of power and responsibility on us: business educators. These two reasons go together because being personal is not a private matter and always belongs to the public sphere, for our being and

becoming in this world always affect our earth-bound relational web (Arendt, 1990; Clifford, 1877). Arendt calls this personal opening to the world 'doxa' (opinion), which she explains has always been understood as the opposite of truth. Arendt disagrees with that understanding and uses the word *doxa* to explain how one's perspective is shared with the world and combines with it because we are bound to it; we are *of* the world (Arendt, 1990). This in-between space between you and me makes my intentions with this thesis quite irrelevant, but despite that, this thesis is written as a *response* to struggles. It is written to help educators stay with the troubles (Haraway, 2016). In itself, this thesis is a response to the wounds that I am not done taking care of. It is in care that I write this piece, not for you to necessarily agree with my perspective and adapt to it. More in the hope that some of what is written here will move you in ways that become part of your perspective. The only thing I am entirely in control of is my *will.*[7] 'Only the will is entirely my own' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 281); everything else becomes common to us all. I had a hard time putting in words how I could express my feelings towards our space; between me and you, my generous reader. Valtonen and Pullen (2021, p. 518) helped me understand what kind of space I wanted to create when they explain their struggles with their intentions of their writing with *rocks*, where they explore being with non-human others in their writing: Writing differently.

> There has been a tendency to bring the 'paper' together in a way to announce our intentions, explain our rationale and structure, and make continual announcements on the direction of the paper. Already anticipating what our colleagues expect of us. We have struggled with this. Evading the announcements. Making announcements. Deleting the announcements. We wonder why in the spirit of writing differently, or as this special issue desires, writing for change whether we need such announcements which make our text more understandable to the reader. Announcing speeds up the writerly and readerly processes. Not only, does this announcing reduce the multiplicities of our voices, it violates the silences that sit suspended in our texts.

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[7] Thanks to my wonderful supervisors, Jenny Helin and Josef Pallas

Inspired by them, I will say no more and invite you into this perspective, in hope we can move together with sustainability in business education.

And off we go…

Essay I: To dominate or disappear

Many attempts have been made to rethink business education[8], and the discussion moves increasingly from business education potentially being the saviour of sustainability[9] to conversations around if this field of education can be 'saved' at all from business; from extreme ideas of exploitation and violence.

Business education snug into academia through the back door, from being a non-academic discipline in the beginning of the 20th century, to be allowed to join the sophistication in the academic environment due to the support we could give towards industrial development (Engwall, 1992/2009; 2000). Yes, read it again; industrial development. Since then, 'business problems have gained acceptance in academic institutions' and have 'gradually come to influence business education' (Engwall, 1992/2009, p. 2). This has created a situation where business education is oriented towards solutions for practice. In this setting, it has been difficult for business education to adapt to academic practices and values such as critical and independent *thinking*.

Now, it is no surprise that in the context of sustainability, our roots are shallow and the 'essence' within business education screams for an acknowledgment of the important role of humanities in business education (in Latour, 2012) that gives more space for reflection on the implicit assumptions within the field (Gagliardi & Czarniawska, 2006). However, there is another story to this. A perspective where our existence in business education is not so ambiguous after all where the so-called 'LERCAT' paradigm, that stands for logical empiricism and rational choice, and has long dominated business thinking with quite solid roots. With its logical empiricism as an account of the relationship between knowledge and the world, where 'purely linear thinkers who see only one-way causation' are produced (Colby et al. in Statler & Guillet de Monthoux, 2015, p. 3). In the LERCAT

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[8] See Gladwin, Kennelly and Krause (1995), Ghoshal (2005), Grey (2004), Banerjee (2003; 2011) Gagliardi, P., & Czarniawska, B. (2006), Colby et al. (2011), Alvesson and Skjöldberg (2018), Kostera (2020), Fleming et al. (2020), Helin, Dahl and Guillet de Monthoux (2022), PRME (2022), Rhodes and Pullen (2023), Laasch (2023) to name a few.

[9] Here used as an umbrella word for various good intentions.

paradigm, people exercise knowledge in practice through rational choice, and agency theory governs how people relate to each other, where humans are seen as actors that primarily work in strategic ways to further their own interests (Statler & Guillet de Monthoux, 2015). Under this paradigm, businesspeople are looked at as stakeholders, each holding their own private stake at hand, characterised by self- and economic interests (homo economicus). As a response to this paradigm, a whole field has emerged of Critical Management Studies (CMS), that stress their concerns in different ways. A group that identifies itself with The Carnegie Paradigm[10] has called for a liberal arts approach to business education, where emphasis is put on critical reflection towards the dominant epistemological assumptions in business education (Colby et al. 2011). Alvesson and Skjöldberg (2018) call for new vistas with a more reflexive methodology while Latour (2012) digs deep into ontological questions around our existence within organisations and how to connect differently to the world, from being economic to being more ecological in our ways of being with research. All this critique has then developed into questions around what we actually mean by critical thinking and what role critique has in business schools (Fleming et al., 2022), where the search for alternatives through for example imaginaries (Kostera, 2020), daydreaming (Helin, Dahl & Guillet de Monthoux, 2022) or ways of being something else than the individual business hero that has the one aim to grow and to conquer the world (Dahl, Helin & Ubbe, 2023), urges us to revisit the practice of critique to respond to the 'extreme neoliberalism' that has been embraced in business education, not only in the field of business but in academia in general (Fleming, 2021; Hil et al., 2021).

At the present moment (much more so than when I started this inquiry), the critique on business education becomes increasingly a part of the now widely known sustainability conversation where the field of business studies has reached a point of asking whether we should be a part of 'the transformation' at all, when we, with our LERCAT paradigm and our superficial 'woke' capitalism (Rhodes, 2022), are hijacking all human life in an opposite

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[10] Referring to The Carnegie Foundation (2023) that gets their name from an American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie and is an independent research centre with the mission to catalyse change in education 'so every student has the opportunity to live a healthy, dignified, and fulfilling life.'

direction, that is linear and exploitative rather than circular and respectful. Thus, it becomes appropriate to ask whether we should rather stay out of the way completely, or even disappear by closing down business schools (Parker, 2018). For quite some time, and not necessarily under the name of sustainability, a debate about critical thinking in business education has been emerging with an emphasis on the importance of reconnecting to society and the world itself. Nevertheless, despite all these attempts to rethink our purpose or retell our story, we do not seem to be able to navigate how to be differently – yet (Blasco et al., 2022).

But why have I chosen to focus on *sustainability* in business education and not for example around liberal arts (Colby et al., 2011), humanities (Gagliardi and Czarniawska, 2006), critique (Fleming et. al, 2022), alternative organising (Parker et al., 2014; Kostera & Szeluga-Romańska, 2021) or something else? Well, because I think it is time that we put less focus on jumping between terminologies of 'the goodness' of business education[11], because then 'the ground of experience' gets lost 'in all kinds of theories' (Arendt in Young-Bruhel and Kohn, 2001), where we get stuck within our niche, separated from 'the evil others'. Now it is time that we in business education use the opportunity to engage with the dominant space that sustainability has already claimed, with the simple question of 'What on Earth are we doing?' – same question Arendt (1958/2018, p. 5) phrased as a central theme of her book about the *Human Condition* in crises; 'What are we doing?'

Sustainability, both in practice and in education, has brought together different movements to not only respond to the defining crises of our time, but also to question how we envision our existence between the past and the future, the old and the new. The field of business plays a huge part in this process, not only because in our troubled times 'the chances that tomorrow will be like yesterday are overwhelming' (Arendt, 2006a, p. 169), but also because the power of business education is increasing every day, graduating more people than any other field (Adolphus, 2023; Parker,

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[11] I think that all these reflections and alternatives to 'the traditional' way of being within business or organisations, in and out of education, are important in their own way but I think it is time we come together to respond to the urgent, dangerous and rapid destruction of the world.

2018). Thus, with the mainstream space that sustainability has claimed, and because of our 'twofold gift of freedom and action'[12] (Arendt, 2006a, p. 169) where 'challenges and opportunities' for business schools and academics are 'there for the taking' (Rhodes and Pullen, 2023), the reality turns into the consequence of exactly that. Our common world.

Lovísa: If we ought to go beyond the surface. What would we need to do to make a change?

Gunhild: I mean, it seems to be like this very big mind shift that needs to take place, and how would that ever happen? This cultural kind of spiritual transformation needs to take place. I don't know how, and I don't think we are the right people to lead that one, for sure.

Lovísa: Why?

Gunhild: Because I don't think we in business schools are the ones that understand those things [around sustainability issues]. I mean, together with others, we can be part of it, but we are never going to be enough. We need new ways of looking at value, new ways of looking at status, new social relationships… yes. But it is not going at all in that direction here; new ways of thinking about borders are not so much happening; it is going in the opposite direction.

Lovísa: What is the role of business schools in this process you describe?

Gunhild: Together with others, we have to play our part; we need to focus on what we are good at and...

Lovísa: What are we good at?

Gunhild: Well, we should be good at .... ohhhh well, we should be good at, well, I don't know!

<div align="right">- Conversation with Gunhild, a business educator at SSE[13]</div>

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[12] An assumption that Arendt makes about our capacities connected to the human condition, that I will elaborate on better in the thesis, and are essential in our work with sustainability.

[13] In the thesis, I will zoom out from time to time to give the reader insights into exchanges that I have had with business educators, a glimpse into our conversations that I feel serve to illustrate certain points in the inquiry. I will tell you more about the educators later in the inquiry. Please stay with me.

Because of our roots that have been soaked with industrial water, when in thinking about sustainability, we perhaps become good at nothing?

What are we in business education good at?

Early in the work of this thesis, it became clear that we had forgotten what we were, in fact, trying to achieve with all our 14.000 business schools and departments in higher education. Now, many years later, we are still trying to figure out what we are good at. What is '[t]he good business school'? ask Rhodes and Pullen (2023), naming all sorts of potential virtues as a way out of despair, based on Raewyn Connell's idea of The Good University, that emphasises democracy, engagement, truthfulness and creativity, and sustainability being one of many, mostly focused with definition on how a university should be organised and funded. All this being extremely important, sustainability education relies on all the other virtues mentioned, and more. It becomes an overwhelming project that business schools have not been able to navigate (Blasco et al. 2022).

Sustainability is, however, quite an easy task when considered just another business opportunity, but once business educators engage in *remembering* its original emergence based on our relationship with the world, the environment and with other humans and non-humans, pushes us to collectively look back and explore educations's potential purpose in society, in the public realm by asking, 'What are we good at?', 'What went wrong?', 'What is our story?' (Latour, 2012), and most importantly 'Who are we? (Arendt, 1958/2018, pp. 55; 179). This moral inquiry, Arendt says, is achieved through thinking. In thinking, nothing can get lost; everything can always be renewed.

> *Thinking annihilates temporal as well as spatial distances.*
> *I can anticipate the future,*
> *think of it as though it were already present,*
> *and I can remember the past as though*
> *it had not disappeared*
> -   Arendt (1971/1978, p. 85).

In thinking, one can be present in 'the gap between past and the future' (Arendt, 2006a, p. 14), where 'truth' is less important than the becoming of it. If we forget to 'stop and think' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 4) we lose our connection to the world and become 'worldless', as Arendt phrases it. Worldlessness is a political phenomenon that is based on the assumption that the world is understood as being separated into many different private parts, when in fact it is '*koinon*', common (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 55). Engaging with that, more convincing assumption about the world, all of a sudden you become a part of other's perspectives and they of yours, which forms the becoming of a shared world. We lose connection to the world when we are only 'in it', 'staying on the job' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 22). Thinking is a bridge between past and the future, a process that eventually ends up under the faculty of judgement, whether we like it or not. It is under this faculty that the world is shaped. But decisions and judgements are not the same. Unlike decisions, judgement cannot happen without thinking. But decisions without judgement are 'worldless' (Arendt in Jørgensen, 2022), and happen under the assumption that we are only 'in this world' and not 'of it'.

With dedication towards a renewal in the relationship of business education *with* sustainability (what I want to call our relationship with the common world, which business education certainly has with its dominance in the field of higher education), it might be best to start with the question of what we are good at. Sif, a marketing educator at Hanken, was concerned. 'We are internally trying to do more and more and more […] more GDP for us, bigger car for you, bigger house for you, more profit for companies, more, more, more, […] we are killing the physical environment,' said Sif, explaining that communication in marketing is aimed at growth and exploitation. She did not see any option other than the death of the subject or the death of people. She saw no way out. In a field where people 'are being taught about digital marketing, data analytics, capital markets, brand strategy, strategic HRM and innovation with no reference to political economy or the planetary boundaries of global capitalism' (Parker, 2021, p. 412), scholars are suggesting alternatives to 'business', such as *organising* (Parker, 2021; Parker et al., 2014) to be more *internal and imaginative* in contrast to *external and corporate* (Kostera, 2020), towards the *com-*

mon good (Chrostowski and Kostera, 2019), and a call for more 'ethical reflection or introspection' instead of 'a glorification of the corporate self in the same way that religious practices seek to glorify God' (Rhodes and Pullen, 2018, p. 495) has radically become a part of the dialogue around the problems of business education.

In this inquiry, I hope to join this wise group of voices as I attempt to rewrite towards a connection to sustainability alongside other educators in elite business schools that have committed to be world champions of sustainability and, in so doing, make use of the opportunity that sustainability gives us to become differently. Business educators play a huge role in shaping the future of world society, educating new generations of decision-makers (Engvall, 1992/2009). Business educators are the carriers of business knowledge (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002) and hold the essence of business schools and universities, which is, in fact, education and research (something we too often tend to forget). Educators are thus key actors in the making of new possibilities in this world. Could there be a place for sustainability in business education without the need for either domination or disappearance?

Essay II: Here's the business

Parallel to the becoming of sustainability in business, the field of business has been developing in the exact opposite direction, contributing to ecological violence through the exploitation of the environment, making living beings into a form of resources with the consequence of increased inequality, and, most importantly, as main drivers of economic growth. Thus, claiming sustainability in business is rather ironic (Kopnina, 2020). But for now, I want you to hold on to the idea that sustainability in business education is possible.

My original plan for this thesis was to explore what sustainability in business education is. It took me a long time to realise that what I really needed to explore was what sustainability in business education could be – the potential becoming of sustainability in business education. This realisation came about for two main reasons. Firstly, I discovered that sustainability is not something particular but rather is constantly evolving and emerging, which makes it impossible to study as 'a thing'. Secondly, as already mentioned, it became evident that sustainability poses major challenges to current assumptions in business education which need to be addressed before exploring 'the nature of' sustainability in the field of business. Business might perhaps be the whole project of sustainability in business education.

Before I entered this research process, I had been dedicated to questions of sustainability in business education for almost a decade, first as a bachelor's student in economics, where I fought with my economics teacher about the unfair and highly corrupt neoclassical fishing quota system in Iceland, which he said was the best possible system. 'For the few,' I added. I did not grow up in a vacuum and all my experiences, such as having a 'Marxist' mom (like she refers to herself) and a father that is so ironic that I quickly had to learn that what he says, often means the opposite. 'Life is a lie' he used to tell me stressing the importance of the art of telling a good story. All these sometimes-absurd discussions we had around the dinner table, I later found out was a matter of politics, society and the human

condition. What is the true life? What is the good life? And why should I bother? Like I have mentioned before, my first week into my economic studies the financial crisis hit. Perhaps life was a lie after all? After having pretended for three years to find old economic textbooks convincing, just to past the tests, I continued to study philosophy and ethics where I wrote a master thesis about Whistleblowing mechanisms in financial banks in Iceland, that I found out were also a lie[14] and mainly served the bank's special interests.

My dedication to questions of inequality, inequity, and our exploitative force 'of nature' then took me to Sweden to explore how sustainability could save us from the dangerous economic ideas of modern societies, with values of 'prevailing neoliberal order' (Liu in Rhodes and Pullen, 2023). After I had written a bachelor's thesis on the exploitative and ever-growing power production system in Iceland and my master's thesis on whistle-'veil', I pursued my curiosity on how we educate all these people that are working in these industries. In Sweden, the illusion continued and my study on the implementation of sustainability in Swedish business schools, which was at the time mostly to bolster their own legitimacy, brought me to a point of reflection. In my continuous inquiry into the purpose of business, all I saw were appearances,[15] that provided us with 'opposite personae' (Latour, 2012, p. 12), where underlying values of infinite economic growth (private, individualistic, exploitative, instrumental) dominated over those of sustainability (public, collective, care, intrinsic), and where 'virtue hoarding' engages with little more than 'feel-good political positions' that simply end up supporting the status quo (Liu in Rhodes and Pullen, 2013). I wanted to go 'beyond' appearances.[16] Or would I have to reverse the priorities and instead of trying to 'go beyond' and look for

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[14] In my master thesis I found that the Whistleblowing mechanisms that were forced on financial banks in Iceland by law, after the financial crisis in 2008, were mostly used for the interests of the banks and not for common interests as inteded (Eiríksdóttir, 2014)

15 A term borrowed from Hil et al. (2021, p. 132) where they describe how universities engage in 'soft reforms' such as promoting renewable energy, water bottle re-use and throw 'awareness raising events' while extolling virtues of infinite economic growth 'as if these imperatives were not fundamentally contradictory (Kopnina 2016)

[16] Later in the research process, I will form a different connection with the word 'appearances', inspired by Arendt's one-world ontology, where she writes as there was only one world (funny how we got detached from that fact), and that she calls 'the world of appearances' (Arendt, 1971/1978, no. I, p. 8).

something that 'truly is', what 'appears' might actually be the main research problem (Arendt, 1971/1978, no. I, p. 28).

'What do you mean by sustainability?' my colleagues asked me when I gave them the customary and specially designed 'elevator pitch' about my research. Many of them have become sick of sustainability and its ambiguity. 'I tell my students to go and study biology or something within natural sciences if they are interested in sustainability,' said one of the newly graduated PhD colleagues after a seminar we had attended together in Uppsala about the 'concept'. I quickly understood that in the context I had just become a part of, in the business department of Uppsala University at Campus Uppsala, sustainability was a 'buzzword' that had very little relevance to the context of business or social science in general. My connection to it was different – a connection that is not theoretical nor empirical, but emotional and ethical, problem-oriented towards our being and becoming in a common world.[17]

Through being within the context of social science, I have experienced that we in the field have a difficult time connecting to sustainability, as something we could be 'good at'. However, Hans Jonas (1984) encouraged me not to give up my search for a new ethics in our modern and technological times, where it is necessary to 'keep ourselves open to the thought that natural science may not tell the whole story about Nature' (p. 8), and that my responsibility should be to bridge the 'scientifically ascertainable "is" and morally binding "ought"' (p. x).

Whether we see sustainability as a story of nature, the social, the economic, or all of the above, for me, sustainability creates a context where people get the opportunity to respond to the extreme challenges we are increasingly facing. Thus, it is not a 'thing' or a 'theory' to apply, nor a concept to be exchanged with the purpose of creating a new field that might become 'trendy', but rather a door that opens up new possibilities to reorient our ways of thinking and being in the world. It is a possibility of something new that is yet unknown. It is the possibility to reconnect to the idea of a

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[17] Inspired by post-humanist scholars such as Donna Haraway (2010; 2016), who inspired me to change the subtitle of this thesis from 'on sustainability' to 'with sustainability.'

common world that is only one and shared, not many and private. Sustainability turns 'the world into this world. ("This world"! As if there were any other.)', as Susan Sontag (1964) so passionately reminds us of.

Business education plays a vital role in being part of different ways of being, even if currently is a part of a world that seems to be driving global development in the opposite direction towards violent and unsustainable practices (Stein et al., 2020) – which literally creates double trouble, where both education and business seem to be on the wrong track (Fleming, 2021; Parker, 2018). Nonetheless, through what Maria Ojala (2017) calls critical hope – hope based not on optimism but on the belief that there is still something worth fighting for (Pihkala, 2018) and where the future is still open – I wonder:

Where lies the possibility of sustainability in business education?

Bad business in a sad system

Businesses have been heavily criticised for their negative impacts on society and nature, which has resulted in a long-lasting academic debate about the underlying assumptions in business thinking (first sparked widely at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1972 in Pisani, 2006). In 1992, world-leading Nobel scientists issued a warning, not least addressing the field of business, saying that a great change in the stewardship of the earth and life on it is required if vast human misery is going to be avoided (UCS, 1992). The core of the academic debate has been fiercely aimed at business education and illustrated well by Gladwin, Kennelly and Krause (1995, p. 874):

> Modern management theory is constricted by a fractured epistemology, which separates humanity from nature and truth from morality.

Today, this criticism remains fully alive, emphasising that business education is still stuck in the 'disparate view' of the economic theory paradigm (Kurucz, Colbert & Marcus, 2013), where students are merely exposed to neoclassical economic thinking (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008) that is in total contradiction with ecological and moral considerations (Kopnina, 2018;

2020; Parker, 2018); a pedagogy of the privileged that teaches 'greedy people how to satisfy their appetites' (The Economist, 2009, September 26th). New IPCC reports, now coming out every year, echo these concerns, emphasising the drastic role of business thinking in the dark development of climate change (IPCC, 2023). However, large businesses which are clearly the biggest obstacle in slowing down climate change, as the IPCC hints at throughout its reports, are still included both as authors and editors of these reports, where the concerns about big fossil fuel industries are 'mysteriously' left out of the summaries. Robert Brulle, an ecological sociologist at Brown University, described this persistent elephant in the room as 'trying to tell the story of Star Wars without Darth Vader' (Westervelt, 2022).

This overarching critique of business education and of the large businesses for which business schools generate employees is, however, not solely aimed at the field of business per se, and has come to express a general concern around our ontological way of being within 'a system'. This concern is no less prevalent within academia, where sustainability in education – whether it concerns the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or other sustainability initiatives – most often becomes either the weaker link in its contradictory component of neoliberalised universities, or a way to support them (see Jickling, 1994; Kopnina, 2020; Hil et al., 2021; Fleming, 2021). However, the field of business studies, in particular, has been blamed for this neoliberalisation of higher education as a major element in its transformation towards modernity; and business thinking, whether through theory or practice, has been severely criticised for having promoted this way of thinking as a major driver of economic, social and environmental development (Engvall, 1992/2009; Meyer 2004). Sustainability, in all its 'plurality', has been squeezed into a market economy (Bonnet, 1999) which is fundamentally inconsistent with long-term ecological and social sustainability (Rees, 2003), and which has limited perspectives on organisations and their role in local communities (Oetzel & Doh, 2009). In addition, the financial crisis of 2008 raised even stronger concerns about not only mainstream business practices and theories but also the overall purpose of business (see Colby et al., 2011; Dallas, 2011; Lewis et al., 2010; Lupuleac et al., 2012).

When I tell people I am studying sustainability in business education, more often than not, they laugh and ask, 'How can that exist?'. In a conversation with educators at one of the business schools I engaged with I got challenged as well very quickly.

Erik: Who is trying to transform towards sustainable development?
he asked me

Lovísa: Your school, for example,
I informed him

Erik: I am not sure that you can say that the school is trying to transform,
he countered

Gudrun: I would also question that,
she added

- A group interview with business educators at CBS

I soon realised that it would be a difficult task to go 'out there' and find some examples of 'best-case scenarios' of this transformation that everyone is talking about, but nobody recognises.

Even though I was far from being alone in the despair at this time, and we not the only ones being sceptical about business education, does not however affect the extreme and increasing popularity of business schools which, despite all the criticism, are really in their 'Golden Age', going by their students 'impressive growth rates' (Dyllick, 2015, p. 17; Walsh, 2011b). Business schools are becoming increasingly powerful every day and business studies also seems to be one of the most popular subjects in universities, graduating more students than most other departments (PRME, 2020). A door then opens up for this mass of graduates to eventually become powerful decision-makers, spreading and developing business ideas through teaching and research and through the generation of students who carry the message with them into all kinds of organisations and the world itself (Engvall, 1992/2009). And we all know, that in a 'Golden Age', the future always looks brighter than it should, 'because no

one remembers the past' (Didion, 2022, p. 4). So, we continue to add on to respond to 'external' crises, instead of engaging in introspection, because why would you change something in an 'golden age'? There seems to be no crises in business education.

But these 'golden age' facts do not reduce a critique that is often characterised by a focus on narrow functional and disciplinary knowledge instead of a broad issue-centred and integrated perspective approach. Business graduates, and business educators that teach them a way of becoming in business, are claimed to be 'surprisingly naïve about organisations and management, […] learn[ing] to take a highly rational view of implementation and action', reduced to analysis and technique from a Western perspective (Dyllick, 2015, pp. 18-19). Furthermore, business students are accused of being weak in their capacity to care about the world beyond the individual and instrumental goals of their education (Colby et al., 2011), as well as losing a sense of their 'moral self' as soon as they start studying business (Andersson, 2016).

Before I realised that I wanted to explore the *possibility* of sustainability in business education rather than what it *is*, I asked myself how the field of business studies is making sense of the implementation of sustainability in education. Many scholars have wondered about this[18] and have tried to come up with a framework or matrix to strategically implement sustainability in education (Rusinko, 2010; Subbs & Cocklin, 2008). In my field of organisation and management, sustainability in business is often turned into other concepts like Corporate Social Resposnibility (CSR) (Montiel, 2008; Bansal & Song, 2017) and described as a 'trend' (Shalin-Andersson, 2006; Shalin-Andersson & Wedlin, 2008) adopted under pressure from the external world.

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[18] See, for example, Barber et al. 2014; Holt, 2003; Kopnina, 2014; Kurucz, Colbert and Marcus, 2013; Landrum and Ohsowski, 2017; Lilly, Barker and Harris, 2014; Perera and Hewege, 2016; Stubbs and Cocklin, 2008; Colby et al. 2011.

My first experience [with sustainability],
some researchers started to talk about corporate responsibility
maybe 10-15 years ago
but then you saw it and thought
-ok it is another kind of pressure
towards organisations or companies
adding other things on their agenda
there has been an increase in these kinds of demands,
the demands have increased on organisations

- Birger, business educator

Birger illustrates quite well the conversations that goes on within institutions of business education, and how it is presented in research papers. Sustainability becomes an 'external pressure.' Today, even though we are slowly realising that sustainability is in fact real and has to be taken seriously, we seem yet to find ways to be with it beyond theoretical explanations around *how we are* and *what we do* to respond to these crises– like we were all the same.

The United Nations (UN) has been working on shaping the business and institutional environment through initiatives such as the Global Compact (UN, 2016) and the SDGs (UN, 2015), putting more emphasis on education as being a key factor in 'achieving' sustainable development. However, it always seems to end up as a source of ambiguity or 'wickedness', where it becomes evident that sustainability challenges cannot be addressed with 'simple solutions' or achievements (Churchman in Rieckmann, 2012, p. 127). This creates a challenge for business education where we tend to address the world with projects to 'deal with' (Engwall, 1992/2009). But sustainability calls for different ways of being than within the mainstream strategic approach that reduces sustainability to an instrument of linearity (Flyvbjerg 2001; 2004; 2006).

Still and even though sustainability has taken a 'strategic turn' from completely different problems than around problems of strategy (Bansal & Song, 2017), this does not take the responsibility away from business educators, who play a huge role in shaping the future of world society, educating new generations of decision-makers (Engvall, 1992/2009) more

than any other subject. Thus, increasingly, business schools are committing to work towards responsible business education, signing up to standards and initiatives such as the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) (2008), a platform for business schools and higher education institutions to commit to a transformation towards sustainable development and responsible education. But the question then becomes: if we agree that sustainability is most definitely not a management or a strategy problem, what is required of us to connect differently? What can business education do to be with sustainability, in other ways than through strategy?

In 2017, when I started this formal PhD journey and was interested in exploring what sustainable development *is*, I looked at PRME reports of the main elite business schools in Scandinavia to try to understand what sustainability is for them. The first report I came across had the title:

Responsibility for competitiveness
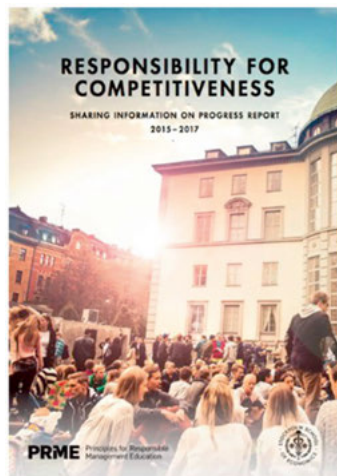
Figure 1 - PRME report by SSE (2017 [screenshot])

Had we not come further than this? There I was looking for contexts to study, 'best practices.' And for what? Competitiveness? Really?

'I am not sure why you would be surprised about this,' said Erik, a business educator at CBS, referring to these reports as 'showing off' for 'the outside

world'. Another educator at SSE who had been involved in the PRME process called it 'bullshit' and recalled the discussion that took place around the title.

> *We wondered*
> *how we could connect best to business*
> *one suggestion was that we would focus on competitiveness*
> *to reach out to the business context*
> *to bundle up with business*
> *to build a bridge*
> *gain legitimacy*
> *frame responsibility in a manner that can attract CEOs*
> *It is a way of bullshitting*
>
> - Karl, business educator

For me, the question went from 'What *is* sustainability in business education?' to 'Why are we even doing sustainability in business education at all?' Why is it that we tend to reproduce this 'bullshit of business schools' (Parker, 2018), creating bullshit jobs (Graeber, 2018), over and over again, based on self-fulfilment and competitiveness, even in the area of sustainability, where the elite has rights to have rights (Segal, 2017). The economist might answer: because growth is actually good and the world is getting better; or as one of the educators I spoke to, who is a professor in economics, put it: '[Sustainability] has always been there [in economics], but the particular shape, form and terminology tend to develop.' I asked him if he did not feel any tension between sustainability and economics.

So, which other fields have made a better contribution?
he asks

-*I laugh*-

Tell me!
he demands

-*I am speechless*-

We can only achieve so much; we are making progress

Sten, business educator

Sten explained that this critique on neoliberalism and contradictory virtues of economic theory and capitalism that is loud in disscusions around sustainability education could be compared to the analogy that is often drawn with the field of medicine: '[…] like how are we not able to prevent people from dying even though we always have better and better research. We can only achieve so much, and we do what we can'. He continued by taking an example from his field of research: 'competition policy is [for example] a concern for the consumer', which he associated with values of sustainability. I did not have an alternative to competition other than not buying into a discourse or a system that places competition in the centre of human relationships. As many anthropological studies have shown, we as human beings are no less caring and cooperative than we are competitive, where competition is just one of many human experiences (Hopkinson & Zidaru, 2022; Molina et al., 2017). Based on this, I started wondering why we tend to feel care and cooperation are moral issues, while placing competition with facts.

> *Why success and no sustainability?* I ask
> *Do not be so normative, little girl.*
> *Why money, not community?* I ask
> *Do not be so naïve, little girl.*
> *Why control and not care?* I ask
> *Keep your values at home, little girl.*
> *What about the other, what about nature?* I ask
> *This is research, little girl, not politics.*

(Written in my notebook, 2018, after I had been presenting in a higher seminar)

Robin Holt (2020) writes about the importance of raising conscience in business schools, departing from the problem that education is becoming so technical that it is 'little more than instruction' (p. 586), connecting directly to the philosophy of Hannah Arendt, emphasising her relevance to the phenomena. In the article, he discusses the above-mentioned thoughtlessness

> …the emphasis on the enterprise is little more than an egregious form of commercial thoughtlessness. Students are to envisage themselves as agile, living minimally, gigging on surfaces, sniffing opportunities, eating it up, assuming there is always more about ever being curious as to why their world should become like this. Why is competition there? Why is growth good?' (Holt, 2020, p. 585)

He explains how skills and facts are being taught to bring about desired states of affair to become means to further ends 'to which there is no end' (Holt, 2020, p. 584). Holt argues that the main purpose of business education is about careers where it has become a simple preparation for vocation. According to (Holt 2020, p. 584), Arendt called this 'atmospheric thoughtlessness' pervading the western world where we are unable to raise unanswerable questions of meaning and where 'talk of good' is often wrapped up in a discourse of corporate benefits or entrepreneurial opportunities. But Arendt's concern was the question of how best to inspire for a citizen which she sees as;

> …publicly embodied and emboldened beings who actively consider the interplay of prevailing and emerging interests and opinions, and who, on the basis of this consideration, would consciously resist the instrumental ways of which one interest group or truth claim attempted to assert itself above others (in Holt, 2020, p. 568).

This progress perspective, in economic theory and science in general, about the world always getting better and better, is contrary to concerns within the IPCC (2023) and Oxfam (2022) reports, but is still in line with so many other master narratives that have been told about sustainability before. One of these stories can be found in Hans Rosling et al.'s (2019) book *Factfulness*, which dominated the discussion on sustainability for many years. Bill Gates described it as one of the most important books he had ever read (Amazon, 2023). Of course, the world is better than we think with Bill Gates, right? being a part of the billionaire club on private jets, that emit, for example, million times more greenhouse gases than the average person (Business Insider, 2023, February 9th; Oxfam, 2022, November 7), and then we have not even come to the social issues of inequity

and inequality, with facts such as that only around twenty men in the world, Bill Gates there included, own more wealth than all women in Africa (Oxfam, 2020, January). This is the world of progress.

What does it mean to teach 'the world as it is'?

From an organisational perspective, the explanation as to why we tend to reproduce the status quo often rests on the concept of legitimacy, for the 'survival of the organisation' that has to cope with constant 'external' pressure, where sustainability is placed with other 'fashionable' ideas as an 'external' force, and not as fundamental part of the organisation. According to what I learned when I started to engage with the 'organisational perspective' within the Department of Business Studies at Uppsala University, I came to see that the world is not as rational as I thought. Organisations are in fact not entities that simply try to 'maximise profit'. 'I don't know any organisation like that,' says Mintzberg (1989, p. xi), and if we just ground ourselves in empirical observations and look at the world as it is, we see something different. Organisations are 'rational myths' (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) that adapt to 'fashionable' ideas (Czarniawska and Sevón, 2011) to gain legitimacy and to 'appear' modern. Hypocrites that say one thing and do something completely different (Brunsson, 2019). What they say is another reality to how they act. These hypocrites are, however, nothing to be worried about; it is, in fact, how organisations become 'successful' (whatever that means), a 'necessary' aspect *to the organisation* (irrespective to what that is being organised for) for them to be able to enact some morality at all (Brunsson, 1993). So, this 'rational myth' is only 'incorporated in widely spread assumptions about what a modern organisation should be' (Sahlin-Andersson, 2006, p. 604), sustainability there included. Why should people within organisations think about sustainability other than for other reasons than to appear modern? The limit was set. This was the world as it is.

> Myth, in its original form [in ancient Greece], provided answers without explicitly formulating the problems. When [Greek] tragedy takes over the mythical traditions, it uses them to pose problems to which there are no solutions (Jean-Pierre Vernant in Wolin, 2017, p. 10).

Most I read were explanations to why things could not be different. Where were the problems? Was the organisation the only matter of concern? I had misunderstood. I thought organising was a movement, a cooperative practice around other problems? But here I was, supposed to do research objectively. I could not let be to wonder though, how can engaging with 'success' or 'the modern world' not be political?

Education is certainly 'politics as paradox', as Osberg (2010) reminds us of. There is no way out. A conversation about these kinds of inevitable politics in education, irrespective of whether the judgements are to be found in the answers we give, the questions we ask or values we address. Where can such a conversation take place, where this paradox is at its heart?

Critical management scholars, like Alvesson and Spicer (2016), go further and describe organisations not only as hypocritical or mythical but also as simply 'stupid', where functionally they close down cognition through morally ambiguous virtues and values that are fixed, full of thoughtless working people. But these explanations of why we might be destroying the world, did not ease my anger, not only because these explanations characterised by a certain detachment from the common world in that they describe the organisation as it was in a vacuum, outside (un)sustainability; but more importantly that they seemingly ignore the actual urgency that the world is facing, and has been facing for decades now, and the organisation's responsibility towards the critical issues of our time. And all of a sudden, we are not only attempting to educate rational human beings, but rather, we start to educate cynical human beings, that do not believe that they can make a change other than through consumption and production, something that Fougère and Solitander (2023) call 'homo responsabilis.' From homo economicus to homo faber or animal laborans (Arendt, 1958/2018, pp. 126-135), and then to homo responsabilis, we are in all cases imprisoned under the faculty of labour and work and thus have no tools to imagine our attachment to the public world, the common world, where we are storymakers and not only story tellers (Jørgensen et al.,

2022). In these 'homo' stories 'others'[19] are made into a resource of consumption or production. This we either claim or reproduce by saying it, writing it, so many times that it becomes even more true than before.

> Without taking things out of nature's hands and consuming them and without defending himself against the natural processes of growth and decay, the *animal laborans* could never survive. But without being at home in the midst of things whose durability makes them fit for erecting a world whose very permanence stands in direct contrast to life, this life would never be human (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 135).

There was no public realm to engage in anymore. No world to erect. Suddenly, our highest capacity of 'action' becomes the making of products and organisations for their own sake, and our 'thinking' becomes solely instrumental to our own little private worlds. The in between private and public was not even there, because there was not public. Public appears only where we understand that we are earth-bound and always erecting the world. But the common was dead, and it broke my heart. The theories were so convincing that I almost started to believe that I could not be response-able (Haraway, 2016, p. 36) to the world, because you already know when you take on theories. I was turned into *an observer*. That became the limit to our imagination of 'action'.[20]

Thinking with ~~strategy~~ tragedy

What is often referred to as 'Global challenges', in the sustainability literature, are not easily to addressed. I get it. These challenges are often referred to as 'wicked problems', defined as those that have no 'simple solutions', have many perspectives and cannot be dealt with through 'problem-solving' (Churchman in Rieckmann, 2012, p. 127). Even though these problems concern us all under different circumstances, they seem to be hard for us to grasp, and require a totally different and broader approach than the mainstream business studies approach of 'solution thinking'

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[19] Such as nature and other human and non-human beings.
[20] Loud calls for 'action' towards sustainability issues makes it important to conceptualise what we mean by action which I will do with inspiration from Arendt simultaneously throughout this inquiry.

(Flyvbjerg 2001; 2004; 2006). But how can we address something that cannot be dealt with from a 'problem-solving perspective', and what are we trying to transform?[21]

This question was the entry point into my conversations with the educators. Through stories from people within business schools who have committed to be champions of the transformation towards sustainable development, and people who actively work with sustainability in business education, I try to pay attention to the often unrecognised will[22] towards change that is hidden under the structure of the status quo. Sustainability in social science is a moral issue, what Arendt (2003, p. 93) would call a 'non-technical' issue because it is about making 'sense of the should' (Osberg, 2010, p. 157). Arendt emphasises that moral issues are the same as legal issues, in the sense 'that they deal with persons, and not with systems or organisations' (Arendt, 2003, p. 57). Arendt emphasised the importance of attention to the individual in this regard:

> '[with] attention on the individual person […] in the age of mass society where everybody is tempted to regard himself [herself] as a mere cog in some kind of machinery- be it the well-oiled machinery of some huge bureaucratic enterprise, social, political, or professional, or the chaotic, ill-adjusted change pattern of circumstances under which we all somehow spend our lives [the responsibility shifts] and all justification of a nonspecific abstract nature […] break down. […] No matter what the scientific fashion of the time may say, no matter how much they have presented public opinion […] the institution itself defies, and must defy, them all or pass out of existence. And the moment you come to the individual person. The questions to be raised are no longer: How did this system function? But, why did the defendant become a functionary in this organization?' (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, pp. 57-58)

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[21] Tales of transformation are not good in themselves, and this potential transformation is not the first that will exist. Capitalism is also a great example of an extraordinary transformation, not only in the modes of production but also in 'the individual's subjectivity: the way people understand themselves and relate to each other' (Parker et al., 2014, p. 9), where in the 19th century, markets were turned into larger markets that started to 'regulate themselves', forced by powerful elites (Karl Polanyi, 1944). Industrialisation is also a reaction to a dream of becoming differently, that became a revolt against so many and so much.

[22] That is another important concept is Arendt's (1971/1978, no. II) theorising on responsbility which I will elaborate with through out the thesis.

This is the reason why I did want to engage in conversations with business educators. Who are they in the organisation and what can that tell us about the possibility of being differently?

Arendt dedicated most of her philosophy, or what she herself preferred to call theorising,23 to the questions thinking and of whether the activity of thinking itself as such could condition 'men from evil-doing' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 160). However, with the answer: 'Not I but the system did it in which I was a cog' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 31), the responsibility shifts. It is only possible to consider these questions to the extent of the circumstances 'of whatever a man of flesh and blood did' (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 58). But Arendt (1971/2003) was very clear that thinking cannot be taught through other than actively engaging in thinking yourself, where you engage in a two-in-one dialogue with yourself on broad and existential questions. Earth-bound (Arendt, 1958/2018) where thoughts are made flesh (Arendt, 1971/1978, no. I, p. 47) in 'an entirely authentic semblance of thinking activity itself' and not just with explanations of 'the errors of the past'. If I wanted to explore thinking I had to expose them to my own thinking, to paralyse them with my perplexities, in hope that they would also respond in the same way. Like an electric ray;

> […] the electric ray paralyzes others only through being paralyzed itself. It isn't that knowing the answers myself I perplex other people. The truth is rather that I infect them also with the perplexity I feel myself. Which, of course, sums up neatly the only way thinking can be taught. (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 173)

Even though I was not going to business school to teach thinking, I wanted to explore what thinking can actually do to create spaces to dance differently.

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23 Arendt did not like to call herself a philosopher, and she did not create theories. She identified herself as a political theorist (Arendt & Gaus, 1964 Stack Altoids, 2013). She said that the blurred distinction between theorising (i.e., thinking) and theory, which is often thought of as some kind of outcome or end result of thinking, 'is among the shibboleths of modern thought', where the common world vanishes (Young-Bruehl and Kon, 2001).

You challenged me personally,

because you were asking me what I think
and I never really thought about that
because I always just put my professional hat on
and work within the system
with what is available
Your interview challenged me to think

- Leif, business educator

This thesis is largely based on conversations involving the real flesh and blood of business schools – the educators themselves.[24] There is this notion of transformation that the world is calling for, but what do we want to transform? What do we have to leave out, and what do we have to take on? What is happening within business schools in this process of transformation? I am not interested in what the schools write in reports or present to the outside world, in all their self-awareness and glory, but rather what perceptions of this phenomenon, of sustainability in business, I could find from within the business schools.

What I wanted was this thesis to be towards radical reform, with the promise to open up possibilities to not only do things differently but also inspire different thinking (Stein, 2021). This is the main reason why I got drawn to Arendt's writing in the first place: her philosophy and emphasis *on thinking* when exploring responsibility enabled me to dig deeper into how it might be possible to study and understand thinking in business education in relation to sustainability, where critical thinking is thought to be one of the main cornerstones of sustainability within education (see Hjörth & Bagheri, 2006; Rieckmann, 2012; Vare and Scott, 2006; Martin, 2007).

Arendt provides a comprehensive theorising on thinking, which asks not only how we can think towards a common world, but also why it is important and what happens when we forget to think. In this thesis, I aim to develop a foundation for sustainability in business education with thinking as the bearing wall – starting with what happens before thinking (in

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[24] Students are, of course, also included as the flesh and blood of business schools, but here I am focusing on the educator's perspective on his/her place regarding the discussion on sustainability in business higher education.

thoughtlessness), what it means to wonder into thinking, and where thinking can take us in education. Could the possibility of sustainability in business education be grounded in thinking? And if so, how?

In Arendt's mind, 'we ought to share the world with other people', rather than looking at the world as private and external, in order to enable a sense of responsibility (Dossa, 1984, p. 179). Even though Arendt's theorising is ingrained in this inquiry for many different reasons, her one-world ontology created the most important opportunity for me to inquire differently into my questions.[25] She gave me a relief that is hard to put into words. *Critical hope* that all this mass of business students and educators around the world, including me, could become differently. This thesis is one attempt to inspire for that.

Critical hope is not a sense of optimism in that 'everything will be fine' but rather a force that reminds you that there is still something worthwhile fighting for.

Sustainability in education, for me, confronts the field of business studies with the question of whether the knowledge that has been created in business schools still deserves salvation. If we agree that sustainability is about life on this planet (or what we violently tend to call resources), and if we agree that sustainability is also about responsibility towards our world, which is where the narrative tends to go in business education (PRME, 2022), we have to start by deciding 'whether we *love* the world enough to resume responsibility for it' (Arendt, 1958/2006, emphasis added). To Arendt, here is where education starts.

When we have decided on that and before starting to explore the potentiality of sustainability in business education, it is important to look deep into our current way of being and ask whether there is something within our current practices and theories that limits our possibility of moving forward. Martha Nussbaum (2000, p. 1005) calls this the 'tragic question',

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[25] To unlearn how I structured my own thinking around externalities, for example by going from 'on sustainability' to 'with sustainability' and from 'exploring the possibilities for sustainability integration' (as it could be external) to simply 'exploring the possibilities to feel sustainability in business education' which is always in the *reponse* to somthing (Haraway, 2016).

where we must address the conflicts in our literature, philosophy and everyday life, before we can go to the 'obvious question' of 'What shall we do?'.[26]

> In all situations of choice, we face a question that I call "the obvious question": what shall we do? But sometimes we also face, or should face, a different question, which I call "the tragic question": is any of the alternatives open to us free from serious moral wrongdoing? Discussing cases of tragic conflict from literature, philosophy, and contemporary life, I argue that it is valuable to face the tragic question where it is pertinent, because facing it helps us think how we might design a society where such unpalatable choices do not confront people, or confront them less often. Cost-benefit analysis helps us answer the obvious question; but it does not help us either pose or answer the tragic question, and it frequently obscures the presence of a tragic situation, by suggesting that the obvious question is the only pertinent question (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 1005).

In an ongoing academic debate withing the field of ESD, one criticism has been that sustainability is used as an 'orienting educational horizon of hope and change', but where the 'development' focus on 'what we should do' is hijacked by values of perpetual growth and consumption. Furthermore, the instrumental and normative nature of the word for (i.e., 'for something in particular') is also of concern. The environmental education scholar Bob Jickling claims that it even goes against the true essence of education, which he says should strive to prepare minds to create new ideas, not to follow a doctrine (Jickling & Wals, 2012). Bonnet (1999) addressed the issue as well by proposing the term 'education as sustainability' and describing sustainability in education more as a process or a frame of mind rather than a subject in itself. Stein et al. (2022, p. 274) take it further and, like Nussbaum, stress the vital importance of considering the violent and unsustainable nature of our modern modes of being, proposing going from 'education for sustainable development' to 'education for the end of the world as we know it'.

One of the many intentions of this thesis is to inspire new and different stories of sustainability in the field of business, where I have argued that

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[26] Donna Haraway (2016) suggest for us to learn to 'stay with the trouble', and which ideas about our response to 'the Capitlocene' I will inquire into later in the thesis.

the educational realm is an important starting point. We need a new frame of reference that is free from exploitative 'master narratives' (Barca, 2020) in which sustainability is an instrumental management idea in the service of competitive advantage and economic growth, with total ignorance of the *urgent* necessity of engagement with the problems and victims of the unsustainable system we are co-creating every day. Some would say that these new stories cannot be found among the 'masters' or 'exploiters', of which I and the educators in the elite business schools could be considered a part. However, Arendt convinced me that a person is not only one thing – either master or victim – and that there is a plurality within each and every person that needs to be connected and actualised in thinking, what she calls the *two-in-one* (Arendt, 2003, p. 90).

> *Though I am one*
> *I am two-in-one*
> *And there can be harmony*
> *Or disharmony*
> *With the self.*
> - Arendt (1965-1966/2003, p. 90)

In social science, this 'two-in-one' can be compared to what we tend to call 'different subject positions' within us that are either dominant or suppressed that forces a personality split (Nelson; Glynos & Howarth in Andersson, 2016, pp. 16; 69), if we forget to think (Arendt, 1971/2003). I started to wonder whether the business educators within these 'sustainability champion' elite business schools that generate proponents or functionaries of perpetual growth and consumption (Holmqvist, 2022; Rhodes and Pullen, 2023) could be hiding some other stories within them, close to their hearts, that could be worth excavating.

One finds an incredible evil within the sustainability issues of our time, characterised by anthropocentric domination, exploitation and violence in an age of racism, sexism, colonialism, terrorism and ecological degradation (Jackson, 2019). However, I agree with Arendt that it is hard to pinpoint how we can escape this because;

'The greatest evil is not radical; it has no roots, and because it has no roots it has no limitations, it can go to unthinkable extremes and sweep over the whole world […] in rootless evil there is no person left whom one could ever forgive' (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 95).

In order to work actively with one's own judgement around tragic questions and with sustainability as a 'frame of mind' (Bonnet, 1999) to help us 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway, 2016), a two-in-one inner dialogue with ourselves is necessary.[27] One can refuse to have this inner dialogue and still be a completely normal person, but it is in this dialogue that the special human quality is proven, a dialogue that enforces a perspective and opinion, something that far too many miss in business education, resulting in action without conviction, what Arendt calls 'fabrications' (Holt, 2020, p. 585).

How can we then think and move within this 'Zeitgeist' of this age then, that Haraway (2016), so brilliantly called *the Capitalocene* as an additional framing of what we tend to call *the Anthropocene*. What Haraway suggests instead is what she calls *Chthulucene* where she invites us on a journey with her 'leggy' spider (Pimoa Cthulhu) towards a time where all the inhabitants of the world, human and non-human can be chosen as our company to *think* with, not in spheres but in the in-between in 'interlaced trails' (p. 32) In this, what Haraway calls tentacular thinking towards the Chthulucene, one is always allowed to 'try out' and 'feel with'. Naming Chthulucene such a difficult name I interpret as intentional, making us become aware of how stuck we are in old ways of being and doing, talking, writing and reading. One beautiful attempt towards this kind of being *with*, I found when reading Valtonen and Pullen's (2020) *Writing with rocks,* where they inspire with their experiences of being with the non-human in their writing, collaboratively reflecting on what it does when we pay more attention to the entanglements of materiality. With rocks they became more 'situated, embodied, and intimate' (p. 507). They chose rocks as their company. Arendt (1965-66/2003) stresses that;

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[27] There is hardly no judgement in the 'sustainability as a trend' discourse that is strong within organisational theories. There we are just 'telling the world as it is'. Or are we? Could it be more powerful than that? A 'force of reproduction'? (Barca, 2020)

'[o]ut of the unwillingness or inability to choose one's examples and one's company, and out of the unwillingness or inability to relate to others through judgement, arise the real skandala, the real stumbling blocks which human powers cannot remove because they were or caused by human and humanly understandable motives. Therein lies the horror and, at the same time, the banality of evil (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 146).

The tragic question of this thesis lies in the evil of business education, what Arendt would call 'the banality of evil' (Arendt 1971/2003, p. 159) which she described not as a theory or a doctrine, but in fact:

[…] a phenomenon of evil deeds, committed on a gigantic scale, which could not be traced to any particularity of wickedness, pathology, or ideological conviction in the doer, whose only personal distinction was a perhaps extraordinary shallowness.

I took the idea of the banality of evil, and use evil as a metaphor to engage with the tragic questions within business education, with sustainability as a frame of mind. The 'banality of evil' guided me to educators in elite business schools, to the normal people that hold extreme power in their hands, graduating powerful decision makers, and to asking them about their thinking about sustainability. Asking them to put their thoughts to flesh. I asked many 'ways' until we came to the point that we could begin again. I tried to ask questions that would encourage them to connect to their plural self and their different subject positions, to engage with different perspectives within themselves, as well as to engage in dialogue with other educators, with questions such 'I am thinking this, what do you think?', in the same way I try to practice my writing as thinking and thinking as writing, between you and me. I believe that if we can address the 'masters' as persons and not as functions, we could get counter-stories to the Capitalocene. We reconnect.

Visiting the champions

I went on a journey to visit the 'Champions' of sustainability in the North, three business schools in Scandinavia that had promised to be world leaders in sustainability. This promise is made through the PRME Champions programme, with the mission 'to contribute to thought and action leadership on responsible management education in the context of the United Nations sustainable development agenda' (PRME, 2023). At the time of starting this inquiry, these three schools were the only business schools in Scandinavia that had pledge their commitment to sustainability transformation in this way. These schools are:

- Stockholm School of Economics
- Copenhagen Business School
- Hanken School of Economics

Business School	Country	Founded	Students
Stockholm School of Economics (SSE)	Sweden	1909	1,800
Copenhagen Business School (CBS)	Denmark	1917	20,188
Hanken School of Economics	Finland	1909	2,650

The Stockholm School of Economics has its origins in 1909 when it was founded by Swedish business leaders and academics. In the beginning the school relied on 'chambers of commerce and industry, municipalities, and wealthy business benefactors for financial support' (Engwall, 1992/2009, p. 31). The school was established with the aim of bringing a new level of expertise to Sweden's business and economic sectors with German business schools as role models (*Handelshochshulen*). Now, it is one of the leading higher institutions in Sweden.

Founded as well in 1909 in Helsinki, Hanken School of Economics has similar roots. It is a Swedish speaking business school that became a part of the higher education system in 1927. It has Campuses both in Helsinki

and Vasa and is now the only private business schools in Finland with strong focus on international relationships (Hanken, 2023).

Initially established in 1917, Copenhagen Business School, in Denmark, became a higher education institution in 1965. Over the years, it has evolved into a leading European business school and has played a pivotal role in shaping Denmark's business landscape and contributing to the global business community (CBS, 2023). Unlike SSE and Hanken, CBS is a public institution. However, CBS still has educational programs dedicated to large Danish multinational companies and thus even though it is public it has close relationships to industry. CBS is furthermore, noticeably much larger than the other two business schools.

My intention with this inquiry is not to compare these institutions, but rather I see them as a viable context to explore sustainability in business education. Their powerful elite status and close relationship to large industries drove my curiosity towards them: Who are these people working here and how can their education be sustainable? These schools all have Nordic roots and Scandinavia has been known for values of welfare, solidarity and care. This makes some people feel that sustainability is inherent in their way of doing education. In the *Nordic Chapter* of a book that PRME published recently called *Responsible management education: the PRME global movement* Nonet et al. (2021, p. 183) phrase it like this;

> Even though there are important similarities within the Nordic countries (welfare states with universal access to healthcare and free education, for example) emphasis on sustainability differs between schools. Some schools emphasize "responsible management" based on strong research environments in related disciplines whereas other schools with strong research environments in other disciplines emphasize "sustainability" in more general terms. This somewhat different language simply acknowledges the diverse nature and the notion of both "responsible management" and "sustainability." The introduction of the SDGs has somewhat shifted the focus from a more conceptual discussion to one more focused on delivering impact.

In the chapter they emphasise Nordic values such as 'shared notions of responsibility and sustainability' and 'long relational histories within the individual schools' (p. 183). However, even though all the schools I visited had various initiatives related to sustainability, under the framing of 'global

challenges' and/or 'global responsibility', in the form of introductory days or entire programs that run in parallel with the 'traditional curricula', all of them simultaneously have their fundamental roots in economics and finance with strong focus on growth and globalisation.

Figure 2 – Corridor SSE (own picture)
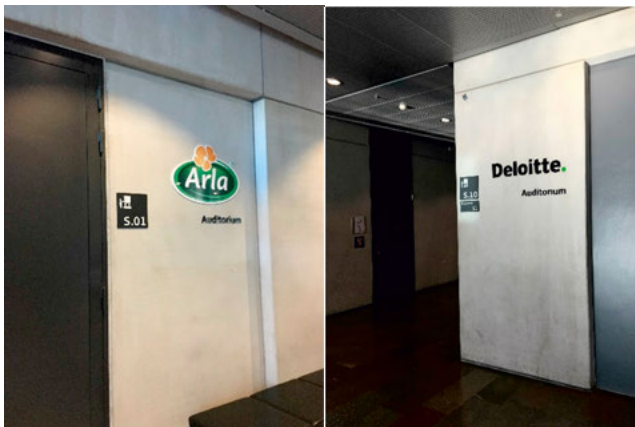
Figure 3 – Classrooms CBS (own picture)

Figure 4 – Hanken School of Economics (own picture)

The schools are what is often called 'elite' schools (Homlqvist, 2022), where students can enjoy 'wine tasting, dinners and art sessions' (SSE, 2020, November 2), along with guaranteed connections to multinational corporations. Most of their graduates end up in the private sector in countries around the world (CBS, 2023) – 'in Stockholm, in London, in Frankfurt, in Shanghai' (SSE, 2018, December 10). Students are prepared not only 'for their first job' but also for their 'future career', and to create 'new ideas, new products, new markets and new business models', with a 'huge focus on being innovated and entrepreneurial' (SSE, 2018, December 10). The world is their oyster, where close links to 'the most important companies' present their students with 'real-life cases' to 'analyse and solve'. These establishments are 'home to successful start-ups like Spotify and leading corporations like Ericsson' (Mattia Biachi in SSE, 2018, December 10), with classrooms named after Arla, Ericsson and Deloitte, and with Hans Wegner chairs in the halls. These elite business schools promise to give their students the 'best qualification to launch a global career' (Hanken School of Economics, 2023, September 15) – Welcome to conquer the world.

I wrote my master's thesis on PRME in Sweden (Eiríksdóttir & Engelmark, 2016). In the master thesis we interviewed deans that had decided to commit to sustainability and that told us that we should actually

be talking to educators, because our questions were aimed towards the actual education.

However, before I engaged with the business educators in this inquiry, I read PRME reports and took a PRME PhD courses that focused much on governance models, how to increase 'competitive advantage' through responsibility, as well as how to raise the 'sustainability profile'. The course was held in all the three countries I had intended to do my study. Aalto University in Finland, Stockholm University in Sweden, and Copenhagen Business School in Denmark. We were presented with technical solutions such as *industrial symbiosis,* to learn how companies could work together to manage their waste properly. We were taught sustainability transition models to understand how we could get innovations through different levels of governance. We got visits from Stockholm Resilience Centre to tell us more about how the earth is actually falling apart, and how we could solve it with science, which our teacher tried to balance out by jumping on the table and play a song for us on his guitar.

The PRME reports had a similar tone, stressing the importance of reporting, convincing us that engaging with sustainability is worth it because research show that CEOs that get 'caught' in unethical behaviour often get fired (Morsing, 2017 [SSE, PRME report]). With time the business school world was actually getting better, where the focus was on showing 'best case' scenarios (Morsing, 2022). 'Competitive advantage' was becoming 'cooperative advantage', schools had transformational plans of curriculum change and pedagogical development. Some were asking students to 'take an oath' as a sense of professional obligation to serve society, and others had worked with the idea of 'business for society' which requires 'a dramatic shift in strategy'. Yes, PRME was 'cautiously optimistic' because growing number of leaderships in business schools and the ecosystem of ranking were directing their attention to reorientation of leadership education (Morsing, 2022). During my years of research, much has changed and now sustainability is finally a part of business education.

At the same time, PRME (2022) also provided space for the educators to speak freely about their thoughts in form of blogs, what is called PRME-Time. Here the educators truly put their thoughts to flesh and the tone

was totally different, with headlines like: 'we are educating leaders for the future that will not exist', 'why are elite management journals silent on issues that matter', 'why we are doing climate communication all wrong', 'why are business schools killing our planet' and 'winning the war within: radically reimagining management education's relation'. It was here I first felt a wound that needed care and attention. The world was definitely not getting better, and the educators were screaming for help 'behind the scenes.' I wanted the inquiry to speak with these voices. The supressed 'otherness' in the educators had to become part of research.

Towards the 'flesh and blood' of business education

Now it was time to talk to actual educators in these schools in order to initiate conversations around these concerns. I used PRME, merely as a pretext to get in contact with 'sustainability' educators, educators that I knew had been confronted on the topic. This is of importance, because studying responsibility in education requires that we study the people – the flesh and blood – within the organisation (Arendt, 1965-66/2003). Not as a function, organisation or a system but a more mysterious thinking being that we tend to see as 'never fully elucidated incarnation' of reality and more as a 'fictious' being of perceptions which are not 'easily dispelled "errors of the past"' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 47). These 'fictious' beings of education are the educators, that even though they cannot easily be dispelled or elucidated as we expect, they are what Arendt would call 'the most authentic semblance of the thinking activity itself' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 47), because they are the education made to flesh.

First, I met with nineteen business educators for individual dialogues, for approximately 1 hour each. As I have mentioned before, I wanted to address people that I knew had been exposed to my phenomena of sustainability in business education (even though it differed how much the educators had thought about sustainability). I looked up educators that were teaching on the subject of sustainability or CSR and once in the loop, I asked around for others who might be interesting to talk to. The first individual encounter with the educators was meant to set the scene with general questions about sustainability education and how they thought and felt about it. Most of the time, the discussion turned into dark and cynical

stories about the inherent conflicts between sustainability and business. The wound stared bleeding. Our conversations emerged quickly into existential conversation about domination or disappearance, and I felt a strong sense of ontological insecurity. The second part consists of three group dialogues within each school, with educators that felt it was worth it to take the conversation further. The meetings were approximately 2-3 hours long and each group contained around 3-4 educators, where I wanted them to open up and discuss their own thoughts in relation to their education and sustainability. Here is where the focus became on the dialogue *between us*. I will not separate these empirical parts in my analysis because how I approached them is not based on a certain method, but rather the focus will be on what they expressed both individually and together in conversations with other colleagues. All in all, this makes about 25 hours of interviews, 300 pages and 150.000 words of transcription. I am not sure why that matters, but it is something I am told you have to write in a proper research thesis. What makes this meaningful to me, however, is the generous participation of the educators and the opportunity I got to engage with them in different times throughout all these years.

I got to know all these educators (through reading their thoughts over and over again), heard their stories and their openings to this world. I transcribed all their words myself to get them smoothly running through my veins, in hope to find something worth to say and add to the conversation around sustainability in business education. Now, my story will never be separated from theirs. So even though I have formally set some boundaries to my context, I can never ignore my real and own context where everyday life inspires my empirical work and is in a way empirical in itself. I include what I hear from my colleagues, I include pictures I take that makes me develop my thinking around my phenomena. I use my reflection notes from when I was in the business schools and in conferences, my reflection notes in all the books I read, my transcription reflection notes of what I think when I listen. My teaching and conversations with student. The world and everything that happens around me shapes my next sentence. To list a few of these encounters, they include;

- Individual interviews at Hanken, SSE and CBS (2018-2019)
- Group interviews at Hanken, SSE and CBS (2019-2020)
- Individual interviews through Zoom at Hanken, SSE and CBS (2022)
- PRME PhD course at Stockholm University, CBS and Aalto university, in Finland (2018)
- Notes from academic business conferences on sustainability at Hanken (2018)
- Notes from academic business conferences on sustainability at Fekis, The Swedish Academy of Business and Management (2022)
- Reflections in my own two-in-one conducted with diaries, post-it notes, mind-maps, voice recordings, posters and other ways of *remembering.*
- A master course I have developed, based on this inquiry called *Business, society and nature: Reflective inquiry* where I experiment with educational *thinking* spaces and where students practice their staying in uncertainty.
- Slow reading as a method

I am always empirical. When I read, write, talk, think, speak.

My inquiry became about connecting the two wounds that were slowly appearing, in the friction of sustainability and business on the one hand, and thinking and critique on the other. The educators had indirect insights to how to take care of these wounds, because they felt them as well.

I quickly realised that the educators also had matters of concern that they so generously gave time to share and discuss with me. These were real people with real feelings. In the next essay I will go through what I encountered in this inquiry, but also tell you what you are about to *encounter* with all this.

Essay III: The encounters – post qualitative inquiry through essayistic writing

Post qualitative inquiry
does not exist prior to its arrival;
it must be created,
invented anew
each time.
For that reason,
there can be no post qualitative
"research design"

- St. Pierre (2019a, p.9).

I want to introduce what you are about to encounter, and how I went about engaging with these broad questions that I have presented you with. In this essay, I will emphasise six encounters within this research process that are important to understand. I started this research with big questions that only became bigger with time: from what sustainability in business education is to what sustainability in education could be, and towards conceptualising the taken-for-granted and mysterious, yet fundamental aspect of sustainability in higher education, *thinking*, which became a vital aspect of this thesis, both in terms of *how* I did my research and *why*. The process then turned into an urgent call for business education to connect differently to the world, and the process became unstoppable. It was almost uncontrollable. Therefore, it was such a relief when I got to know about the post-qualitative approach and it became easier for me to stay with the trouble. This approach helped me to understand that the big questions had a purpose beyond my curiosity.

Post qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2019a; Kopnina, 2021) inspired me to back off from trying to find a definition for sustainability in my 'semi-structured' interviews that needed to follow all kinds of rules and design for them to be 'valid' for the sake of the truth of sustainability in education. Rather the inquiry became a trial to see what might happen if I allowed the research process to flow in different directions, guided by the broad questions that I carried in my mind. Kopnina (2021) stresses that the exploration of sustainability in business education rarely engages with

posthuman or earth-bound human relational spaces, for it tends to get stuck in 'closed loop' systematic techno-economic answers, where it becomes hard to engage with *difference*. I started an experiment in poststructuralism based on recommendations from Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2021) that follows a certain 'ontology of immanence', where we allow ourselves to begin the inquiry by rethinking what it means to be a living being in a world plagued by crises. Reading Arendt provided me with different assumptions about the human condition, beyond homo economicus, homo faber or whatever 'homo' that has showered off morality, and her conceptualizations allowed me to wonder how responsibility and judgements in business education could become more present. There was no other way to start the research process. Sustainability is simply too complex to design and explore according to simple rules or methods. Responsibility and judgement happen in *thinking,* according to Arendt. You approach the human being before a bewildered attachment towards a field or an identity, with the simple question of 'What are we doing?' (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 5).

Similarly, the concept of sustainability came into being as a result of asking this very same question. In the 1970s, we began to realise that we, human beings[28], were actually responsible for the world's environmental and socio-economic problems, and that we needed to start to become differently (UN, 1972; Swim, Clayton & Howard, 2011). At this time, the idea of 'progress' as a legacy of the Industrial Revolution started to be seriously questioned, and a clear causality between economic growth and environmental destruction and inequality became obvious (Pisani, 2006; Kopnina, 2020). Yet today, the focus on 'progress' – not least in academia – has in practice never been greater (Hil et al., 2021; Fleming et al, 2021).

What are we doing?

With a huge handbook on qualitative research methods by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) on my desk, which I had inherited from a retired colleague, I tried to make sense of what I was doing and how I could move forward. *Method.* What is a research method? It quickly became obvious to me that

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[28] Some more than others; see press release from Oxfam (2022, November 7) about their findings that billionaires actually emit a million times more greenhouse gases than the average person.

method was about getting control of your phenomenon. 'A scheme' conducted with 'an intellectual discipline' that evokes the idea of 'systematic arrangement, order', so I interpret the definition as in the Oxford English Dictionary (in Alhadeff-Jones, 2013, p. i). 'Order'! This idea of order became a problem for me, when exploring a complex phenomenon such as sustainability in business education, because these Cartesian principles (about evidence, disjunction, linear causality and enumeration) had it as their main goal to reduce complexity (Le Moigne & Alhadeff-Jones in Alhadeff-Jones, 2013). The idea of order in methods remained unchallenged, like the idea of progress, until the early 1970s that later blurred business with diverse paradigms such as (de)constructivism, post-positivism, phenomenology, critical theory and feminist theory to name a few (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). 'Research became more reflexive and called into questions the issues of gender, class, and race' (Alhadeff-Jones, 2013, p. ii). I started to read more into reflexive methodologies, mostly in a book by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018) precisely named *Reflexive Methodologies,* where I tried to learn to be creative and original – in a stepwise process. Exhaustively trying to be 'interesting' and not 'dull' for Murray S. Davis (1971) to show a 'character of greatness' (p. 309), which I was not ready to understand at the time, because I only wanted to be important. Davis proposes that interesting research is only when you are able to deny various aspects of conventional structures. It was hard for me to see, in the beginning of this research process, what was conventional and what was not, because it seemed that the 'unconventional' had become the most conventional there is, because everyone needed to be special and unique but at the same time play along with the system. Perhaps sustainability in education was not a very interesting topic after all. 'So what? Who cares?' (Davis, 1971, p. 344).

Well, I care. Sustainability is important at least, which should be equally emphasised to interesting. The world we are aligning to in business education is a terrible and unsustainable world. 'We are creating some life that nobody wants', as Estrid disturbingly expressed in a group discussion with me and her colleagues at Stockholm School of Economics (SSE). I understand that sustainability is not important as an empty signifier, as Harald at Hanken School of Economics phrased it. It needs to become a *responsive*

to the world. From control to care. It sounds nice, but how to embody it in research?

Being essayistic is one way, because it allows me to try new ways of being with research that does not require that I know the answer before I start to 'write them down' or 'report them'. It is a trial, an endeavour, a prose composition (Boulous Walker, 2017). First and foremost, it allows for time to *respond* and the attention needed to *listen* (Bickford, 2018). I have not always been successful at applying this 'slowness' during this inquiry. I got sad, lost in despair that returned to hope, in constant negotiation. You will find hasty judgements, that land in slower reconciliation somewhere else. This inquiry has taken years, and each moment I sit down and write, I am a different person. I have not only discovered wounds, but this thesis has also been like one big open wound. I have tried to take care of it the best I could.

And now, I slowly invite you into my post-qualitative trials.

Encounter I – From control to care through poetic inquiry

> *The state of the world calls out for poetry to save it.*
> (Ferlinghetti in Kostera and Straub, 2022, p. 187)

When I became convinced that sustainability needed to be treated as a frame of mind and not as a thing or a theory it was more difficult to approach it with the urgency that I felt was needed. Urgencies are often treated with hasty judgements that do not have time to mature. However, while reading Haraway (2016) I started to see that perhaps I could stay with urgency in a different way. Urgencies namely have other temporalities than *emergencies*. It is another kind of feeling of response, because it is concerned with the present and not something that is approaching and not yet. This distinction makes us realise that sustainability issues are happening now, not only in the future. It makes it easier to stay with the troubles and approach them in presence. I try to stay with the urgency in two ways. One way, is to use concepts that allow for more urgency. I decided to take concepts from my readings that I felt described a more urgent reality. I

use for example *evil* to analyse instead of 'risks' or 'negative impacts'. Furthermore, I use *love* instead of 'opportunities' or 'entrepreneurship', because, like Arendt (1958/2018, p. 242; 1965-66/2003, p. 95) I see those concepts as still being 'apolitical' forces that can be merged with our earth-bound political nature of natality. Evil and love are rather a consequence of our earth-bound relationships; evil when we forget that relationship to the earth, and love when we remember. But concepts in post-qualitative inquiry are not the same as we call them when we are in 'conventional social science inquiry' (St. Pierre, 2019a, p. 7), where we *apply* concepts. Deleuze and Guattari (in St. Pierre, 2019a, p. 7) call it 'concepts of concept', where you can read your way into writing, with concepts that do not close of an experience with a particular data that has been collected and where thought becomes a frozen image, but when you use concepts for new concepts and questions to emerge.

To do this, one needs to give the process time to *listen* and be *listened to* (Bickford, 2018) and not get stuck in explaining or answering with an 'anxiety to know' (Boulous Walker, 2017, p. 58). I use poetic inquiry to give space for this attention. Poetic inquiry suggests no straightforward recipe but rather opens up to questions and negotiations of what we know about the world (Kostera and Straub, 2022). Poetic format offers slow philosophy to be with judgements that are not hasty or a final verdict but rather hesitant and in-between, where content becomes a glimpse of our reflections. Luban (in his interpretation of Arendt, 1983) argues that even though poetics is not a 'scientific method' it is still the closest you can get of '"mastering" the past' of 'no more' that leads to a present of 'not yet.' As you read, I will be trying to resist the 'fear of immense' that St. Pierre, 2019a, p. 4) calls 'the fear of the unpredictable not yet.' One way is to put my dialogues I have had and quotes that I have read into my writing, in a poetic format when I feel it is necessary to engage slowly with it. When I do this, my intention is to invite you to a slower judgement – by asking you; 'I am thinking this, what do you think.'

While engaging in dialogues with business educators around sustainability, most of them mentioned that the nature of complexity within the concept was troublesome. *'We do not have time'*, both when it comes to giving sustainability a worthy time in their business education, but also because many

felt that the world was falling apart already. In the midst of this inquiry, I began to see however that the ambiguity and complexity around sustainability as an idea, that we did not have time for, might not be the biggest problem when trying to include it in education. Rather, it seemed to be exactly the opposite: that the call for sustainability in higher education curriculum could as well be the very consequence of the fact that we constantly try to reduce the world into fields for other ends, so we get time along with our anxiety to know. And even though the vagueness of the concept of sustainability is often the reason why it has been hard to integrate it within education (Dixon & Fallon, 1989; Bansal & Song, 2017), we might rather need to start to find new ways to be *with* sustainability, beyond strategic- and solutions-oriented ways of being that reduces sustainability to an instrument of linearity (Flyvbjerg 2001; 2004; 2006), where sustainability is turned into a total oxymoron.

In my conversations with educators, the attention quickly turned to the pressure that the academic system puts on them to 'stay focused', with a narrow sense of being, in order to be able to publish in top journals or to get tenure. In her PhD thesis, *The Responsible Business Person,* Pernilla Andersson (2016) studied how business education tends to reduce the individual to '*homo economicus*', where ambiguity about the human conditions is left behind and the nature of morals, which is a preordained to the process of engaging with the idea of sustainability, is watered out in *echo* instead of a process of *response.* This represents a loss in the quality of our relationship to the world, where we are 'response-able' to it (Haraway, 2016).

In this loss of quality in the infinite diversity of this world (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 20), the human condition of plurality that is actually the very essence of the world (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 76), all of a sudden becomes surprising, and instead of *responding* to that, we try to *echo* in identity with our categorisations and control. In Arendt's considerations on *thinking* and its relevance to the world*,* she stresses what she calls the biggest crisis of our modern ways of being, namely our 'fashionable search for identity' instead of *difference* (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 184). Deleuze and Guattari called a similar shift 'a specifically European disease' (St. Pierre, 2019a, p. 4), marked by obsession with 'I am' or 'what *is',* which however will most likely be something else tomorrow.

Because of this, when ideas around sustainability enter fields that are obsessed with identity, we become part of a technical life form[29] that ignores 'different possible ways of being' (Heidegger, 1953/2010, p. 10). Andersson (2016) points out that if sustainability is taken seriously, this ambiguity that it creates in the field of business, because of its obsession with identity, does not have to be a problem but rather can facilitate a dislocation of discourses that can 'create opportunities for something different and better' which then 'open up new ways of thinking and acting in business and business education' (Andersson, 2016, pp. 17-18).

How can I be differently with research about sustainability education to find ways to reconcile with the world, and not only describe it?

'We cannot do this on our own' was a common refrain among the educators. The world 'out there' is crazy, it is 'falling apart', Harald and Frode indicated to me when we sat down in a meeting room at Hanken School of Economics, along with Sif, to try to collectively understand what we are responding to when we teach sustainability. In my meetings with these educators who taught business and sustainability in various ways, it was mainly the world out there that was described as dangerous, uncontrollably evil. When I encouraged them to stay with business education before cynically distancing themselves from 'the world out there', many of them started to describe a development within their schools that they felt might be the biggest threat to an engagement with sustainability.

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[29] See discussions about homo faber as a technical way of being in, for example, Hannah Arendt (1958/2018), Hans Jonas (1984) and Heidegger (1953/2010).

There is a lot of pressure,
publication pressure,
to isomorphise
with our international landscape
as a research institute
that particularly aligns to the silo mentality
when we should be trying to
broaden the landscape.

-Sif, business educator

The 'bad management theories' were not necessarily the biggest problem anymore.

I have not been training my critical mind enough recently,
which is weird because I am a researcher,
but I feel like research today is going in the opposite direction,
in many ways,
with all the publishing,
so I feel like I have lost some of my critical ability
I have been falling asleep throughout the years.

-   Gunhild, business educator

Alvesson and Sandberg (2013) stress this issue about the pressure of publishing and are concerned, for example, with how PhD students 'get clear rules for how to operate their careers. At the same time, all suffer in various ways from the constraints' (p. 138). Luckily, I did not have this problem – yet. But how to allow for a broader landscape to engage with the complexity of sustainability. Perhaps we need not only a 'broader' landscape to 'work the ruins' (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 163) but begin again because the ontologies become incompatible. This St. Pierre (2021) calls post qualitative inquiry.

I myself started to take this question around methodology seriously in the context of my own research process, making an attempt to dislocate learned methods of being with research. I had the freedom to do so. It would have been a shame to not use it.

I think all of us are aware
that we are contributing
to the very system
we criticise.
How do we deal with that contradiction?
I spend a lot of time myself,
thinking about
my role in the profession,
how it contributes to
and maintains
the system
a system clearly built on
modes of exploitation
We willingly contribute to,
maintain
develop
these mechanisms
we say:
well, we must!
like it is our destiny
I think it is fairly,
fairly pathetic
These norms
have been created by ourselves

- Harald, business educator

For me, the educators were not 'them' anymore. It was us. How were we going to resist this destruction of the possibility for sustainability? I could not just write a thesis about others' needs and struggles of resistance. The thesis needed to embody resistance as well, not to *the other*, but *together with the other*. Boulous Walker (2017) convinced me that slow resistance 'against the institution' (which is the subtitle of her book *Slow* Philosophy) is a way to instead of supressing 'all forms of otherness' (p. 58), you work on including *them* within your own perspective. Similarly, Arendt stresses that in becoming 'We' with *the other*, action is always engaged in changing our *common* world. (1971/1978, p. 200). However, when the institution itself has become

a matter of concern we tend to pay attention to where 'thought is reduced by a mere instrument' (Boulous Walker, 2017, p. 61)
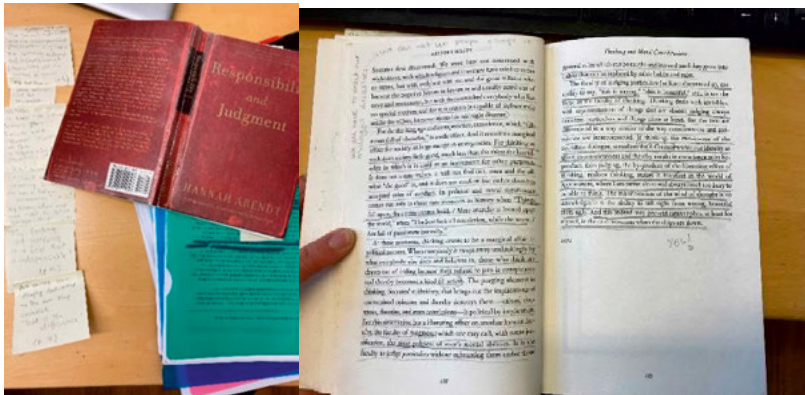
<div align="right">Figure 5 - When underlining loses its meaning</div>

Slow reading with colleagues

Slow reading is one way to work against the instrumental. I feel a relief in reading. It gives time for uncertainty and the out-of-order. When I give text time and I read it over and over again, slowly, I see new, every time, up to a point where underlining loses its meaning. New things become important while I am entangled with the ever-changing environment. I am lucky in my research environment where I get to learn the *The art of reading slowly* (Dahl & Helin, 2023). Jenny, my supervisor, and Matilda our colleague, have infused our educational environments with spaces for *attention,* where we reflect together (with students as well) about what it takes to *imagine the other* and be together in education in a sense that there becomes no need for an alibi - with pretending or already educated judgements. We are simply becoming together. In this way, we are not producers and students are not costumers but rather something you become *with* in research. Books are not a commodity to 'get through with,' they are there when you need them, like good friends. I cannot begin to describe my fortune to be in an environment where vulnerability and attention becomes more important than measuring outputs or the anxiety of knowing (Dahl, Guillet de Monthoux & Helin, 2022). I am told that when this thesis is published, those times are over for me. The question becomes, how to resist the institution that tells you to be otherwise? I found comfort in Boulous Walker book she calls *Slow philosophy: Reading against the institution*

that has inspired the essayistic ways of writing this thesis and I will discuss further in next Essay no. III that I call *The encounters.*

Materialising thoughts
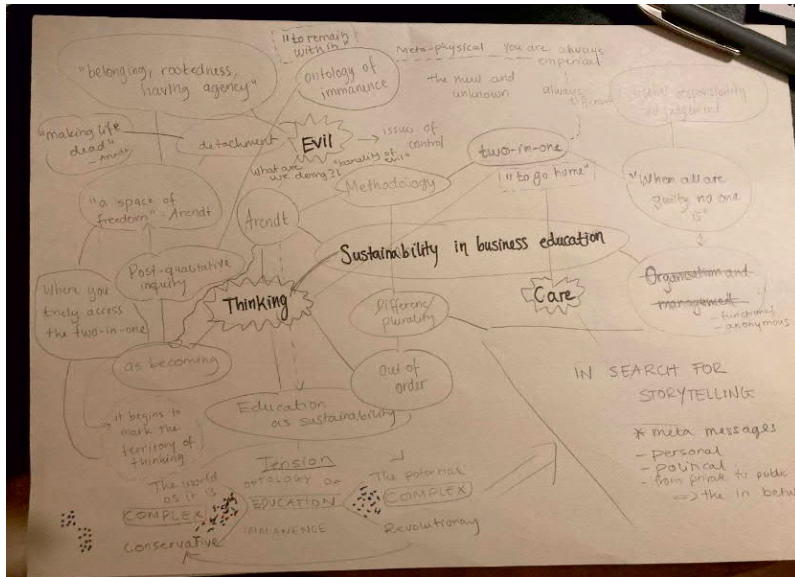
Figure 6 - Putting thought on paper (own picture)

With the broad questions I carried with me, it became important to capture my thoughts on paper. These pictures remind me of my passionate belief and hope in business education, and where *evil, thinking* and *love* (that I first called care which later I found had too many interpretations to stay on point with the one-world ontology that I was emerging into), all became a part of my perspective and created the frame of analysis.
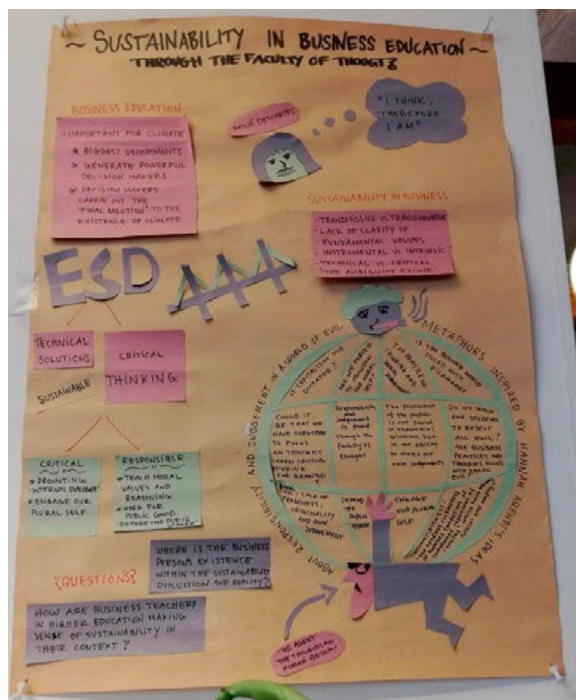
Figure 7 - A poster made with the help of my husband the night before my first conference, called *Climate Exitance,* held in Sigtuna, Sweden.

With the educators, I explained, that I was interested in their opening to this world, about their own *thinking* about the world. I also asked them about their feelings towards the conflicts and the debate on the issue, issues I have traced in this essay. I asked them about their perception of a *business person,* inspired by Pernilla Andersson's (2016) phrasing in her doctoral dissertation about *The Responsible Business Person,* and how they personally connected to that idea. I asked them about how they see sustainability and its 'grand entrance' into their field. I asked them what they thought was missing and what they thought needed to be added to enable a more sustainable development in business education. I asked them about themselves, their own entry to the business school and how they became functionary within it, with inspiration from Arendt (1965-1966/2003, pp. 57-58) that convinced be that to be able to engage in a conversation about responsibility the questions have to go from how the system functions, to

why people became functionaries in those organisations. I wanted them to share their hopes and worries, their dreams and experiences. All this is done based on the assumption that in creating space for *thinking*, one can create something new and meaningful that can be connected to responsibility for our common world instead of *explaining* away responsibility with descriptions of the destined system.

> *The trouble is*
> *that few thinkers ever told us*
> *what made them think*
> *and even fewer*
> *have cared to describe*
> *and examine*
> *their thinking experience*
>
> (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 168).

What is worth to know? What is worth to teach? What do we care for taking care of? These questions cannot be attached to science or organisations but only to individuals, the real flesh and blood that empower the essence of business schools, education and research, in the context of business and sustainability.

As I have emphasised before, Arendt stresses the need to create a space within us and among us to 'stop and think'. *Thinking* is done in solitude, within yourself where you theorise and connect things in a *two-in-one* discussion with 'me and myself' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 184). She believed that if we finally allow our plural self to flourish, with all our complex and often contradictory opinions, we are able to be more rooted in our ways of living and contributing to the common world, which is necessary in a world filled with harmful sustainability challenges. She explains the plurality like this:

> Even though I am one, I am not simply one. I have a self and I am related to this self as my own self. This self is by no means an illusion; it makes itself heard by talking to me – I talk to myself, I am not only aware of myself – and in this sense, though I am one, I am two-in-one and there can be harmony and disharmony with the self. If I disagree with people I can walk away; but I cannot walk away from myself, and therefore I better first try to be in agreement with myself before I take all others in to consideration (Arendt, 1965-1966/2003, p. 90)

Thinking is, however, not enough to take moral action towards renewing the common world. There is where practicing *judgement* becomes important, done with others when we reconcile to the reality that Arendt called 'the web' of human relationships which she described as an *in-between* space 'no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common' (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 183). Here Arendt stresses the fact that our judgements are constantly being formed and shaped by others but her theorising is also a response through her concerns that we tend to forget this and rather build our opinions to be frozen and explained. Together, the self-dialogue that we have in the solitude of our *two-and-one,* but often forget to listen to, transforms into 'a more broadly shared public or common interest' (Smith, 2001, p. 72) and constitutes an 'enlarge mentality […] where they think in the place of everybody else' (Kant in Arendt, 1954/2006, p. 217). This opening to the world Arendt rooted in the Greek ancient word *doxa* where the assumption is that the world opens up differently to every [wo]man (Arendt, 1990, p. 81) but cultivates through the faculty of judgement, that is done with others, whereby the opinion can both be expended and tested by others through interaction with other opinions. This, Arendt said helped you in the becoming of a complete human being in connection to the world (Arendt in Smith, 2001, p. 68).

> Thinking and remembering is the human way of striking roots, of taking one's place in the world, as we all arrive as strangers. What we usually call a person or a personality, as distinguished from a mere human being or a nobody, actually grows out of this root-seeking process of thinking (Arendt, 2003, p. 100).

The educators all raised great concerns about the ambiguity of sustainability as a concept. They had nothing to grab on to. It was 'an empty signifier'

as Harald at Hanken phrased it. Something that is only taught on the fifth year as a side note of something that is not a part of the fundamentals, like Gudrun at CSB indicated. Colourful boxes of 17 contradicting development goals, where 'all can relate' and take pictures with, to put on Instagram. A method to make it easier for the students, as Karl at SSE proudly noted, his eyes still showing his awareness of how short we had come.

You know we have boxes, have you seen those?
We bought 50x50 cm boxes for each Sustainable Development Goal.
The students can all relate.
We ask people to pick up one of those boxes and say something about it and then we take a picture.
It is easy and colourful.

- Karl, business educator

With a certain understanding for why educators have a hard time coping with the complexity, it is important that we start to realise that the ambiguity around sustainability has nothing to do with the problems that it seeks to respond to. That has been quite clear and obvious since the 1970s, and now it has become clear how it affects equality and equity (Oxfam, 2020). Now, it does not matter any longer how much more research we do about 'possible' consequences of climate change because it is already here. If we do not simultaneously start to engage with how we can become differently, there will be no secure research environment anyways when the world is burning and glaciers are smelting. Like Gunhild "Ninis" Rosqvist (2021), professor in geography at Stockholm University, explained in a 'SummerTalk' in Swedish National Radio, when she describes the feeling of her 'workplace' melting beneath her feet, while she measures how fast glaciers are disappearing. Natural Science have done their job around climate change (that is one aspect of sustainability troubles), now it is time to engage with how we can become and connect differently in relation to the Earth. The ambiguity around sustainability issues emerges in the reflection of what will become when and if we decide to be different, and this decision will never be made with easy and colourful tools. It is not 'necessarily a pleasurable process' (Andreotti in Chayne, 2022, January 4th).

Here is where *thinking* as a research method plays a crucial role in studying a phenomenon such as sustainability, because it starts a process of commitment with urgent attention towards a specific phenomenon close to heart. This however requires a level of undecidability about how the research design will emerge, allowing for the nature of ambiguity and complexity of what might be coming to be, and leaving behind already made structures that legitimise the world as it is. A world that is melting. According to Arendt, *thinking* makes no constrictions dedicated to the world as it is where thoughts of yesterday are only to satisfy the need to think them anew (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 163). Thinking becomes the *research design*.

Encounter II – Staying in the 'questionableness'

As you have likely already realised, I allow this text to be guided by my rhetorical questionings as an attempt to invite you, the reader, into my own thinking, my own two-in-one. The questions that you encounter throughout this thesis guide the inquiry but could not be considered 'the main research questions', in a traditional way. I use them to carry my arguments in a way that allows the thesis to stay open, right here, right now. Questions, as opposed to answers or convictions, give us the opportunity to dance around the phenomena of sustainability in business education, with our own experiences. This is an attempt to allow for a diverse grounding and create a collaborative space in-between the writer and the reader, in between you and I. Here, the concept of sustainability is used as a meeting point for a conversation about 'the good business education', with special attention to our common world that is under extreme threat.

What sustainability has brought to business education is a certain process of 'responsibilisation' that often loses sight of these threats, due to the counteracting process of 'neoliberalisation' that is fiercely loyal to consumer culture and economic growth. This duality calls for a research approach that is 'strongly subjectivist', relying on our singular interpretations of 'what is going on in the courses at hand' and then on 'confronting our different interpretations with each other to achieve more robust analysis and reflections' (Fougère & Solitander, 2023, p. 402). Arendt (1971/2003, p. 184) writes that these 'singular' and unique interpretation will together

contribute to plurality. 'I am inevitably two-in-one' she writes, when we finally get the time to think in solitude, because there we get time to investigate others' perspectives that are absent from ours. Thinking is the only place where we can get in touch with what is absent. When we do not think we are too busy 'staying on the job'.

Arendt describes a 'consumer society' as a place where everything we do becomes about 'making a living' and points out, already in the year of 1958, that the professions that could challenge this way of being have decreased rapidly (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 126-127). She names artists as the only ones left of those professions and as a result, everything else is just put under 'playfulness' (p. 127).

Sustainability in business education is a challenging topic because it questions this way of being. Are we people only human resources, that compete for other resources? Sustainability becomes about curating the human condition in ways that allow us to be sustainable, because the time of exploitation must be over. Sustainability requires us to explore matters related to our being and becoming in the world in ways that perhaps cannot yet be put into words.

I cannot go on stage here and say
'OK! Listen! What we are going to do today is to question capitalism!'
Because the first thing people are going to ask is,
what do I suggest instead?
I do not have an alternative or a vocabulary for that.
But I feel really strongly for it.

-   Harald, business educator

When doing research on topics such as sustainability, that challenge the very core of our ways of being in the world, of being in business, but also remind us of the not yet or ever-changing with its foundation of 'response-ability' (Haraway, 2016), it is important to acknowledge that writing is thinking and thinking is writing (St. Pierre, 2019a). This thesis thus does not become 'a book' to read from the beginning to an end, but neither to look for answers. This book should not be consumed, but rather used to

seek inspiration when struggling to connect with sustainability and thus with the common world in education.

Writing as thinking allows for emergence, and the 'logic' of emergence takes a form of Prigonian[30] bifurcation, which Osberg (2010, p. 167) calls a 'moment of freedom' that she describes is a moment of undecidability. In those moments lies the responsibility of caring for the future in education, in non-utilitarian ways.

> When the path is clear and given, when a certain knowledge opens up the way in advance, the decision is already made, it might as well be said there is none to make (Derrida in Osberg, 2010, p. 164).

'Thought does not need a method' (Deleuze & Guattari in St. Pierre, 2019b, p. 2), but method can shut down thought. Deleuze and Guattari warn us that methodologies can create a 'dogmatic image of thought' (in St Pierre, 2019a, p. 5) that focuses on the conditions of possible experience instead of looking for conditions under which something new can arise.

This thesis carries no promise of truth. It is important to remember that it is at best an attempt to inspire towards becoming *with* sustainability through education. The search for sustainability in business education is a search for a relationship to a world where drastic climate and socio-economic crises surround us. Might we have lost sight of this relationship through our technical ways of being? (Jonas, 1984; Arendt, 1954/2006a; 1958/2018; Heidegger, 1953/2010). When looking into the historical roots of the concept of sustainability, and like mentioned before, Pisani (2006, p. 93) observes that since the 1970s, sustainability, then mostly inspired by ecological thinking, 'has been watered down to once again make the material demands of the human species the primary test of what should be done with the Earth'.

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[30] Ilya Prigogine (1997) was a Russian/Belgian chemist that got the Nobel prize in Chemistry 1977 for his 'contributions to non-equilibrium thermodynamics, particularly the theory of dissipative structures'. He wrote the book The End of Certainty where he explains, based on pure scientifical evidence, how thermodynamic processes go in the direction towards more disorder, and how life arises from chaos and not from stable systems (The Nobel Prize, 2023). This created the 'logic of emergence' (Osberg, 2010).

During the inquiry process, I got inspired by what Latour (2005) called empirical metaphysics, or experimental meta-physics, that serves the purpose of opening the world anew, 'in conjunction with empirical research' (Hämäläinen & Lehtonen, 2016, p. 20). This is where you engage in controversies over agencies that pay justice to the multiplicities of fundamental questions raised by ordinary actors (Latour, 2005, p. 51).

As Latour (2005, p. 114) advised me, I approach the educators, not as humans that needed to be freed from 'the prison of the social' but rather creating a space to think and 'gather'. And when we gather, we focus on 'matters of concern' rather than 'matters of fact'. This way, we can escape the narrow cell given to matters of fact, by, what Latour calls 'the first empiricism' that assumes 'the social'. Thereby, with our 'twofold gift of freedom and action' (Arendt, 2006a, p. 169) we are able to engage in 'cosmopolitics' without nature/society collectors (Stengers in Latour, 2005, p. 262), where unknown effects of our questions are made present. Furthermore, this is also where multiple ontologies are composed together in a 'pluriverse' as opposed to 'universe' (Haraway, 2016), acknowledging that despite the fact that we only have one world, it is not single, and thus the 'questionableness' in it becomes so important as a two-in-one dialogue. The 'questionableness' became my approach.

Encounter III – Enlarging the space of the possible with Arendt

Management studies suffers a certain epistemological insecurity in the struggle of whether it should be about how the world impacts organisations that effect their success or failure, or to describe how organisations impact the world (see for example Adler & Jermier, 2005; Haugh & Talvar, 2010; Banerjee, 2011). Banerjee (2011, p. 729) expresses his worries about the lack of the latter in management education and calls for more 'ethnographies of resistance from the perspective of those whose lives are rapidly becoming unsustainable because their livelihoods are disappearing as a result of industrial expansion'. He calls for more perspectives to business education such as political science, anthropology and cultural studies. While inspired by this call and driven to respond to it, I however cannot help feeling that in order to make sustainability meaningful in business

education, we have to find a way to be *with* the world in other ways than with traditional research methods that try to 'include' other perspectives. Latour (2014) encourages us to respond to this by shifting from the economic to the ecological paradigm, not only as content but as a way of being. From external worlds to a plural and a common world where organisations cannot impact the world or vice versa, because they are *of* the world. Smith (2013, p. 30) writes that '[e]cology is a reminder of a multispecies and multi-existent "we" that modern humanism chose to forget'. The need for this shift from 'I', 'you' and 'them' to 'we' and 'us' is not only one of the most urgent findings of this research process, that led to the question of; what does it mean to educate for something you do not want to be part of? This also reflects a struggle that I experienced in the process myself, of being angry at 'them', who like me, educate business people. In the beginning, it was easier to spot the madness of *others*. I was no better. With a metaphysical grounding in *connection*, I as well had to *become with* others and the world (Haraway, 2016). The question was not only about how to be with the world in business education, but also became how to be *with* the world in my own research. I shifted from 'How dare YOU!' to 'How can WE?'

To go from 'I' or 'you' towards 'we' or 'us' requires a quality in *being with* which I felt I first learned from Arendt, before I started to read others that stress similar quality like Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway. Arendt is exceptionally good at *being with* her readers and correspondences in her writing. She does it by writing as thinking, and thinking as writing, which allows for this open way of becoming with her texts, while dedicating her theorising towards a renewed paradigm based on a *common* world. Writing as thinking and thinking as writing gives attention to difference instead of consistency, because it is 'out of order' but at the same time inviting to other perspectives and contexts. She allows you to measure your morality to all sorts of ideas that empowers one to *become* in different directions. One good example of this is how she uses certain ideas and concepts from Plato and Kant to create judgements that often emerge into concepts of critique, to keep the dialogue alive, and then enters back into thinking. She joins different thinkers in a dialogue without having to 'test' the relationship for consistencies, but simply because they made her think. Her arguments emerge in dialogue that she then curates into a judgement. This

approach to theorising is embodied in her idea of *two-in-one* (that she takes from Socrates), based on the fact that there is always two that carry a dialogue and the assumption that thinking is a dialogue with yourself, built on perspectives by others. One must see to that the two who carry on this dialogue are in good shape, friends, despite of the truth of things.

I now see how important the dialogues partners are for me. I am a western white woman from the North, with a Western education, mostly citing Western people. Vanessa Andreotti (et al., 2018; Stein et al. 2020), a professor in educational sciences at The University of British Colombia reminded me of these short-comings with her research and talks on decolonialise futures. I try my best to make this thinking part of my perspective, but it will take longer than the end of this thesis.

Arendt also has her short-comings for similar reasons. Her theorising that led to the concept of 'the banality of evil' has from day one been highly controversial, often illustrated with her most popular case of Adolf Eichmann, a former Nazi officer that organised transportation of millions of Jews across Europe. After Arendt had covered the trial for *The New Yorker* magazine in 1961, she described him as being 'terribly and terrifyingly normal' (Arendt, 1963/2006b, p. 276) with an attitude towards his family 'not only normal but most desirable' (Arendt, 1963/2006b, p. 26). What she observed was a 'banal bureaucrat' (Elon, 2006b, p. xii), a vulnerable man and a normal family father that just happened to work for Adolf Hitler, but was in fact simply trying to proof to himself that he could be someone, 'a career man'. It was there he got the chance to be 'a big man' but was 'actually stupid' and incapable to think (Hannah Arendt in a letter to Karl Jasper in Elon, 2006, p. xii-xiii). Not that he lacked knowledge about his wrong-doings, but simply stuck in the mind-set of 'doing his job' and his ethics solely dedicated around 'following orders'. This description shocked the academic community where she was accused of being an anti-Semitic Jew, in forgiveness towards this horrible monster. However, what Arendt tried to illustrate with the Eichmann case was that he in fact not 'monstrous' in himself, but rather that what he did was a consequence of his thoughtlessness. This lack of thinking, Arendt thought was even more dangerous.

Today, Arendt has never been as popular but at the same never been as controversial either, both because 'the banality of evil' is so evident in our troubled times, in what is often called the Anthropocene (or the Capital-ocene as Haraway calls it (2016), and that I like more). Nevertheless, because of the new discovery of previously lost tapes containing interviews with Eichmann and what many interpret reveals his very thoughtful and monstrous anti-Semitic ideology (Mozer & Sitt, 2022; Åsard, 2022), people see a way to dismiss her theorising. While disagreeing completely with the conclusion of some of the critiques that claim that Arendt's theorising on the banality of evil can be dismissed because of these tapes that reveal Eichmann echoing anti-Semitic phrases from the past to justify his doings, it is additionally important to understand that her concept of the banality of evil did not justify anti-Semitic behaviour nor did it emerge only from the case of Eichmann. Before the trial, she had already started to question the nature of evil in similar terms, in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and in an essay already written in 1945 called 'Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility', where she explored other cases of this kind on the absurdity of committing evil acts whilst showing love and care towards family and friends, and in retrospect realising that they did in fact not want to commit those crimes, blinded by the dedication to follow orders (Arendt, 1945). She had been arguing for the absence of the demonic dimension of evil for a long time, with many different cases, and was one of the first that dared to connect German fascism with imperialist Europe and international racism (Owens, 2017). Her concept of 'the banality of evil' put fascism in a wider context, where she reflected on whether there might be an 'Eichmann in all of us' (1965-66/2003, p. 59), based on her observations of the emergence of exploitive and violent systems, whether it was towards dictatorship or 'managed democracy' (Wolin, 2008). As 'the only woman admitted to the male-dominated 'canon' of political thought' in the 20th century of Western philosophy (Owens, 2017, p. 404) she was also sharply criticised for her bold theorising that went against the Zeitgeist of her time, usually by men that had not read her texts (Elon, 2006). I myself have experienced many interpretations of her Eichmann case by men that later admitted they had not read her either, but mentioned that they had read Heidegger at least.

Arendt theorising on evil was not to forgive and condone but more to understand and with that aiming to 'reconcile to the reality of a world in which such things are possible' (Arendt in Dossa, 1984, p. 167). 'The banality of evil' spoke to me in a two-in-one dialogue with myself based on my experience and observations around normal and nice business educators educating for extremely violent practices, reconciling with world where that is fact. Even though it can be debated whether business education teaches people to organise for killing, exploiting and violating human and non-human resources [sic!] we must reconcile ourselves to the reality that it can in fact be discussed, and thus it must.

For me however, there are other thoughts than of evil that have disturbed my relationship with Arendt. This includes her Western and white infused racist and anti-feministic claims she has made occasionally in her writings.[31] Nevertheless, to me Arendt was the absolute best company in the discussion of a good education in world of crises, based on my own experiences.[32] Jon Nixon phrased well this sense of connection he also felt to Arendt, despite the errors and contradictions in her writings. Nixon writes that it is something about how 'she speaks to the moral purposefulness of education, its relevance to ethical well-being as expressed through our everyday actions and choices and its focus on educated citizenry at home in the world' (Nixon, 2021, p. 52). The 'questionableness' of what it means to educate for something we do not want to be part of, led to a drive to find out how we can be at home in the world of business education *with* sustainability.

Hannah Arendt is exceptionally good in writing as thinking and thinking as writing that allows for this open way of becoming at home with her texts, and with the world *in difference*, which post qualitative inquiry is calling for. Arendt did not create theories or doctrines, but theorised with her readers and students (Young-Bruhel & Kohn, 2001), seizing them wherever they might be in their thinking by exposing them to many of her own

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[31] See Owens 2017.
[32] Vanessa Andreotti (et al. 2018) and Sharon Stein (et al. 2020) have made me understand that other less white and western perspectives are vital in the discussion about sustainability education as well, which I am committed to be more cautious about including in my research process that is now only beginning.

and others existential reflections, building arguments in one direction until all of a sudden with a witty remark, turning the argument around in a split second. Sharon Rider, a professor in Philosophy at Uppsala University, started to laugh when I mentioned my struggle with this characteristic in her writing. I had invited Rider to join us in a slow reading seminar on Campus Gotland to read Arendt slowly together and outload, paragraph by paragraph, for deep engagements with her text. Rider is an expert in Arendt and no doubt that she was familiar with this style of Arendt's, where she teases her readers on all kinds of directions and perspectives. 'She is very ironic', Sharon said. A funny storyteller, still with the purpose of reconciling her readers with the world by elaborating on rich historical and philosophical material. This makes Arendt's texts messy and sometimes hard to understand, but did not want us to understand her like she 'should' be understood. Her philosophy was that her texts should be abstract enough, messy enough, to be able open up new ways of thinking. She knew that one could never explain something to another person exactly as it was meant because it changes in the process of sharing, based on other perspectives one might hold and be shaped by. The best thing you can do is to hope to become a part of the perspective of others, and vice versa, allowing other thinkers and practitioners to become part of your perspective, without rules or restrictions but with storytelling as a method. Witty irony was one tool in her storytelling to practice the great capacity to be able to not only learn but also to *unlearn* (Knott, 2015). '[Y]ou learn to put yourself in another's place and see the world – through *your own eyes* – from there', Young-Bruhel and Kohn (2001, p. 227, emphasis added) explained in an exchange of letters about their experience of being her students. To understand through your own eyes, the irony becomes a tool to spark attention or a struggle for the reader where the reader has to make judgements him/herself on what perspective to include in ones own two-in-one.

Practicing this kind of reading and writing you start to trust yourself and to let your own thinking guide you, rather than being guided by a particular field, person or a method.

In giving attention to the fact that we live in a shared world, the in-between becomes so interesting to explore. 'I am thinking this right now; what are

you thinking?', the writer asks the reader, without the need to come to the same conclusions - the researcher asks his environment without having to have a predesigned method other than being open for its response-ability. In this thesis, I write with my thoughts that are constantly affected by the perspective of others and with that curate *difference,* which opens up possibilities of inspiration to become differently.

In this process, however, you have to allow concepts and thoughts that you feel close down the inquiry to 'go missing'.

> *Arendt rejects instruments of comprehension*
> *that have proved dull or irrelevant.*
> *She allows them to go missing,*
> *unlearns them.*

> (Knott, 2015, p. xi)

I tried to let go of many concepts that did not fit my ontology any longer, such as finding 'answers' to my questions, creating 'theories' as an outcome or making a 'research design'. Marie Lousie Knott (2015) wrote a book called *Unlearning with Hannah Arendt,* where she describes her relationship to Arendt's texts in a way that I found relatable.

> *I was unsettled by the results of her thinking,*
> *but even more about her ability to allow the reality she encountered*
> *to shake and confuse her.*
> *Her writings brought fresh winds*
> *to the act of thinking*
> *Here was someone*
> *who was seeking*
> *a new pact*
> *between language and life.*
> (Knott, 2015, p. xii)

The call for critical thinking in sustainability education has been answered in many ways, through Critical Management Studies (CMS) and other

strands of critical business studies that confront elements within business that are perhaps not as they seem. However, what these critical waves often tend to do as well is to end up in a hurricane of 'conclusions' such as that business is 'bullshit' (Graeber, 2018; Paulsen, 2014), 'stupid' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2006), full of 'myths' (Salin-Andersson & Wedlin, 2008) or 'necessary hypocrisy' (Brunsson, 1993). All these arguments are painfully convincing. However, I wonder about the usefulness of making those arguments over and over again. Bullshit! Myth! Hypocrisy! Idiots! What does it do to reality? Perhaps to *understand*, I get it. But *why* do we have to understand it? For the sake of the effective and successful organisation to continue to thrive in a neo-liberal system? I want, before anything else, to seek a new pact between language and life in this context. What do we need to understand to be able to carefully slow down instead of striving to be effective and successful?

In struggling with these questions, Arendt's texts gave me a sense of relief, where I was able to suspend my anger without having to abandon my concerns and hopes for the world. Arendt 'awakens delight from suffering and light from ancient dread' (Knott, 2015, p. x), not to find a new school of thought but to 'cultivate the existing forest, to recapture a world under threat' (p. xi). Arendt's texts are 'inexhaustible' (p. xiii) in the sense that they unfold differently in every new reading of them.

> *The power of her images and concepts*
> *creates a safe place*
> *where readers can feel confident*
> *of being involved*
> *in essential intellectual processes*
> *even in the midst*
> *of their own perplexity*
>
> (Knott, 2015, p. xiii)

In the beginning of this research process, I was thinking - How could all these nice, enlightened educators in business schools continue to teach all this meaningless bullshit on success and economic growth? This anger was however grounded in old ways of being, when it was 'I' and 'them', pre-

venting me from opening up for different ways of becoming. The questions I was asking went from 'What the h*** are YOU doing?' to 'How can WE be differently?' This enlarged 'the space of the possible around what it means to educate and be educated' (Osberg, 2009), because all of a sudden, the question of what we were doing was undecided, which meant there were many different potential ways to move forward.

The political nature of sustainability raises questions of this complex relationship between education and politics. It is here when an important turning point happens in this inquiry, where *sustainability education* stops being *a thing* to study but a reflective partner that reminds us to not lose sight of its important role in society, to take care of the future. This we do, according to Osberg (2009, p. v) by going beyond the traditional academic discourse of 'representational epistemology' as a 'representational practice', and rather engage with political and ethical conversational practice (Osberg, 2009, p. v), where the conversation leads the content, but not the other way around. This is the very magic of education, or at least its potential, because it is free of political decision making.

Throughout this thesis, I am in conversation with Arendt around responsibility and judgement in crises of education. Why? Because with Arendt, I found I could actually aim my thoughts and questions towards business education's connection to a world in crisis, without having to keep a cynical distance to the world (Fleming & Spicer, 2003) as an anonymous agent who pretends to have no impact on reality. Arendt never allows for this distance, and provided me with a sense of agency through her convincing theorising around thinking, where thinking can never be about 'the world as it is' because is always about what is absent in the world as it is (Arendt, 1971/2003, p.163), otherwise you would not have to think it. This is exactly what post qualitative inquiry allows for as well: to drive the inquiry with questions that arise in the process of thinking, within your own *two-in-one*, where those you meet along the way become a part of your ever-changing perspective; where thinking is writing and writing is thinking (St. Pierre, 2019a). By allowing my research process to flow in this way, I was able to resist the drumbeat of market-driven rhetoric with radical care (Segal, 2023) towards an engagement with the idea of a 'good university'

where one is allowed to believe in the possibility of resisting 'the ideological agenda of competition, privatization and individualism' (Connell, 2019, p. 115).

In this inquiry process, I really tried to take slow reading seriously. I was *curating*, as a wise academic named Marcus Bussey told me when I described my thesis to him over pizza in Visby. I started to look into this word – *to curate* – and later discovered that close colleagues at Campus Gotland, had written about it before me. Jenny Helin, my supervisor, along with Matilda Dahl and Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, my good friends and mentors, had also 'curated'. I had even done it with them. They use the word 'curating' when they describe their teaching as creating a *poetic space*. By curating, you create an 'atmosphere of intensity' to enable opportunities for 'deep attention, and to break the surface by taking away disturbing elements' (Dahl, Guillet de Monthoux & Helin, 2021, p. 13). In the classroom, we do this by experimenting with, for example, a non-digital environment, where we read literature that has reoriented our thought; slowing down with the students, reading on paper together, letting go of technology that might disrupt attention. I could not let go of this concept; to curate. One day I sat with my PhD colleagues on Campus Gotland, two friends studying cultural heritage. And there I saw it; A book they were reading called *Curated Decay,* by Caitlyn DeSilvey (2017, p. 68). 'What to do when the world begins to fall apart around you?' she asks in this book paying attention to the importance of having to let go of certain things and bring new ideas of being to light. When you curate you engage in an open-ended process of endless potential ways of being and building arguments. It is a way into chaos, where instead of actively choosing one lens over another, you let go of things that do not serve your matters of concern. In this inquiry, I curate by drawing on thinkers who put forward ideas and concepts that I feel call for more intensity, urgency, and emotional connection towards the phenomena I am studying with constant attention to different signals that might come to me, while actively letting go of other concepts that I feel do not make room for this care.

To curate with thinkers who allow one to dwell in passion and urgency, who allow one to feel a part of this world in their education of it, could be the most important sustainability project of them all. I curate my research,

when I take on ideas and concepts that I feel are a necessary part of the emerging perspective around my phenomenon, while avoiding the instrumentality of defining it to death. When you curate, you shake your phenomenon without trying to control it into a certain order.

Arendt never lost sight of the unique human being within a bureaucratic or economic system, and dedicated her theorising to the nature of plurality among and within us. Plurality is what forms the common world, but it suffers in world that is obsessed with individual 'happiness' as a human right, without considering its cost for the common (Segal, 2017).

This inquiry may not solve the 'ultimate' question of what sustainability in business education *is;* in fact, I am sure it won't. Instead, I hope it contributes to the process of our being and becoming, in various ways, with sustainability in education. This 'letting go' if theoretical explanations that only dragged me into despair, allowed me to naively believe in 'the good business school' (Rhodes & Pullen, 2023). Do you dare to follow me further?

Encounter IV – Post-qualitative *thinking as design*

I came upon post qualitative inquiry after a long search for a methodological approach. My supervisor introduced this philosophy to me, in a moment of confusion, when trying to force a research design before the research process. While I was still stuck in trying to find my place within the traditional frames of method, I took a PhD course called *The Research Process*, where a text book by Van de Ven (2007) on *Engaged Scholarship* was the main entry point. Then my inquiry sounded something like this (written in 2019):

> *Research design is a strange phenomenon. While writing this text, I have taken God knows how many courses in different methods, and still have not figured out what a research design is. I guess I am supposed to choose a method. Case study, grounded theory, ethnographic, historical or something else, where I decide*

beforehand what it is that I want to explain to you. I get it, but do I have to choose beforehand?

Yes!

There are namely just two basic epistemologies when you are dealing with questions of 'what' and 'how'. Once I have chosen a method, I must decide whether it is a process study or a variance study (Van de Ven, 2007). But I had written a whole chapter about why I am doing a process study, when I realised that I might be doing a variance study after all. Do I have to choose beforehand?

Yes!

Because 'what' and 'how' something is, describes a reality. Either you design with variance models to explain a change in relationship among independent variables, or you use a process model to explain how a sequence of events unfolds over time. Linear time? Fixed variables?

Yes!

You have to know what the independent variable is and what the dependent variables are. I must identify what causes what and what is affected by what, right? I am doing research, and it has to say something about the truth of things. There is a problem, there is a solution and there is reality. Otherwise, what is the point?

I understand that we social scientists want to be taken seriously, as real scientists. I want to be taken seriously and use my degree to prove that I know something, that I have gained some sophisticated knowledge about these phenomena, after all these years of study.

But, wait! Isn't this exactly what we are trying to unlearn regarding sustainability? To be circular instead of linear, in flux instead of fixed?

I have tried to categorise my research into all kinds of boxes. Is it a case study? people ask me. Well, there are a lot of elements of case study design that have helped me come to where I am today. Yin (1994) and Eisenhardt (1989), for example, both advise researchers that want to work with case study design to pick an extreme case of a phenomenon to make sure there is something in the particular case that is relevant for your study and questions – to study something that 'is' rather than something that 'is not'. That message I have taken with me in the research process. Rather than just going to any business school and talking to any teacher about sustainability and responsibility, I wanted to make sure that the teachers I spent time with had been exposed to concepts of sustainability before. By picking PRME business schools, I knew that some work and discussion on sustainability had taken place inside the walls, to build upon. But I have not yet figured out what my research is a case of.

It is clear from reading the above text that I was struggling with a lot of 'musts' that could have limited me from going on with my existential thoughts and my urge to discover a new way of being with research. In existential theorising, where I could be with ontology of imminence, there are no fixed theories, solutions, models or reality. The generalisation that those tools assume creates a mass society, where one has to supress their earth-bound relationship.

I felt it was easier to resist this when I allowed myself to dwell in the research process, before 'writing it down'. In writing, another tool to fix the research into a product, a certain process of rationalisation began to evolve. My thinking with concepts like peace and love all became a 'horrid mechanical screech' (Auden in Arendt, 1975/2003, p. 10). Before I started writing, in my thinking, this was never a problem. I have never been able to see the world in terms of fixed variables and causality. These limitations that I felt when trying to 'write down' what my

study was 'a case of', never interfered with the parallel research process that was in fact going on in the organic evolution of questions that arose in the open and abstract dialogue with myself and others. The only way for me to move forward in my writing was to write as I thought, and I allowed the process to design itself.

However, it was not until I read St. Pierre's (2019a) view on research through post qualitative inquiry that I felt I was actually on the right track, even though I still did not have a research design. She understood why I was struggling in a world that worships method. 'Methodologies are models that limit what can be thought and done,' she writes, which very accurately describes how I felt while I was trying to find a method to 'apply', leaving other possibilities of knowledge aside. Trying to find 'a field' to belong to. In post qualitative inquiry, there are no 'musts', but rather an opportunity 'for new inquiry that is different every time' (p. 12). This should continue in the writing, where St Pierre reminded me that writing is thinking and thinking is writing. I found an affinity with St. Pierre in her questioning of the common distinction between the philosophical (metaphysical) and the empirical, a distinction I had been suffering with trying to make, because in fact I was always empirical, always becoming, always new and different, and always 'in the field' (p. 10). 'Research methodology is problematic because it exists in the binary which sets the rational (mind and theory) against the empirical (body, practice)' (p. 12), and post qualitative inquiry encourages us to reorient our thinking with new concepts or ways of being in research that break from the existing structure of worn-out concepts. St. Pierre says that you are already an expert in the questions you want to pursue, and I am thankful that I did not become overly trained in method before I discovered that.

What is a research design?
I sought
I sighed
I lost myself
In the search for something
I cannot see
Something I fundamentally am not
Because I always was,
and am,
for reasons I am still trying to understand,
Post qualitative

- *Lovísa on the decision of letting go of research design*

To write post qualitatively is not an easy task when trying to finish a PhD thesis, let me tell you. The design is namely open till the very end, with the purpose of allowing unexpecting difference. Post qualitative philosophy allows the thesis namely to stay open, never to be 'done', in constant design. The process has no beginning, either. In post qualitative inquiry, a PhD thesis is rather a snapshot of one's own process of becoming a researcher and their relationship to the phenomenon of interest, that might speak to other experiences to make anew.

Thus, the process of this inquiry started before the writing of this thesis, and will hopefully not end with it either. It begins with what Arendt (1954/2006a, p. 171) would call 'natality', what she says is the essence of education. The very fact that I was born into this world started a process of something new, of which this thesis is one result. And in the same way, to be post qualitative is nothing you decide to be (St. Pierre, 2019a); it is an approach that unfolds in the process of trying to design and structure your research, when suddenly you realise that you are simultaneously destroying something fundamental in the inquiry, away from yourself.

This fundamental uniqueness that is born with you, and shaped by your environment, but still needs active resistance in our modern world that is obsessed with the sameness of identity instead of difference (Arendt, 1971/2003). This sameness kills new perspectives. Further, post qualitative inquiry confronts the fact that we are constantly taught to leave out

of research the things that make researchers living beings, and thus reminds us to be cautious of becoming too schooled into ways that destroy the uniqueness that every single one of us is born with. The best space for this resistance is in education (Arendt, 1954/2006a), 'for it may be that the only place in which an experimental engagement with the possibility of the impossible – or with "politics as paradox" – can take place […] because education does not have to make political decisions about the future' (Osberg, 2010 p. 168) and the new, the unique quality within natality, has not yet been destroyed by already made decisions from the 'already educated' people. Natality pays attention to renewal instead of withdrawal, like critique tends to do to us.

If against, what am I for? asks Felski (2017, p.4), where I suddenly realise, I was doing the same thing, in trying to confront a social 'reality' with sense of errors driven by 'a stance of scepticism, knowingness, and detachment' (Felski, 2017, p.4). Referring to such critical sociology, Latour (2005) reminded me that blaming few social causes for masses of effects is rather 'weak and powerless' and 'simply repeats and tries to transport an already composed social force without reopening what it is made of and without finding the extra vehicles necessary to extend it further' (Latour, 2005, p. 131).

The quality in critical thinking towards a renewal lies not in the critique but in the *thinking* activity itself that 'undoes every morning what it had finish the night before' and enables us to reorient ourselves *in* the common world, as opposed to *from* it (Arendt, 1971/2003, p.166). Later, when reading Latrour's (2005) book on *Reassembling the Social*, I understood that my conceptualisation of thinking was not only to critically search for sustainability in the education of others, but rather to *deploy* by looking for friends with agencies that I might be able to expend *with*. Without playing a part in the plot, I would myself not act either. Thinking deals with invisibles, that can be found in a two-in-one dialogue with oneself, where you are open to allow others to become a part of your perspective (Arendt, 1971/1978). Latour suggested 'network' instead of 'society' to flatten out our ontology and bring in more perspectives into social science, looking for different meanings in ways that we do not assume 'domination' or 'power' as a source of nature, but rather as a consequence of something

that needs to be explained, or at least looked into. Similarly, Arendt takes the word 'house' as an example of a concept that presupposes other things like 'being housed' or 'dwelling' or 'having a home' and that requires *thinking* to take into account its 'characteristic swiftness'. *'The word "house" is something like a frozen thought which thinking must unfreeze, defrost as it were, whenever it wants to find out its original meaning'* (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 172-173). Similarly, 'network' to Latour was to unfreeze the meaning of 'the social', that to him had been stabilised and shirked. According to Latour, the term 'network' had a quality in a sense that it is not 'a thing out there' to be described but rather a concept to describe something. Correspondingly, I started to look at the concept of sustainability as a 'perspective grid' where asymmetries, non-humans and common world got space, even though it made the discussion more complex. Instead of being 'a matter of fact', sustainability became 'a matter of concern' (Latour, 2005, p. 114). In *Essay VII*, I go into more depth about the importance of attention to *thinking* in itself, which opens up different alternatives of being *with* matters of concern, but with a momentary relief from the *critical. Thinking* answers the quest for post-critique, because in thinking your relationship to the world is actualised and reopened (Arendt, 1971/2003). For now, it is sufficient to emphasise that the process of conceptualising thinking was not only meaningful for what I was studying, but also for how I studied it.

For Arendt, thinking in education is about reconciling oneself to a reality as 'everlasting becoming' rather and trying to 'make sense' of it (Arendt in Biesta, 2016, p. 184). This for Arendt, is a highly political being and that she called 'being home in the world' (p. 185). This requires judgement, but the only fundamental judgement that this requires is to be willing to admit that we are in fact 'earth-bound', which means that we are relational and always changing in a response to *the other,* that goes back and forth in glimpses of a moment from 'I' to 'us'; 'the other' to 'we', and back again. If we decide to reconcile to this reality, then we will have to have additional ways of trying to be with the world.

EMERGENCE

INSPIRATION

ATTENTION

URGENCY
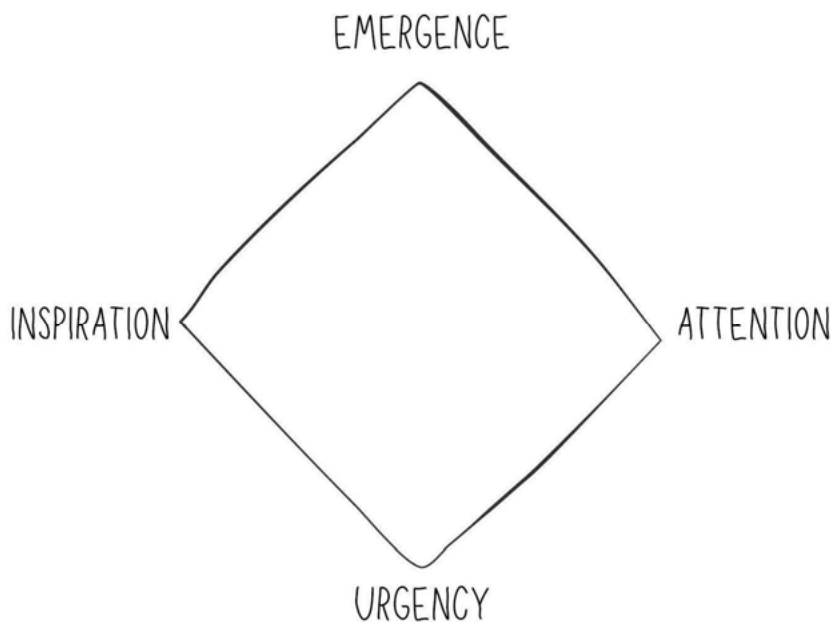
Figure 8 - Thinking as design (illustration by Karítas McCrann)

Thinking as design is largely based on Biesta's (2016) interpretation of Arendt's relevance to education. It provides an additional way of being with research. Instead of jumping between different pillars of the research process where you develop theories and models to find solution and capture fixed realities, it provides an enlarged space of research where we can 'actively seek those places and spaces were our sense making might be interrupted' where we can prepare ourselves for the 'incalculable' (Biesta, 2016, p. 187). In thinking as design, you get a time to be with yourself in two-in-one, before you start applying methods of others. This not to exclude *the other*, but quite the opposite, because in thinking you get time to visit multiple-perspective understandings, not as abstraction but as *attention* to particularities (Disch in Biesta, p. 186). I did this mostly in allowing myself

time to *read* into writing (Cixous in Boulous Walker, 2017, p. 157), not just any articles that provided answers or were 'within my field' but rather I allowed time to stay with texts that I felt I could reflect *with* in 'questionableness' (Gadamer in Nixon, 2015). When you read *with* and not *about* something it is easier to capture the particularities that speak to your own *two-in-one*. You become more aware of the *in-between* space in the text that is connected to of our earth-bound condition.

When you pay attention to particulars you first have to go through a particular condition of the stand-points in order to arrive at one's own general stand-point. You make the particularly in other's stand-points a part of your own. To do this, you need to enter the faculty of the imagination, where you imagine what is absent. This you can only do in *thinking*, because when you are with others you are present in the 'world of appearences' (Arendt, 1971/1978, no. I, p. 8), the only world there is, and in which you always share with others. But in thinking you can put things in proper distance, and with that bridge abysses to the other (Biesta, 2016), because in active thinking one cannot disregard the fact that you are earth-bound, *with others.*

To allow for *thinking as design*, we have to give time for that Arendt would call 'eccentric judgements' (Biesta, 2016, p. 185) which means that instead of assuming that we can take the position of another person and create theories out of that, the judgement always jumps back to you through an in-between space where *the other* gets intrinsic space in your own perspective, where *the other* call you into question but not the other way around. In research, you engage in an educational process, where you are being taught and not meant to find answers to 'report' to the students. It is here when it becomes more important to think about *who* you think with rather than *what* you think with, where the whole aim becomes about finding what questions to ask together and not finding answers for already educated questions. Thinking is 'in between' past (no-more) and the future (not-yet) and the necessary connection to the plurality and complexity of one self, the other and the common world, that is the prerequisite for renewal and a representative world that is common and not private (Arendt 1954/2006a; 1971/2003).
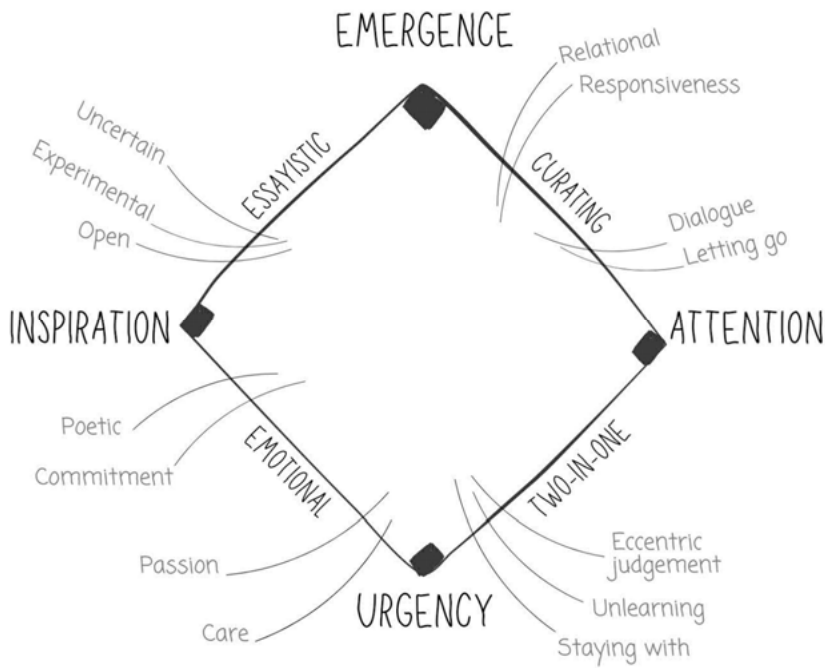
Figure 8 - Thinking as design, *in action* (illustration by Karítas McCrann)

Thinking as design allows for a constant response in an ever-changing and relational existence, and where we will never fully be able to 'catch' the reality, make up general theories, create general tools or find solution that do not create other problems. Thinking as a design is a response where I experiment with turning reality to *urgency* (Haraway, 2016), models to *emergence* (Osberg, 2010), theory to *attention* (Arendt, 2003) and solutions to *inspiration (or composition)* (Boulous Walker, 2017). To act in this design, there are not many bullet points to follow and I can only provide you with insights on how I tried to go about in it. It is not a design to *follow*, but rather a design for *response*.

Later in this essay you will meet other encounters on how I gave time to *curate* my company with research for deep attention to the urgency I felt when I observed our world that is falling apart. 'What to do when the world begins to fall apart around you?' asks Caitlyn DeSilvey (2017, p. 68)

in a book called *Curated Decay,* where she stresses the importance of letting go of certain things and bring new ideas of being to light, what she calls to *curate*. In my curation the question of; 'what knowledge deserves salvation?' changes into where is a place and with whom is sustainability in education possible; that is a place where we are allowed to feel the world as common and with that renew it.

Here the research problem stops being a 'gap' in the literature and stays with what you feel needs to be changed. The problem becomes staying with the trouble. To work with attention, I use *poetic inquiry* for slower reading in-between me and the 'phenomenon' (in this case business education) but also to bridge the gap between me and you, where I attempt towards inspiration and try to paralyse others with my own perplexities and out-of-order thoughts. Just like an electric ray. 'I am thinking this, what are you thinking'. With this I make an attempt to allow for a response. The thought is never done. This inquiry is not meant to be understood, but to inspire for thinking and the urge for daring to put our thoughts to flesh education where we can say 'no more', 'not yet.' I furthermore use *essayistic writing and reading* to slow down the urgency and judgement and hold on to an in-between space that is always emerging. 'Thinking as design' allowed me to stay in the reading where I felt hope for change and to theorise with various persons of 'who's' instead of specific fields of 'what'. In this my attention shifted to *listening* in to what the educators were saying about their own thinking as well as thinking *with* them, instead of looking at them as distant 'interview respondents' to study, assuming beforehand *what* they *are as* business educators. Thinking as design allowed me to address the business educators more freely about what they would like to become.

Encounter V – Thinking with educators

I started to wonder what it would take to explore sustainability *as* thinking in business schools. Arendt made it clear to me that one cannot study thinking, the *two-in-one*, because of its 'soundless' and 'solitary' nature 'between me and myself' (Arendt, 1971/2003, pp. 185-187). But what I could do, according to Arendt, is to go 'out there' with questions that arose from

my own two-in-one dialogue to 'infect' people with questions that *belong* to thinking, what some would call meta-physics, questions that define our being and becoming in the world. I put my thoughts 'to flesh' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 47).

According to Arendt (1971/1978), thinking is actually the most active one can be. Her assumption is that if you dare to engage with the *two-in-one*, it will automatically change the 'world of appearances' because you will show up differently, more plural. In the *Essay VII*, simply called Thinking, I dive deeper into what happens when this two-in-one process stops, but for now the idea was that if I dared to put our thoughts to flesh, I could infect the educators and find new insights than what I had already found in reports or literature about sustainability education, or responsible education. I did not understand what a beautiful inspiration this would become until I sat down with their words and *listened*, over and over again. What were their worries? What is their 'no more' and 'not yet'? I started to care for them deeply.

In the beginning, I tried to 'code' my first 'semi structured interviews', and what I found is that sustainability in business education was still about 'more awareness' and 'interdisciplinarity', while at the same time we have been 'aware' of sustainability issues for decades, and most consider business studies as a very interdisciplinary field, a mix of sociology, economics, psychology, and law to name a few. During this project, I discovered I needed to approach my research differently to get better insights. If I had continued to try to predesign, code and categorise from outside of my own perceptions and passion and before inquiring deeper within my own thinking and learning about research, it would not have been in harmony with what I had read about sustainability education and its complex entrance 'into the end of the world as we know it' (Stein et al., 2021). Sustainability in education is simply too complex. It is, however, perhaps not more complex than other issues we try to explore in higher education, but at least the very result of a certain disregard for complexity. Thus, post qualitative inquiry not only provided an internal sense of relief; it became a complete necessity to an inquiry into sustainability in business education, because despite of being aware and interdisciplinary, there was something else

missing that we needed to gain new insights into. Most of the educators were not feeling sustainable at all.

This sense of relief had something to do with control. As you are well aware by now, one fundamental aspect of sustainability education that I became curious about was critical *thinking*. According to most sustainability education scholars, critical thinking is the main capacity we need to practice if we are to make education sustainable. But what does that mean? How do you practice thinking? In my search for answers, I came to understand that *thinking* is namely the exact opposite of controlling or categorising. Thinking itself is totally 'out of order', usually considered a waste of time, 'good for nothing' (Arendt, 1971/2003, pp. 166-167). My theorising on thinking played a huge role in my organic refusal to create a research design, and post qualitative inquiry became the perfect match for studying thinking as sustainability in education. It aims namely 'not to find, to describe, interpret or represent what is but "to bring into being that which does not yet exist"' (St. Pierre & Deleuze in St Pierre, 2019a, p. 9).

With post-qualitative inquiry I start an existential dialogue with the educators to fit in between the discussion of 'domination' or 'disappearance' to help me guide my entry into these powerful business schools, not to find alternatives but rather to create a space where we put thoughts to flesh. I had to suspends all certainty and it was not 'fast and furious' of the 'final verdict' (BoulousWalker, 2017, p. 8). One way is to 'aimlessly stroll around the crowds' and turning my back on everyday hurried activity (Arendt in Boulous Walker, 2017, pp. 8-9) by engaging in out-of-order conversations about our relationship to the world.

> Experimental or empirical metaphysics is about opening the realm of discussion on metaphysics so that it involves as many entities of different kinds as possible and is capable of accommodating the plural perspectives of different participants (Latour in Hämäläinen & Lehtonen, 2016, p. 17).

Trying to engage with business educators with existential questions allowed for thoughts to emerge and for respectful relationship to the world, where we do not presume the 'nature' of things. It was exhausting at times

though as I and the educators sometimes felt that the discussion was ending up in an 'out-of-control' blather. When I asked for examples how our theories can be important, Birger answered:

I mean you could [also] ask;

- *why do we exist*
the big why
why bother I mean
it is too devastating
every tenth year you can ask that question
in a more fundamental way
you answer it
you continue
- Birger, business educator

Latour (2005) reminds us though, that the common tendency within social sciences of sidestepping meta-physics, does not come without a cost. It is time to re-negotiate and make our preconceptions about progress and success within business education visible if we ought to hold the dream of sustainability true.

Like I have mentioned before, I spoke with my educators several times. First, I went and had individual meetings, but later, when I had had acquaintanceship with them, I went back to speak with them in a group, to see if we could negotiate some preconceptions, we might have about business education and what it has to be, to see if we might come up with some useful meta-physical tools to move forward with. I asked them how they have been feeling about their sustainability education since last time I saw them. It had been approximately a year in between.

I had a very strong experience, identity crisis
not as much about purpose, because I have spent a lot of time thinking about that,
but probably because I have been teaching sustainability courses for ever,
and it feels I have given that quite a lot of thought,
I think what became clear to me was sort of,
well, it was always a surprise that I ended up in a business school,
but then I forgot to think about how surprising that was.
I am only confronted with that when I meet people
that I have not seen for the past 15 years
they say 'what?' [are you in a business school?],
it was more this strong sense of having been co-opted
I have become 'the critical voice within'
Well, it is there so we can always say, everything is fine,
we are an open-minded business school,
we have a critical voice, we have them here,
but business schools are mainly taught by someone else than the critical voices,
I became, the quirky person you have on the 5th semester,
and then you forget about it and you go out and make money
green something
and then…
I told you
that we were having this annual mini conference at the department
where I sat with the head of the department and raised this.
I had this very strong feeling, I just had to bring it up,
and my colleagues were like
'O my god, she is such a hippie'
yes,
there is something really wrong here,
it just completely confirmed
that the people that should at least understand this feeling,
coming also from sort of the same type of critical kind of background as myself,
were so not open to this,
I haven't done anything else with this feeling,
and it has not produced any big effects,
I am still working at CBS,
but I had an urge to go and look for a job somewhere else.

-   Gudrun, business educator

To put the educators' words, expressions and stories in a poetic format, enables me to be able to pay close attention to the complex realities that they navigate in their everyday. To read their experiences slowly, word by word is helpful in creating an understanding of what it is that makes them teach business. I asked Gudrun what she thinks it is within a business school that does not fit her 'hippie' image.

> *I think it is the idea that*
> *when I teach my students sustainability*
> *I see environmental catastrophes,*
> *they see a business opportunity*
>
> > ‐   Gudrun, business educator

The question becomes, how much of those values actually come from the students? Studies show that we business educators might have a bigger role in forming those visions than we think. Advocates for existential teaching emphasise the importance that the educators join the learning and re-learning process as an inspiration for capacities of resistance of unsustainable and oppressive vocabulary and prejudice (Jaarsma et al., 2016; Kumashiro, 2002, p. 67) which I will elaborate further in the next essay.

How to take care of the future? Deborah Osberg (2014) asks when writing about sustainability in education. Her questions aim towards care for the unknown, the new, in which is yet to come. Her text on care ethics, titled *Taking Care of the Future? The complex relationship of education and politics,* has influenced me tremendously in my exploration of sustainability education. In my research process, I had been trying to adapt to different kinds of narratives around sustainability education that never seemed to feel right. First it was sustainability as awareness, which needed to be 'integrated', not just as an 'add-on' but throughout the whole curriculum, a view that was quite commonly expressed in my conversations with educators in answer to the question of what sustainability in business education is.

If this could be achieved, to just raise more awareness and work with integration, then finally sustainability would become 'successful'. But there were also doubts about this story.

I mean we are all people
inherently enlightened to a certain extent
and yet,
we willingly
contribute to,
maintain
develop
these mechanisms
that we say we cannot resist

-Harald, business educator

The idea that more awareness or enlightenment is what is needed to enable sustainability in education suddenly did not seem convincing.

In order to become a professor
and thus reach the stage
where you can truly have an impact
to be free
you need to do this and that
but if this is the case
why don't we see more enlightened professors?
who are fighting for these things?
I don't see that...

-Harald, business educator

Now finally, I will introduce the educators that I have spent many years with (mostly in my reading of our conversations). As I have mentioned before I spoke to nineteen educators in three different business schools, and in three different countries. Then we gathered again, a year later in groups to continue the discussion. Then they were three at CBS (Erik, Karl and Gudrun), four at SSE (Ludvik, Birger, Estrid and Karl), and three at Hanken (Harald, Frode and Sif). These are not their actual names, because I felt it would be more comfortable if we could speak more freely. However, no one said that it was important to them whether or not they would be anonymous. I still decided to keep it that way. I describe them mostly by their own words and how they disclose their *doxa* around sustainability. These descriptions are in no way fixed identities but rather based on snapshots of my transcriptions of what they said then and there, exactly in the moment of our dialogues.

Few years later, after I had been on a parental leave and came back to work, I called few of them on Zoom and talked to others by e-mail, to catch up and hear if something had changed from last time we talked. Harald and Frode at Hanken said that now sustainability had become a part of the mainstream curricula, but they felt it did not change much. 'The students still cannot imagine doing change through other than production and consumption.' When I sent Gunhild at SSE a part of our conversation in 2022, when it had been three years since we spoke last, she wrote back and said 'I recognize myself and my closest, but the students have changed. They are more aware now.' Gudrun at CBS told me not much had changed since we spoke last time. 'And I am still here.'

Frode, Hanken

Frode believes in the power of government. In his own cynicism, he is convinced that we as human being are all rather cynical, and with highly theoretical explanations stresses that to be the reason for why we are not *responding* better to sustainability issues. 'We are falsely enlightened and alienated'. To him, Marx provides a counter narrative that he uses to question the master narrative in business education, but feels resistance among students which he describes as mostly 'anti Marxists'. He sees tyranny as the only possible way to 'reach' sustainability. Works mainly with problematisations and moral imagination in his teaching. For him, international business theories are the enemy of sustainability in business schools. 'International business theories legitimise the state of the world without any mention of the colonial history or patterns of exploitation […] international business theories are good to get rid of, problematic fantasies.' He did not want to go work for the private sector so he ended up in a business school. He feels that the neoliberalism of academia and its structures makes it hard for educator to engage in critical work and I sense in him that somehow, he feels that he could do more. But he does not know how. 'Why aren't we all acting like Greta [Thunberg]?' he asks. And then he answers his own question with; 'I mean, it is about what is possible at the moment.'

Sten, Hanken

Sten considers 'analytical sharpness' the most important competency to develop in a business school. He feels that economics have always engaged with sustainability issues, but just with a 'slightly different terminology'. To him, sustainability is reflected in their focus on 'short-run and long-run trade-offs' and in the concept of 'fairness'. 'Let us take an example of competition policy, where there is a a general concern for the consumer'. Sten feels that the field of economics is one of the greatest contributors towards sustainable development, through macroeconomic analysis which incorporates recognition and restrictions imposed by the environment. 'So, which other fields have made a better contribution he asks me. Sten does not think that this type of macroeconomics belongs to his business schools, but rather in social science departments at universities. 'We do not live in a world were economic departments of business schools focus on these things […] you cannot cover everything'. He admits that sus-

tainability is not their research focus. 'There is no credibility in completely changing our research focus […] we are a small business school'

Knut, Hanken

Knut is new to business school. 'I come from a social science background'. Having been in 'a university' with social policy and economic geography as a background he distinguishes himself very clearly from what he considers being a business school. He says that he teaches students 'how to get things done' and emphasises the instrumentality of it. He has a clear definition of business and explains that it is a 'private use of power brought by the monopoly of violence'. He believes that 'educating 19-year-olds can only go so far' and expresses what he calls 'the tragedy of the educator', that you want them to be transformative 'but still have to teach them to be conservative […] to see the world as it is right now'. He thinks it is almost impossible to try to suggest to students that 'you can do things differently' and believes that sustainability can at best be located in the field of organisation and management 'where I am teaching how you can manage or organise human activity in different ways, and not necessarily relating it to business.' He categorises the students in three groups where one of them is there to make a difference. 'To take care of the future you need some basic management skills.' But Knut says that the other two groups are much more dominant. It is those that 'think [business schools] is the best possible way to get a job' and then it is the elite that 'might have to take over their dads' business'. He makes me realise that even though this business school that he is working in has committed to be the 'Champions' (PRME, 2018) of sustainability 'half of all their students read financial economics because there is where you get the jobs'. Knut is also quite cynical in a way that although does not seem to create a struggle within him, because he feels that the struggle is not in his field of organisation and management, but rather in economics. 'Management and organisation are more outward looking and less closed because we can manage anything and organise anything in the world. However, he is clear that 'we can never tell them [the students] what to do in the end'. When I ask him what he personally thinks about the steps forward towards a more sustainable world, he articulates cynically on the wickedness of the issue. 'If we want to fight climate change, we would have to stop using coal, which would also mean that we couldn't have renewable energy, because it would need to be centralised, and that would mean 300 million Chinese without water which would lead to 1-2 billion migration waves before 2040 […] I

don't have answers but I can ask the questions.' Knut was very well aware that sustainability was a 'wicked problem.'

Bodil, Hanken

Bodil is an expert in supply chain management and responsibility. She feels it is very natural and easy to connect her work to the Global Challenges and does not teach a single course where she does not talk about social responsibility or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 'I personally don't feel much tension'. She thinks however that sustainability is the 'fuzziest' concept there is and feels it is better to anchor it in narratives such as the SDGs. She is careful about attaching herself to particular values and feels that the only way to go about in education when it comes to encouraging sustainable action is to facilitate critical thinking with open debates and questions, 'and sometimes playing the devil's advocate to provoke people'. She works closely to practice but mostly related to humanitarian work, which she says 'just happens to be her research topic'. She chooses to not see the conflicts between business and the ecological perspective and thinks it can very well work together. She however thinks that we will 'never get to the point of mainstreaming [sustainability] in business schools.' She translates sustainability in her teaching by going through various aspects of scarcity, taking it from 'the risk perspective'. She feels that there has been a lot of change, just in the last five years, that the students engage 'on a much more mature level.'

Harald, Hanken

Harald almos exclusively teaches on ideas around sustainability. He feels that business education in business schools is too broad to make any assumptions about 'what it is', and claims that his students come to the school to be able to get the broadest education possible. However, Harald is torn. On the one hand he explains that he is 'not a defeatist in nature' and believes in the capacity of business schools, where 'it is not the destiny of people working in business to make absolutely terrible decisions.' However, he struggles with the idea that the business school will be able to come up with some kind of a new knowledge that will make a difference even though he feels that the response to sustainability issues lies in the training of an imagination around a new and different world. He doesn't seem to believe that it will ever happen in business schools, to incentivise students to think in that direction. He points out that neither he nor his colleagues have the vocabulary to spark this imagination that is needed, but tries by using different narratives for the students to be able to 'contextualise different values.' Harald goes between expressing his

aspiration and cynicisms in our discussion. 'I feel that the changes that are being made is only a Band-Aid for the problems we are producing because the fundamental question is so dangerous, in a sense, that it is illegitimate to ask in a business school'. In a 'half joking way' he explains how his purpose as an educator in a business school is to make sure that as few students as possible will go into business. 'If you can get the students that dream about becoming a business person to not dream about that.'

Sif, Hanken

Sif teaches marketing, responsibility and business culture. Raised by her business school where she went through all her own education, she describes her experience of business education being mostly about business logic is growth. 'We are all about growth. The companies should grow, the GDP should grow and this trickles down to individuals.' She is cynical in her way of approaching sustainability 'apparently we are the ones that have destroyed this globe, so maybe we should just disappear.' She has never thought much about where this 'growth logic' comes from, wondering if it comes from the business school. She explains that there is a field called social marketing, where you use marketing to sell good ideas rather than push consumption. 'But it is a minor' in the field she adds. She has recently started to reflect on her own consumption and brings her reflection into the classroom. 'I make it very clear in the class room that I have too many pairs of shoes.' She says that recent report about climate change has started to make her think more about the issues of growth and consumption, but feels that she does not have enough knowledge to teach 'on degrowth', for example. 'But when I think about it, I had a lecture today about pure marketing, I did not say a word against consumption, I have to remember to do that.' For her teaching sustainability is about trying to 'promote less stuff' and wonders if we can get to the point of having a celebrity living in a small house 'how wonderful that would be, we all would probably take that example to live by.' Her responsibility as an educator scares her at times and she often gets self-doubts 'what if I might be wrong […] if I have misunderstood the world and that I am actually making the world a worse place to be in?' she asks herself in front of me. She talks about sustainability as belonging to the field of 'environment' or 'biology'. 'We will need a grand theory for this, I don't know if that is possible'. She raised her concern about how the business logic has developed throughout the years, away from societal purposes. 'From I grow apples, you grow potatoes' logic, she feels we have lost sight of what is important and the role of business schools should be

to question this fundamental change in logic. 'We do not go historically [into business logics] we go to current types of businesses […] and they are not concrete'.

Sune, CBS

Sune is a political scientist that claims to knows nothing about business. 'I know method and a little bit about everything.' Sune is cynical. He has been a part of strategizing the business school for around 20 years 'I have followed the process and seen that its [good intentions] always water out in a broad and vague formulations, smart sentences that come from a particular discourse of management strategizing'. He says that the school is clearly not focusing on sustainability as much as they are focusing on entrepreneurship, 'not climate change, not environment or social responsibility, but entrepreneurship. In business entrepreneurship is a big star now.' He observes how the students are helped with making all this 'little smart making money ideas and [the teachers and management] make speeches about how fantastic it is that young people are creating their own businesses and they see it as a Schumpeterian idea of the active rational man, taking active economic initiatives, creating new businesses'. Sune is concerned with where the idea of economic growth is heading. While he feels that him and the other business educators should try to resist it, he observes how it becomes increasingly popular where more than half of their students are reading financial economics. 'Their values are pure economics […] but you destroy as much value as you create in businesses, so it is an illusion and it is a dangerous one.'

Gunhild, SSE

Gunhild has been working with questions of sustainability for years. 'They called me little miss morals.' She comes from an academic family in humanities and explained how coming into business school was a sort of 'rebellion act'. Her family was disappointed that she ended up there. 'I may as well have become a drug addict or a prostitute'. She explains however how she has become less and less critical 'I have been falling asleep throughout the years […] I become more pragmatic'. She truly believes in interdisciplinarity when it comes to sustainability in education, and even though she has been engaging with critical questions in a business school for more than 20 years she is still not seeing what could be the potential contribution of business towards sustainability. 'Sometimes I feel –shit! It is never going to change and I am actually a part of this.' She describes the mainstreaming of sustainability, that is now happening in her school,

where SSE has a whole track about Global Challenges that every student needs to take. She took part in this development and feels proud of it, at times. Sometimes she feels bad about it and thinks about this process of legitimising sustainability as yet another trend, and now when they have it in place 'we can continue destroying the world.'

Birger, SSE

Birger is interested in organisations and identities. He describes the 'negative' (Americanised) development of business education in Scandinavia passionately and is nostalgic about the time when researchers could write books in their own language. He tries to resist the neoliberal development and feels that sustainability does not create any particular tension within him and he feels that he has never been a part of the traditional business discourse. For him sustainability is an empirical phenomenon that can be addressed through leadership theories and be used to problematize the instrumental narrative. He teaches organisational theory from different perspectives but acknowledges that he is an underdog in the business schools and that the bankers and consultants are the dominant characters. 'I mean, this is an elite school. It makes sense from in instrumental point of view that companies from these sectors are the guests that we represent because that is the top-of-the-line work in terms of prestige coupled with money.' He tries to resist this master world while taking advantage of it at the same time. 'The great thing of being in a business school is that people think that you are doing something useful to make companies more effective. But I am just a sociologist that can get away with a lot in a business school. You get money to do research about what you think is interesting and criticise companies, but the companies do not care anyway because they do not hire sociologists.'

Ludvik, SSE

Ludvik entered the business school through his interest in people and commination. 'It took a long time for me to realise that I am actually in a business school.' The close relationship with industry is what made him feel at home there, the feeling of creating actionable knowledge that is useful. Knowledge that creates concrete solutions attracted him and the interplay between research and practice. In his view, business school is constantly becoming and, at first it seemed like he was coping well in belonging to that process. He does not like the concept of a 'business person' though, because constantly there pops up this stereotype in his head that he does not like. We talked about this negative view that him and many of his peers had about 'the business' and wondered why they seem to distance themselves

from the paradigm of business, even though they obviously belong to it. 'When you said that we detach from business, something happened in me, is it something that I don't want to recognise. I feel that maybe I need to reconsider how I am related to this, that there is something more for me to discover […] I am saying that context is important and then I talk in a way that discards the context.' Ludvik's relationship to the concept of sustainability is deeply connected to his work with inner development. He feels 'a little bit different' in this context but seems to thrive in that position. 'It comes with the quality of authenticity and being genuine.' Genuity is what he thinks students most appreciate with him, but he feels that is often an overlooked quality among business educators. 'Through my practice of meditation, I came to feel more a part of this world and from that perspective it is much more difficult to do harm, because if I do harm, I harm myself'. Interconnectedness he calls it. An attitude that belongs to his way of teaching sustainability. He tries to connect to students as human beings above professional business persons, 'when that connection is lost, I suffer'. Tools for self-awareness and self-leadership is how he approaches sustainability in his education. 'But there are different ways.' He talks about technical challenges that are easy to deal with, within a frame that we already know. Other challenges need behavioural change 'and then reflection becomes a tool that reach these levels from which you can act […] to think about your thinking and learn about your learning.' He feels that a change is happening, something that he could never have imagined 10 years ago. 'I feel the engagement […] we can contribute in different ways; my contribution is to work with inner development and help people gain self-knowledge […]. I am not saying that it is the most important but that is what I do best.'

Gudrun, CBS

Gudrun is an organisational scholar and has been teaching sustainability 'for years.' She explains how her old friends still get very surprised when they hear she ended up in a business school 'it is then I am confronted with that'. With that, she means the feeling of not fitting in. 'We are called the Woodstock department', she illustrates describing times she feels like a parasite that is used 'as the social on the fifth year,' referring to how sustainability issues are treated as an 'add on' to the 'actual' education. It was hard for her to engage in an existential discussion about business. 'I wondered if I should quit my job after we talked.' For her, just by talking about her as a functionary in a business school made her feel like she could be doing something

more meaningful. She has not quit her job, but shared some disappointments, years after we talked the first time, about how she felt 'nothing had changed.' She still felt 'co-opted' or like 'the critical voice within' which she finds has relatively small impact. 'Because business schools are mainly taught by someone else than the critical voices', she adds. For her business is an empirical context and she does not like to 'teach solutions but rather ways of thinking.' However, she is cynical in her role. Increasingly she sees motivated students that are 'seriously concerned and that have the one mission of changing how business do business. 'Will it work? Probably not, because they are all going to go out there and be[come] start-ups' with their 'tiny super niece hipster' ideas, describing with exhaustions how she does not believe that 'bringing your own packaging' or 'bring your own jar' to the store will change how business do business. 'I cannot see where that will take them, but I see that there is something going on in their heads [at least].' She connects to sustainability through case studies and stories.

Leif, CBS

Leif's focus is on brands and communication. Originally from England, he has been living in Scandinavia for around 30 years. He felt our conversation about sustainability was right on time because he just took over a master program that he feels needs to be reconsidered. He has however been ignoring e-mails from PRME for a long time where he has not had time to engage because of 'the day-to-day busyness.' Now he is ready to rethink. 'I have always been personally interested in societal and stakeholder perspectives,' he says explaining that he has yet to actively integrated it to his education. Now he thinks it is time to go in more depth around sustainability. 'I said yes to this interview because I was thinking that I have not been reflective enough around this topic. I have not sat down and said; Ok! Where is my responsibility in this?' Leif feels that sustainability values are more implicit in Scandinavia than he is used to from elsewhere in the world, and thus he has not felt that it needs special attention in his education. Our conversation made him rethink that position, he told me in an e-mail conversation. 'Because you were asking me what *I* think.' He's concerned about how the commercial discourse has hijacked the discourse in society but has chosen to look at it rather as an 'interesting development.' The main purpose for him with business education is *understanding* business processes and practice. At the same time, he feels 'awful' about the sustainability crises but chooses not to bring those feelings along with his professional-self. '[B]ut on a personal level I change my behaviours.'

Erik, CBS

Erik mostly does research and teaching on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). His focus is on socially responsible investments where ethical guidelines and portfolios are important. He feels that sustainability did not start to gain a real momentum until around early millennium when corporate scandals began to escalate. 'That made an impact on our teaching and ability to frame as something that the students really need to take into account.' He observed how awareness about climate change changed the concept of CSR into sustainability more broadly. He thinks it is important to strike balance between being critical and constructive around these issues and not just 'talk about all the horrors of capitalism.' He is still careful about not just leaving it to the market to take care of these things. Erik does not like much of the rhetoric that has developed in the business school around sustainability. 'People in this field would say that they are here to make a better world […] I do not relate to that.' What he thinks is important is to make sure that the students' go out into the world with a broader worldview than the ones they are exposed to in their traditional business classes, in hope that they become 'slightly less linear in their thinking.' He is cynical about a transformation into something completely different where the whole idea of consumption and production is rethought. 'I mean, we are not even close.' He describes CBS as having 'a lot of small kingdoms' where sustainability 'lives a relatively quiet life' being 'on issue among others.' Erik wants to make sure that people that study sustainability at CBS know each other and work together on the question of: 'what can we do?', but he does not want to take a radical stance. 'You could take this Marxist position, saying that Capitalism is rubbish, that business is a lost cause and that we have to overturn the entire system, but most of us *very consciously* do not locate us there.'

Estrid, SSE

Estrid specialises in sustainability in the retail industry. Mostly been involved in what she calls 'a mainstream' education, she recently got on board in the Global Challenges program at SSE, that she describes as being track that every student needs to take and is concerned with large-scale sustainability issues. She expresses how difficult it is to integrate sustainability into the students' thinking, 'when they have already been taught the whole mainstream stuff.' Estrid is sceptical about the combination of sustainability and business where she observes, both through her research and teaching, that the responsibility is pushed onto the consumer where they are made to choose between 'better labelled' products. 'Just give them the better option to

start with!' She talked about her feelings towards the contradictions she experiences within her field. 'The whole problem with consumer research here at the school is that it is about selling more and buying more.' She was confident in claiming that sustainability was only a small niece and usually presented as an instrument to increase sale and growth but not vice versa. She believes that sustainability should be made a part of all the core courses instead of having it as a side-track. 'It becomes a low priority for the students.' She explains how the motivation for engaging with sustainability is merely about reducing cost, which makes her exhausted. I ask her if she is translating her exhaustion to her teaching. 'I don't think we are really there yet; we are just adding on. We need to start to think.'

Karl, SSE

Karl has been with SSE since he started university education, but working for NGOs and government agencies in between with environmental issues. Involved in the PRME Championship he stresses how he finds policy barriers the main hindrance towards what he calls 'a smooth transformation.' He sees the SDGs as being the main narrative for sustainability in business and finds it effective since it is easy to grasp where 'all can relate'. He is proud of what his school has done to integrate sustainability where all students are exposed to these difficult questions of climate change and social issues, and he believes that the top management is key. There he refers to an abbreviation that has emerged from their liberal arts program towards certain values the school strives to align to. 'FREE it is called and stands for *fact based, reflective, entrepreneurial and emotional.'* I ask him if he feels these top-down initiatives such as PRME, the Global Challenges program and FREE has change how the school educates. He is doubtful and rationally explains, inspired by institutional theory, how the school is institutionalised into disciplines that are unwilling to change. He still believes in change, as long as markets are regulated. 'We can have it parallel and sew the treads together so in the future we have clothing that fits perfectly […] but we are not a sustainability school […] you need to be a chemist or a biologist in order to understand.'

When I write through these stories about the educators, I feel that they have become my friends. My partners in crime. Our meetings changed the way I thought about business education in their generous ways in putting their thoughts to flesh in our discussions. It made me feel hopeful to shee

them passionately engaging in these difficult conversations. Many of them had been fighting for long.

Encounter VI – The essentials with the existential

How to think with and explore sustainability in business education?

I found it is exactly in these conversations where we can begin to be with sustainability. But it is not enough to keep them only 'between us' educators. I argue that it is time we start to make us a part of the students' thinking and with that infect them with our own perplexities. That I argue is the true 'integration' of critical thinking within education and possibly 'the only way thinking can be taught.' (Arendt, 1971/2003 p. 173). If we agree that sustainability education is first and foremost about critical thinking in social sciences, we have to show that we are thinking beings in the classroom.

Existential teaching is one way to emphasise the importance of educators joining the learning and re-learning process as an inspiration for capacities of resistance and of unsustainable and oppressive vocabulary and prejudice (Jaarsma et al., 2016) as well as other 'harmful repetitions' that are a consequence for how we work and labour today (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 67), and in which business schools play a huge role educating more students than any other subject. This view questions 'objective' knowledge development and the 'objective' role of the educator, where the teacher should solely transmit knowledge to the students or facilitate external values. Existential teaching calls for subjective awareness in the classroom, especially among educators. Thinking needs to be given space in education for 'being thought' before assigning it to certain purposes. This is where educators start to play a crucial role according to Jaarsma et al. (2016), most importantly in the neoliberal universities, where drumbeat of market-driven rhetoric drives obsession with 'individual happiness' and 'self-fulfilments,' (Segal 2017; 2023) to the point where elite students have the right to have rights to 'do what they want' with their education as Harald phrased it. This worries researchers like Fougère & Solitander (2023) where they show how business schools now teach neoliberalism for individual self-enhancement and economic growth almost undisturbed, because now it is

just a part of the hidden curricula instead of being explicit, like in the 80's; where 'greed was good' like Gudrun recalled, and where students got the dollar sign on the first slight on their first day at school to make the aim of the education clear, as my colleague told me that is an alumna from SSE. But now, the business schools just hide their actual education under the concept of 'responsibility' (Fougère & Solitander, 2023). Jaarsma et al., (2016) point out that 'ontological freedom of students seems subsumed by their status as perpetual debtors, future corporate workers and consumers' but at the same time remind us that 'the more we embark upon practices that shape ourselves and our classroom in emancipatory ways, the more at odds we are with the regulative ideals of the corporate university' (Jaarsma et al., 2016, p. 458).

Storytelling is another way to bring our thought into the classroom. According to Arendt, storytelling is a way to transform the private into public meaning, which few could deny, is also the main role of higher education. But storytelling also has an existential thesis which sees it as a 'vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances' (Jackson, 2019, p. 34). In my conversations with educators at the business schools I visited, it was clear that this sense of agency was vulnerable. In the third part of this thesis, I call *Composition*, I invite you to follow their reasoning around why they feel that their actual thoughts should not interfere with the students. We needed to keep certain distance like Harald pointed out. 'I don't think it is our role as educators to change people values as such, because that would insinuate that we have better values in the beginning which we don't have at all.' How to *think* with the students without infecting them with our already educated values? Are we not doing that all the time anyways? There must be judgement in the textbooks we choose and models we provide. But there were other things, outside the classroom, that controlled the stories, the life that was created for the students once they were out of business school. The world 'out there' that to most of the educators was unsustainable and even dangerous. Nonetheless, they had to 'go with it'; after all, these were business schools and would never become 'sustainability schools', as Karl at SSE reminded me of. Their stories and matters of concern were thereby mostly silenced in their education. We were 'here', the students went 'there.' However. 'storytelling is both a process of engaging with ourselves and the

power relations that we are a part of' according to Arendt (in Jørgensen, 2022, p. 52). Storytelling can help us understand in what circumstances we can act politically in education, as well as in higher education institutions. For Arendt (in Gordon, 2001, p. 43) to *act* is 'the ability to interrupt and begin again.' This points to an interesting question that has emerged from this inquiry and that is about how we can understand the requirements that sustainability puts on *thinking* and *the political* in education[33].

Post qualitative inquiry seeks an ontology of immanence, where everything and everyone is always *becoming* (Nietzsche's style), *different* (Derrida's style) and continuously *variating* (Deleuzian style) (in St. Pierre, 2019a). An ontology of immanence, similar to Arendt's one-world ontology of the 'world of appearences' (Arendt, 1971/1978), reminds us of the very obvious fact that we only have one world that is shared and shaped all the time, ever-changing *with* us. Once we dare to stay with those facts, it almost becomes impossible to study what *is* and much more interesting to pay attention to what might be coming into being. This is, I think, particularly important when studying sustainability in business education, which is more about being response-able enough to organise differently, allowing for being managed and not only managing, as well as being with the facts that the natural sciences provide us with. *Listen.* We know.

It is not until now, when I am writing these last words in the thesis, that I can explain that what I was doing is to searching to re-spark hope for change *in-between* my confrontative and sometimes angry reflections, and the educators' experience or 'doxa', where our 'opinions' met and formed new 'eccentric judgements.' (Biesta, 2016) (at least within myself). What if, not their organisational identity, but their moral perspective and consience could become a part of the world, a part of the perspective around sustainability in business education?

Arendt's definition of thinking (*two-in-one*), was in one way a respond to what she called a 'fashionable search for identity' that we see in the modern world (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 184). For her, the modern crises live in our lost connection with *difference* and *otherness* that she describes as the

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[33] This will be elaborated further in Essay IV on *Crises and promises of education.*

main characteristics of existence. These characteristics form the *world of appearances*, which refers to her exhaustion of our constant attempt to understand what is 'beyond' appearances, trying to see beyond the world of appearances, as if there were some other worlds somewhere else that we have yet to touch, and where identity is stabilised. Arendt not only rejected this two-world ontology, which can be traced back to Plato's philosophy of ideas (St. Pierre, 2019a), and more generally to realism where the real world is always something else than what you experience (Owens, 2008). She explained how dangerous it can be when we assume that we all live in our own little private worlds, holding private stakes, and anything common gets lost, because it is out of our reach. Arendt constantly returns to the very obvious fact that we all share the same world, and the *plurality* that forms it, as opposed to identity, creates the common. Us. Common sense happens through our relationships, in-between. Losing sight of the world of appearances, while in search for another world, is losing sight of common sense.

Post qualitative inquiry allowed me to stay in my process of thinking, which means allowing for the 'metaphysical'. Without engagement with the 'metaphysical', we suppress a vital part of the inquiry that is always and already there (Deleuze in St. Pierre, 2019). Thus, in fact, it is not a decision to make, whether to be metaphysical or not, but rather something we tend to ignore which can destroy something fundamental to us. What gets destroyed? Arendt would argue that it was our 'earth-bound' relationship and our capacity to *act,* which I will elaborate further in the thesis. However, 'the *ability* to think is not at stake' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 13) because everyone can think. The only decision to make is whether we are *willing*. 'Only the will is entirely my own. By willing I decide. And this is the faculty of freedom.' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 281). To be willing to engage in the questions of right and wrong; good and bad, is *response-ability*. Even though we cannot always find the answers when negotiating. The process itself is our responsibility. It is uncertain and undecided but it turns our decisions into judgements, which is the only way to take responsibility for the world. While morals are about manners, conscience is different. Conscience is to be found in the process.

Conscience in all languages means originally not a faculty of knowing and judging right and wrong, but what we now call consciousness, that is, the faculty by which we know, are aware of, ourselves' (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 76)

To be in the post qualitative, I have allowed my search for sustainability in business education to be based simultaneously on what is and what is not. We need to learn to respond in our own plurality (two-in-one) and to the world's plurality (where the other becomes part of your perspective), instead of echo in identity, if we want to hold true to values of circularity, resilience, justice and care. This, I argue requires several different approaches.

When I got rid of the idea of claiming 'the truth of sustainability' in business education, it became easier to create an *in-between* space of the 'not yet'. This is not to say that I do not see the value of having a method to help us in the research process, such as structuring notebooks, choosing a good company and deciding what to be attentive to. But we must understand when such methods are relevant and when not.

Methodical sterility is a generally known phenomenon … Applying the method is what the person does who never finds out anything new, who never brings to light an interpretation that has revelatory power. No, it is not their mastery of methods but their hermeneutical imagination that distinguishes truly productive researchers. And what is hermeneutical imagination? It is a sense of the questionableness of something and what this requires of us. (Gadamer in Nixon, 2014, p. 6)

We need to know when to unfreeze what we have already frozen. To stay in the 'questionableness' of something is of course hard, especially when it is time to make a product of your inquiry, like I am doing now.

Holt points out that Arendt's interest in educations lies in the ambition that it becomes a place in which more focus is put on asking questions rather than looking for answers. This quality belongs to the realm of action where expressive creation, exchange, and transformation of opinions happens. Unlike work and labour, the realm of action is one of debate and argument, where an inner two-in-one dialogue with oneself is stimulated,

close to heart of each human being (Arendt in Holt, 2020). Often, *thought* is put in opposition to action, but for Arendt, the realm of action is actually grounded in thought. Holt explains that what she means is that it is 'when we are doing nothing as such, that we are most active, most alive to possibilities of things being otherwise […] taking our imagination for a walk, free from the chains of purposes that bind both labour and work.'

Thinking engages us in posing the unanswerable questions of meaning
(Holt, 2020, p. 587)

Slowly, I started to find a way back to a certain common sense, which I feel gets lost when you try to incorporate too many theories. You can get so distant from the world through theory that there is no urgency to your work anymore. This is way Arendt did not create theories, she only theorised (Young-Bruhel and Kohn, 2001). When you stay with the questions you stay with the trouble. Sustainability is a response to times that some call the Anthropocene, defined as times of 'great mass death and extinction' (Haraway, 2016, p. 35). Staying with the trouble is daring to admit the 'banality of evil' (Arendt, 2006b). Staying with the 'banality of evil' requires thinking to cultivate all-to-common urgencies of sustainability, that might prevent them from happening again. Once I allowed myself to just ask 'simple' and fundamental questions, like 'What are we doing here?', and bring these questions into business schools, it was as if I became closer to reality. Finally, I was with the world of appearances. The big elephant in the room. With this question I was paying attention to on what we actually think about things in a horrifying world.

Kostera and Zueva (in Kostera and Straub, 2022, p. 186) point out that 'business schools, above all, teach students to take capitalism for granted'. This, what they call 'ghostly presence in the curriculum', we do not speak about so much, or as Birger said; 'every tenth year […] and you then you continue'. This worries me because like Kostera and Straub (2022, p. 186) remind us these mainstream ideas in business education are 'powerful paradigmatic foundation that prevents the business school from offering a curriculum that serves more than the aims of its own propagation.' Most

of the educators shared these concerns, but they felt it was hard to address because they did not have an already educated alternative.

Soon enough, I got the chance to engage differently with the educators, informed by critique but with acknowledgement of business education potential to be resilient. In a 'dance of dependency and difference', as Felski (2017) so beautifully describes, I finally allowed the business educators to become part of my perspective. Thinking about them as thinking beings, I assumed that they were not only one, but *two-in-one*, as was I, dependent on context and different every new day. The educators went from 'them' to 'us'. But it did not happen immediately. I needed time to be with them and their words. In the beginning, I went and took individual interviews with educators, with no other aim than to get some insights into what they were doing there, and why it was important. I was still in the 'me' and 'them' mode, full of perplexities about worlds we did not share. But the educators took this well. They listened to my questions and answered genuinely. They were no 'cogs', or thoughtless human beings, but they struggled as well in staying in the trouble. The ones' I engaged with did not seem to feel that there was much happening 'on the ground' when it came to *sustainability*, calling it an 'add-on' to the mainstream curricula. 'We will never become a sustainability school, we are a business school', like Karl at SSE reminded me of. I asked them about their experience with sustainability, how they ended up in a business school and what they personally thought and struggled with in their trial of engaging in 'goodness', which is what we have to reflect on when engaging with sustainability.

I dedicated all my attention to what they were saying. I started *listening* carefully to be able to hear what we needed to assign to 'no more' (that I analyse in *Essay VI* on Evil) and what was 'not yet' (which I explore in *Essay VIII* on Love). Once I acknowledge, as a researcher, that I myself was also a 'flesh and blood' - a 'thought made flesh' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 47) I started to understand I was always empirical (St. Pierre, 2019a, p. 10). I started to look, talk, listen, read and write differently in different moments of my becoming, like Kostera & Krzyworzeka (2023) describe the ethnographic process. I doubt I can call this research process ethnographic, but it is post-qualitative.

My belief is that stories from business educators on their two-in-one thinking around sustainability issues as well as creating space to share those thoughts with each other can provide us with a whole new vocabulary and inspiration for sustainability in business education. But of course, this will never be solely about what they say they, but what we say and think together 'interacting, conversing, and adjusting our interest, experiences, and points of view to one another' (Jackson, 2019, p. 15).

> When one tells stories, therefore, one is never simply giving voice to what is on one's own mind or in one's own interest; one is realizing, or objectifying, one's own experience in ways that others can relate to through experiences of their own. Stories are like the coins of the realm, the currency we implicitly agree to make the means of exchange, and, as such, a means of creating a viable social life (Jackson's, 2019, p.15 interpretation of Arendt's view on storytelling as an ontology)

Storytelling is a method to transform something private into public, where we practice our judgements. 'Unlike pure reason, judging does not consist in a silent Platonic dialogue with between me and myself, but springs from and anticipates the presence of diverse others' (Arendt in Jackson, 2019, p. 248). Existence becomes coexistence. Storytelling enables you to access this coexistence that is needed to be able to take responsibility in a common world. Storytelling on responsibility must indicate both politics and ethics. Responsibility is felt through 'life stories' of individuals, according to Arendt, that are wrestled in questions of 'justice, non-violence, and ecological well-being in an age of racism, sexism, religious prejudice, nationalism, colonialism, terrorism, nuclear war' (Jackson, 2019, p. 28) and other current crisis. Storytelling enables you to visit something else than the status quo of perpetuating a given social order and to engage in creating a more viable life (Jackson, 2019, p. 29).

> Unlike classical empiricism, where the observer makes himself a *tabula rasa* in order to register his impressions of the observed, judging requires active engagement and conversation- submitting *one's own thoughts* to thinking of others. (Jackson, 2019, pp. 248-249).

This does not mean that responsibility is irrelevant to institutions, organisations or other functions of society. I am merely saying that if we want to re-connect to responsibility in organisations that is a matter of justice,

non-violence, and ecological well-being in an age of racism, sexism, religious prejudice, nationalism, colonialism, terrorism, nuclear war' etc., we need to get to who we are in the story of sustainability, towards the roots of *why* we do what we do.

> Thinking and remembering is the human way of striking roots, of taking one's place in the world, as we all arrive as strangers. What we usually call a person or a personality, as distinguished from a mere human being or a nobody, actually grows out of this root-seeking process of thinking (Arendt, 2003, p. 100).

That is why I think it is time for a thesis like this, not about the function of sustainability in business schools but about the perceptions, believes and dreams of people who work with it 'on the floor'. Dreams about what it can and should be. The flesh and blood of business schools are the educators, where they work directly with the essence and purpose of higher education institutions, research and teaching which together creates higher education. I am interested in their root-striking process of their thinking and opening to this world. Here is where my two wounds meet, because it is here where take care of thinking (with a relief from critique) and start a trial about what it can tell us about the implications of sustainability in business education. This conversation has never been as important as now.

What sustainability *is* was not interesting anymore, but rather how it can help us become differently *with* the world, in contrast to *of* the world, in an everchanging becoming. Thinking as a method allows not only for different rhetorical questions to guide the way, but also for paying attention to how the problems of the inquiry change and evolve, slowly in the process. This I try to illustrate in my the third part of this thesis called *Composition* with the essays *evil-thinking-love*. It happens when you allow things to fall into complication and explication simultaneously, what Deleuze (2006, p. 261) called the 'two movements in immanence'. I did not arrive at *the* question of this inquiry until the very end of this process, because finding the right question was the whole point of it (Gadamer in Nixon, 2014). To Gadamer, an inquiry always starts and ends with questions. My leading question in the beginning was:

What is sustainability in business education?

After feeling and reading it quickly turned into:

What the h*** are we doing in business education in general?

Which brought me to a melancholy place when reflecting with Gunhild[34], one educator at the SSE, about:

What are we actually good at?

Which led to a long silence. One third of all the world's graduated from higher education become good at what? In my conversations with educators in elite business schools, there was quite a consensus that business was not a profession per se but more a function. 'It is instrumental,' many of them told me, not necessarily with shame but more with a certain sense of its limits. I then started to wonder, in light of our extremely powerful role in shaping the world, with around than 14.000 business schools around the world, and business departments generally being the largest departments in universities:

Can it be called education if we are solely teaching people to be 'functional'?

This in turn led me towards a totally different question, one about the future:

Where lies the possibility of sustainability in business education?

If we agree by now that sustainability is not a strategic issue that can be managed and solved with technical solutions:

What is required of us to be able to connect differently?

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[34] A conversation to be found in Essay I, called *To dominate or disappear.*

When 'best practices' of sustainability are Ikea[35] and Unilever[36] that are still about competing for resources or exploiting them in a growth economy (Hinton, 2020), I started to wonder:

Why are we even doing sustainability in business education at all?

Thinking about what exactly this transformation is that we are trying to bring about. I then asked myself:

If not technology, could the possibility of sustainability in business schools be grounded in thinking? What is thinking?

I asked, while sustainability scholars claim the importance of critical thinking; and more importantly, while the field of business continues to generate the most graduates in the whole world, students that have tech companies such as Apple as their most desirable employer, along with accounting firms and automotive companies (Hoff, 2022, November 2).

Are we really thinking about what we are in fact doing when we are educating businesspeople?

Throughout the six years of my inquiry, during which time I spoke with various business educators, both those in elite business schools and other colleagues that teach business, which led be back to myself as a business educator. I finally arrived at the main question of this inquiry, a question that also became the main problem: many of us business educators that were trying to get our head around sustainability as well, were educating for something that we did not want to be part of.

What does it mean to educate for something you do not want to be part of?

These questions will not be answered with an itemised list, but rather act as inspiration to try to figure out how we as business educators can start to come closer to business with sustainability as our 'frame of mind', close

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[35] As was used as an example for housing the sustainable future business employee at The Swedish Academy of Business and Management conference (Fekis, 2022).

[36] As was named as a case used for sustainable business among many of the educators I discussed with.

enough that we start to dare to shape it, with our deepest attention. Could that be what sustainability in business education is all about?

Essay IV: Crises and promises in business education

When engaging in an inquiry about sustainability in education, it is of utmost importance to start with the question of why we even educate at all. Education is generally considered to be something good in itself, a process of knowledge production and self-development; but what do we educate for and what are we trying to sustain with education?

Where the old meets the new

Half a century ago, Hannah Arendt (1954/2006a) raised her concerns about what she called *The Crisis in Education*, describing the dangerous emergence of an unwillingness among educators to 'assume joint responsibility for the world'. This claim she puts in connection to a certain attitude towards the past, which assumes that 'all greatness lies in what has been' (p. 190). Arendt attributes the crisis in education to the fact that in 'the modern world' educators had started to lose all sense of authority. She outlines three basic assumptions underlying education in the modern world that are in need of reconsideration. The first problematic assumption of modern education, according to Arendt, is that students (or children as she calls them)[37] are thought of as 'its own kind', like they belong to a world on their own. This was evident in my conversations with educators where the world that the students would meet was not the educators' world. It was 'out there'. Arendt stresses that this lost in authority to share a world with them, they are subjected to a much more terrifying authority which is 'the tyranny of the majority.' 'They are either thrown back upon themselves or handed over to the tyranny of their own group.' (p. 178). This pressure causes the students to react with 'either conformism or juvenile delinquency', or a mixture of both, where the educator is freed of any responsibility because they belong to a 'different' world.

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[37] The relevance of Arendt's theorising about education to the matter of higher education can be debated, since she talks about education being a relationship between children and adults. However, she also talks about adults being among the 'already educated', which has allowed me to interpret her concerns as relevant in this case, since education, regardless of level, always has a learner who is not yet educated, and a teacher who is already educated in this sense.

The second assumption that worries Arendt is a certain pragmatism where pedagogy is separated from the actual material to be taught. This makes it hard for the educator to be *with* judgements or rely on their own authority on the topic. This decoupling can be compared to the separation that is often made in higher education between research and teaching, as if they were not interrelated.[38]

The third assumption, which Arendt says has been held in the modern world for centuries and is also related to pragmatism, is that 'you can know and understand only what you have done yourself' (p. 179), where success is measured using instrumental values and knowledge is exchanged for practical skills. In this process, institutes for learning were transformed into vocational institutions, which have been successful in teaching us 'how to drive a car or how to use a typewriter' but 'unable to make the children acquire the normal prerequisites of the curriculum' (p. 179). In light of these three basic assumptions, it is hard to have faith in education to 'set [the world] right anew' (p. 189). For Arendt, this is a shame, because it is precisely in education that we find relief from politics in the sense where opinions are not already educated and have to be made into decisions.

Arendt emphasises the need to balance the conservative with the revolutionary in the undeniably conservative essence of education, where the task is to protect and cherish '*something*'. It thus becomes crucial to dare to take authority by engaging in a discussion about *what* is being cherished and protected. What are we trying to sustain? The conservative part of education lies in teaching 'the world as it is' (p. 186)[39], but at the same time leaving an open-ended space for the student to understand that the world can be changed, with the aim of protecting 'the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new' (p. 188).

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[38] I use the term 'education' to describe an interconnected process of research and teaching/learning where one does not separate the two.

[39] It is unclear what Arendt means with 'the world as it is,' but based on my readings of Owens (2008) and Biesta (2016) it is about making eccentric judgements based on own thinking and research and make it part of your students' perspectives, which then can then shape the reality.

> Insofar as the child is not yet acquainted with the world, he must gradually be introduced to it; insofar as he is new, care must be taken that this new thing comes to fruition in relation to the *world as it is* [emphasis added]. In any case, however, the educators here stand in relation to the young as representatives of a world for which they must assume responsibility although they themselves did not make it, and even though they may, secretly or openly, wish it were other than it is. This responsibility is not arbitrarily imposed upon educators; it is implicit in the fact that the young are introduced by adults into a *continuously changing world* [emphasis added]. Anyone who refuses to assume joint responsibility for the world should not have children and must not be allowed to take part in educating them. (Arendt, 1954/2006a, p. 186)

Teaching *the world as it is* but with a sense of this kind of responsibility, alters the story of the world and how we educators tell it. For Arendt, the crisis of education lies in the loss of authority, caused by loss of a certain conservatism in education when education became more liberal. Even though Arendt's philosophy is far from being conservative 'since it is heavily influenced by her existential convictions' (Gordon, 2001, p. 38) she was concerned with a loss of common sense for the world that then becomes co-opted by 'the tyranny of majority' instead. A crisis becomes a disaster only if we respond to it with *preformed* judgements, or prejudice, under the conditions of and in response to 'the demands of a mass society' (Arendt, 1954/2006a, pp. 171, 176). The very delicate aspect of education, to 'teach the world as it is', has to be engaged with in terms of an 'old world', with the assumption that the world can be renewed. A 'new world' gains its meaning in education from the old world which constantly needs to be engaged with the 'questionableness' of that world, not 'because it could find no solution for poverty and oppression' but because it needs to leave space for the process of becoming with renewal in non-instrumental ways (Arendt, 1954/2006a, p. 174), in order for education to be 'response-able' to the world (Haraway, 2016).

These same crises that Arendt describes have never been more relevant today, vividly illustrated by the case of climate activist Greta Thunberg. In 2018, then aged 15, Greta started refusing to go to school in what was the beginning of the 'school strike for climate'. She accused world leaders of

'behaving like children' and refusing to claim authority regarding the climate emergency, something that Arendt was concerned with 70 years ago. Seeing that the adults around her were unwilling to take responsibility, Greta came to the conclusion that young people must take things into their own hands. This decoupling between children and adults, as if they each lived in worlds of their own, needed to be reproduced in a revolutionary-like response because nowadays it is almost impossible to see the world as shared. A sense of responsibility and connection to the world was, according to Greta, not learned nor felt through her education (Veck and Gunter, 2020). Education still tries to promise to be a certain civilising force, where we learn virtuous habits and capacities for concern, and where students are meant to eventually go 'out' into the world to make it a better place. At the same time, it is important to question whether, in education, we are in fact creating the very conditions that we are, at the same time, trying to overcome (Todd, 2009).

Within the business schools I visited, there seemed to be two main crises that prevented educators from being able to fulfil their ideals of sustainability education. It is of course not totalitarianism or dictatorship, but rather a kind of inverted totalitarianism, or what Wolin (2018) calls *Democracy Incorporated,* that seems to dictate how educators feel they are able to be and act, based on various 'external' demands, such as from students, as if they were a homogenous group. The first of these crises in business education is quite obvious in relation to sustainability, and that is how the neoliberal political and economic system encourages exploitation of and alienation from the environment and from others, human and non-human. It is hard for us to imagine that we could be something other than producers and consumers of resources. It is assumed that this is the only way for us to make changes in society. Education has become something that enables us to go out in the world, but not necessarily to make it a better place. We do not believe in it anymore.

How can you even believe
that such a thing as teaching business students to behave well
is even possible in a business school?
I don't have an image of THE world as such
in a way that assumes a better world
where everybody is each other's brothers and sisters
and where we have completely reconfigured our patterns of consumption
I do not believe in it.
- Erik, business educator

Could it be that we struggle to even imagine that we can be meaningful in business education? Arendt stressed exactly this in her description of the crisis in education and wrote that a certain love for the world had been exchanged for nihilism that robs us of our sense of responsibility (Arendt in Nixon, 2014). 'All is permitted' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 42) is how Arendt describes modern nihilism, and this attitude was also evident in my conversations with educators in the business schools I visited. Most of them were reluctant to stay in judgements with their students. 'All is permitted', and if we do not support the students' aims (which are often assumed to be fixed and already decided), somebody else will, seeing little relationship between their students' aims and the framework that they provide for them.

Well, I cannot have any impact on what they choose to do
it is not like I can have that as a learning outcome
I do not want the students to drop out
I want to be able to support them in their aims.
What I can do is to insert some vocabularies
they do what they want with it.

- Harald, business educator

When I teach my students sustainability
I see environmental catastrophes,
they see a business opportunity

- Gudrun, business educator

On top of this crisis, characterised by the mysterious and fixed incorporated and neoliberal values of anthropocentrism, consumerism and exploitation, which the educators often implied came from the students, there was another crisis, not as obvious as the first but also related to the neoliberal and inverted totalitarian system of our times. What the most educators felt limited by with in our conversations about sustainability, and their exhaustion in that regard, was the development of our academic system. Lars Engvall (2004), writing about management education in the Nordic countries, calls this crisis the Americanisation of the academic system. While business education has its roots in Europe and the economic discipline established there in the 18th century, in the 20th century, when Americans started to jump on the bandwagon, they quickly became role models within business education and American quality control systems became the universal measure, with strong emphasis on economic theory and marketing. 'Publish and perish', as the educators referred to it, which is the constant pressure they have on publishing in academic journals and that is one of these measures that turns higher education into a market game. It is meant for a more meaningful or impactful role in society but is felt reversed, as it forces a certain reproduction of a master narrative about business, where it is hard to uphold a critical perspective. Since critical thinking is a central capacity for sustainability education, this development raises concerns for business education.

Sustainability as consequence of crises in education

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on both practical and theoretical ways of looking at the world. We live in a globalised world of 'wicked problems' which involve numerous and diverse individuals[40] and fields with all sorts of values and priorities. On the contrary, academia is characterised by increasingly narrow perspectives, creating more fields that work in silos and with isomorphic topics, making it difficult to open up and engage from a broader perspective with issues that concern justice, humanity and well-being – issues that take time to consider.

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[40] Or *stakeholders* as we in the field of business would put it, assuming that each individual has their own private stake at heart with very little room for public concern. I wonder how dangerous only this assumption, of all the others we tend to make, is for the public world?

Business educators I engaged with in business schools around Scandinavia, passionately illustrated an ongoing crisis in different ways. In their struggle with the complexity that is in the nature of sustainability issues, they called for a broader approach, which for them was increasingly lacking. The main theme that came up in relation to the essence of sustainability in education was interdisciplinarity. 'We cannot do this on our own' was a common refrain, but most of them described how the schools are actually going in the opposite direction, towards more specialisation and narrower ways of understanding. 'I am becoming more and more sceptical about this academic system we're in. I think we need to collaborate much more. I think we need much more interdisciplinarity […] The academic system is not really going in that direction; it feels like it's going in the opposite direction,' said Gunhild. The academic system itself was, for most, the main concern. 'There is a lot of pressure, publication pressure, to isomorphise with our international landscape as a research institute that particularly aligns to a silo mentality, when we should be trying to broaden the landscape,' said Sif calling for more insights from other fields. It was obvious that most of them had tried to resist this development of tapering. 'I want [the students] to be knowledgeable about a lot of stuff and not to be specialists in a certain very narrow area. They should be generalists. Understanding business in general is a very strong competence,' said Karl.

All educators emphasised the importance of *raising awareness* – self-awareness and also awareness of the world around us – without teaching specific kinds of values. 'Teaching sustainability is about understanding complexities, creating people who can think on their own and are capable of taking new developments into account, but I do not believe that I should raise a very particular, clearly defined, awareness of sustainability,' said one of the educators when I asked about his understanding of ESD in this context. 'I try to create opportunities for [students] to know themselves, to be a little bit more present with themselves and other people. To give them tools for self-awareness, to give them opportunities to explore what their values are and to do exercises where they can discover their privileges,' said another. They all seemed to care so much, like they had really thought this through. 'I think that the main thing is making them aware [of sustainability issues but] I do not have an idea of a model to teach them. I think that would be dangerous. I try to increase their awareness and self-

awareness and make them understand that these are difficult things – sustainability, responsibility and ethics. It is difficult, but I don't think we should transfer their worldviews. They need to balance a number of things,' says Harald. The educators were all quite clear that they were not in a position to tell their students *what* to think, but more to facilitate a space where they have the opportunity *to think*. 'I mean, we cannot force people to do something that they do not want to do, but we can raise awareness and point towards the challenges. Show examples of organisations that are working with this,' says Frode.

Many questions were raised in the discussion of what sustainability in business education really is. 'I think that we need to change awareness, collective awareness. How can we do that, and how can we become more present in the world instead of kind of being more absent?' Estrid wondered as we spoke, and questioned whether raising awareness would do. It was unclear what she really meant, but it felt she was referring to a certain loss in our earth-bound relationship. 'It seems like we really need to rethink things. That is the transformation for me.' We needed:

new ways of looking at value,
new ways of looking at status,
new social relationships […]
but that is not happening,
it is going the opposite direction

- Gunhild

The educators were concerned that sustainability was often treated as an 'add-on' promise. 'I think we have to rethink the whole of business education, not just add another track,' Estrid said. 'We need to start questioning the whole building of business models. What is the purpose of business? I think it goes back to how we think about ownership and how we divide profits to improve the welfare of society, but not at the expense of nature. This is not what is going on. It is difficult.

There is always a very big gap
between the aspiration to transform the world
and then educating 19-year-olds about the world.
You want them to be transformative
but still, you have to teach them to be conservative
or teach them to see the world as it is right now.
That is the tragedy of being an educator.
You can teach them a bunch of stuff
but you can never tell them what to do in the end

- Knut, business educator

What does the world look like 'as it is right now'? Sustainability makes this question more complicated because it is vulnerable to so many perspectives. Sustainability issues are often described as 'wicked problems': '"Wicked" problems can't be solved, but they can be tamed. Increasingly, these are the problems strategists face—and for which they are ill equipped' (Camillus, 2008, p. 1). Camillus' argument is that the reason why we are 'ill equipped' to address complex sustainability issues is that we are increasingly focused on producing 'real' science, as opposed to softer ways of looking at the world, like when sustainability is defined often defined as a soft subject which has no solutions. 'Real science' requires narrow and specialised fields. While working with 'real' science, it is easy to forget that knowledge production is always based on a choice. 'Living is nothing more or less than doing one thing instead of another,' wrote Ortega (1947, p. 44) when reflecting on the idea of universities being not as objective as we would like. His next-generation colleague Lyotard (1979, p. 8) continued this argument and pointed out the interlinkage between science and ethics lies in the fact that 'the right to decide what is true is not independent of the right to decide what is just'. They also observed an authority that was fading. Like Arendt, Ortega identified a dangerous crisis in higher education which to him was mostly about the abandonment of the crucial task of the teaching of culture (Higuero, 1987). To him, culture was the basic foundation of life and he was concerned that we had become too focused on trying to prepare students for the concrete tasks of today, instead of focusing on capacities that would prepare them for tasks that might come, tasks unknown.

> [W]hen the student becomes an adult he will find out that life has a different face, and the more adjusted he was to the image of life as it appeared during his studies, the more unprepared he will be for the life in which he has no function (Ortega in Higuero, 1987, p. 39)

Ortega was concerned that we were generating pure scientists or professionals for specific and unnecessary professions, when in fact what we need is cultural consciousness and intellectual independence, where one can be prepared for the unknown by the practice of developing one's own judgements. Both Ortega and Arendt stress that the civilising force that education promises to be is found in common sense, where we come to understand that we share this world and choose to live together (Arendt in Rider, 2018). This common world is only realised when it becomes common sense. These older ideas and concerns about education are like a thread running through the theorising around sustainability education that forces us to go back and deal with open and interdisciplinary questions around what kind of knowledge really deserves salvation. Arendt worried that modern education encouraged a certain alienation from the world, instead of helping us to reconcile ourselves with the world and thus to reality (Arendt in Biesta, 2016).

In my conversations with business educators, it seemed to be that sustainability no idea that travelled into education but rather a consequence of fundamental crises within education, crises of authority and alienation; of separation and pragmatism that was left unsaid in the work towards something considered as an empty signifier, as Harald described sustainability to be. Are we perhaps trying to define sustainability from the wrong end? Might we have to turn our search for sustainability around and instead look at what sustainability is not? The questions that we need to ask about sustainability education thus become closer to us, in extreme proximity – it becomes all about business.

The fundamental question
is so dangerous
that it is illegitimate to ask in a business school

-    Harald, business educator

The changing promises of business education

Business studies is a young discipline that emerged in the beginning of the 20th century as a response to a new practice of control over resources that had been separated from ownership. This separation created a whole new field of corporate managers practising various kinds of administrative and technical skills. In the beginning, these skills were considered non-academic but eventually penetrated the academic system (Engwall, 1992/2009).

> In the same way that the rapid technical development brought about new types of schools and placed them beside the old university the institute of technology, the development of an increasingly complex economic and business life caused the foundation of schools of commerce designed to educate the young generation of prospective business men (Fehling in Engwall, 1992/2009, p. 2)

This kind of education, that is concerned with business matters, has throughout the decades gained wide acceptance in the academic world and as a result now makes other promises than solely being of practical relevance to business, where intellectual training eventually has become equally as important (Engwall, 1992/2009, p. 50). Business education made a grand entrance into academia to sit alongside subjects such as engineering, arts and law and quickly formed elite institutions where a large proportion of powerful decision makers are recruited from. Business education became a response to a developing market, and did not have as much legitimacy in conservative academic institutions, where there was resistance to forming new disciplines. Thus, business education started to attract external funding from businesses and governments which legitimised business schools as important institutions, where businesspeople could attain higher social status and where governments were keen to support infrastructure for industrial development (Engwall, 2000).

Today, business education has become the most popular subject in higher education around the world, with the problematic promise to prepare people to assume important leadership positions within the modern capitalist system, and now has the social, moral and aesthetic legitimacy to exercise that power, due to the strong position it has gained in higher education

while still maintaining longstanding connections with multinational corporations (Holmqvist, 2022).

What problems do these foundations create for sustainability in business education? Well, namely the fact that sustainability education is the very response to this neoliberal agenda that has invaded most areas of modern life, not least in academia, and business education the main carrier of those ideas (Holmqvist, 2022). Despite this contradiction in terms, and while sustainability scholars have been warning us for more than 50 years about the dangers of our current rate of industrial development, business education has become one of the fastest growing segments in higher education and has now pledged to take leadership in sustainability as well (PRME, 2018). However, because of its entry through the back door of academia, along with corporate scandals in recent decades, questions have arisen about whether business education can be considered worthy of its academic title, creating ontological insecurity among business educators (Antunes & Thomas, 2007). These two parallel developments of insecurity and claims of leadership create a vicious circle where the vocabulary of business has become such an important part of modern life that it has become necessary for most to master it in order to play their part in the modern world (Engwall, 2007) at the same time as trying to resist and be differently when trying to be with sustainability issues as well. This tension between the huge influence of business education on the one hand and uncertainty about its value on the other creates an complicated dance between hope and despair around questions of sustainability, because while business education might be traced to the worst enemy of sustainability, its ontological insecurity opens up a space for hope.

Some scholars argue that Nordic business education has special characteristics that make it more capable of responding critically to the field's instrumental function towards exploitative corporate forces that is considered to be its classical paradigm (Czarniawska and Wolff, 1986; Engwall, 2000). Czarniawska and Wolff (1986) refer to this as the 'Scandinavization of organisation theory' which is thought to challenge the rational model of decision making that has become to dominate in business education and assumes clear goals, plans and measurability. One explanation is that Scandinavian research on business has been more focused on the public

sector, with stronger values around welfare and less of the focus on private multinational corporations that characterises the 'American school', which has slowly started to dominate business education institutions across the world (Engwall, 2004).

Leif, one of the educators I spoke with, who works in Denmark but is originally from Britain, spoke about this Scandinavian element as being the main reason why he has not felt the need to consider sustainability as actively as if he were elsewhere in the world. For him, responsibility is 'implicit in the sense that it is there all the time'.

> *As a Scandinavian business school*
> *this [sustainability] is an implicit focus,*
> *you see it everywhere,*
> *in the cases student use,*
> *in the discussions*
> *we have it as an underlying logic*
> *and so it is always present*
> *in the cases we do.*

It seems that Nordic business schools like SSE, CBS and Hanken should be best equipped to take leadership for sustainable development, which they have already committed to doing (PRME, 2020). The questions that remain though are: is it possible for them to fight against their foundations and what promises can education make regarding sustainability?

Sustainability for 'the end of the world as we know it'

'Well everything regarding sustainability is an empty signifier. It actually does not mean anything. That is its strength and its weakness. It really leaves it up to the schools to define what sustainability means.'
- Harald

Studies about ESD in higher education are as diverse as they are numerous and can be found across several fields, from management and pedagogy to environmental studies, biology, anthropology, and sociology to name a few. These studies range from describing a 'whole school' approach towards sustainability in higher education institutions (Schmitt and Palm, 2018): to theoretical reflections on how to 'conceptualise the global citizen' through 'moral reasoning' in higher education (Lilley et al., 2014); to 'hands-on' curricula studies focusing on 'innovative and collaborative' relationships with stakeholders (Barber et al., 2014). Although these studies differ considerably in method, theory and approach, they all agree on one thing, which is that despite all the talk about the importance of more sustainable thinking in higher education, and efforts made in that direction, the higher educational sector has made very little progress in integrating this way of thinking. If something to that effect is to be found, we can assume that it is at a very early stage,[41] where ESD is used more as an 'add-on'[42] to existing ways of being in education and as a concept of transmission rather than transformation (Gaard et al., 2017). In light of this, it is fair to ask ourselves whether we are engaging with sustainability to change the way we think or whether we are rather using it to be able to legitimise what we already are and how we already act, according to the virtue that 'all greatness lies in what has been'.

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[41] See: Barber et al., 2014; Holdsworth et al., 2008; Kurucz, Colbert and Marcus, 2013; Landrum and Ohsowski, 2017; Lilley et al., 2014; Perera and Hewege, 2016; Scott and Gough, 2006; Rusinko, 2010; Schmitt and Palm, 2018; Stubbs and Cocklin, 2008.

[42] See: Bonnet, 1999; Gladwin et al., 1995; Holt, 2013; Karatzoglou, 2013; Kurucz, Colbert and Marcus, 2013; Kopnina, 2013, 2014; Lozano, 2010; Rusinsko, 2010.

Fiselier et al. (2017) identify two main approaches for embedding ESD in higher education. 'The first approach focuses on making sustainability core to the institution and its education, rather than leaving it as a stand-alone additional subject' (p. 405), where staff and senior managers within universities are expected to embed ESD within all degree programmes as is specifically stated within the strategic plan. 'The second group of institutions adopts more of a laissez-faire approach' (p. 405), where sustainable development is made a part of the mission but integration of sustainability into each course is not required, 'recognising that disciplines have differing abilities to respond and academics may respond negatively to such demands' (p. 405). Scholars emphasise the importance of implementing sustainability into existing modules to reshape values in the 'socio-cultural' environment, where for example the economic self (or professional self) can be combined with the moral self (Nelson in Andersson, 2016), similar to the argument that Lyotard makes regarding ethics and Ortega makes around culture. This view can be seen as a call for a paradigm shift in academic fields, such as business studies, that often have priorities that contradict certain goals of equality, equity and sensibility to nature (Haider et al. 2018; Kopnina, 2018). In business education, students are generally taught to set their feelings aside and join an 'apolitical' economic force which dismisses a certain sensitivity towards the world and others, which is a vital quality in education (Dewey in Andersson, 2016, p. 56). It is safe to say that it has long become urgent for business studies to engage in revolutionary action research, as opposed to 'normal science' research, as Kuhn (1962/2012) calls it, where you experiment, observe and theorise within an already settled paradigm. This will require more than an 'add-on' approach on top of existing ways of being in education and rather a total paradigm shift. Bonnet (1999, p. 316) asks us whether we should 'simply assume that traditional subject domains are the appropriate vehicles for pursuing [sustainability] issues when historically many of their central motives were shaped in a cultural milieu preoccupied with subordinating and exploiting nature'. All these scholars emphasise that if ESD is implemented with a sole focus on 'technical solutions' and as an 'add on', with specific courses and programmes 'on the side', as a dwarf on the shoulders of past 'heroes', we will never be able to achieve the transformation that is needed in the higher education.

ESD asks the question of what kind of knowledge will best enable us to address issues of sustainability (Bonnet, 1999; Rieckmann, 2012). It is meant to improve quality education and reorient it to address sustainability (McKeown and Hopkins, 2007). ESD puts strong faith in education and departs from the assumption that what we teach actually makes a difference in society (Holt, 2003). It emerged from environmental science and related movements but has become more of a general concept that aims to cover various issues, not only environmental but also social and economic. However, often these pillars of the economic, social and environmental are separated in what is called *the triple bottom line.* In doing so, we find ways to sustain capitalism and create 'sustainable corporations' using markets and technology to solve the problems to solve the problems of the 21ˢᵗ century (Elkington and Rowlands, 1999). Is that what we are promising to do with sustainability education?

ESD is often described as having two main goals: (1) promoting an understanding of and capacities in technical *sustainability solutions* (ESD 1), based on facts and insights from natural sciences, and (2) promoting *critical thinking* (ESD 2) (Vare and Scott, 2006). However, it is evident that in the field of business there is a much stronger focus on ESD 1, on the solution-oriented and strategic approach (Banerjee, 2003, 2011; Bansal and Song, 2017). Ghoshal (2005) and Grey (2004) express their concern with this development and suggest that business schools should make an effort to rethink traditional theories instead of seeking effective techniques and solutions that often decouple business and economics from moral values. Ackoff (2002, p. 6) proposes that '[e]very single aspect of the educational process ought to be questioned and systematically denied and the consequences explored', for sustainability to be realised. Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) agree with this and suggest that sustainability should be implemented in every single course, across the curriculum. To achieve this, Scott and Gough (2003) emphasise the promotion of more active engagement with critical thinking as a foundation for sustainability education if it should 'ever happen' (p. 301). Instead of calling it education *for* sustainability, they emphasise education *as* sustainability, where it becomes less instrumental and more a way of being in education. Having critical thinking as the foundation of learning is, for them, working against the narrow disciplines that education as become:

> The divisions we routinely make of knowledge into disciplines, of policy making into ministries, and of sustainable development into economic, environmental and social components – whilst useful and necessary ways by which complex entities are made manageable—remain simplifications. For example, the economy, the environment and society are not separable, and sustainable development cannot arise from the independent insights of economists, environmental scientists and social scientists, working with different assumptions and methodologies. Learning is required across the institutions they represent, the constituencies they serve and the literacies they employ. Without this, there will be no sustainable development. (Scott & Gough, 2006, p. 304)

Similarly, Bonnet (1999) writes about education *as* sustainability and emphasises the need to have 'sustainability as a frame of mind' instead of economic growth, which dominates not only business education (even though it is very much rooted there within) but most fields of higher education. This frame of mind has to be based on a certain commitment to environmental ethics, according to Bonnet, but most importantly awareness of the prevailing values that stem from social, economic and political arrangements and are based on a certain fundamental economic thinking. Rethinking Economics (2016), a group formed mainly of economics and business students around the world, aims to respond to this lack of environmental ethics in their disciplines and strives to challenge the focus on economic growth both in society and in the classroom. Given these foundations in the field of economics and business, sustainability has been a huge challenge for business schools to take on and it is still highly uncertain how they are dealing with it. Even though the content to be included in ESD could be an endless matter of debate, scholars have emphasised the problems of focusing too much on the 'apolitical' and 'technical solution' approach that in fact often legitimises the 'status quo'. Most ESD scholars stress that the very fact that this approach to sustainable development – a term which Shiva (1992) suggests in the Western mind 'development can hardly escape connotations derived from the market economy and immediately has read into it economic development in the sense of economic growth' (Shiva in Bonnet, 1999) – is in fact hugely value-based and politically Western, white, colonised, anthropocentric and dualistic, might be the most important issue to address in sustainability education (Stein et al., 2021).

However, Stein et al. (2022) suggest that it is important to stop educating 'for sustainable development' where the mainstream concept of development presumes the possibility of growth and consumption, and has been hijacked by capitalism. Jickling and College (1994) make a similar point in an article titled *Why I don't want my children to be educated for sustainable development,* arguing that educating for something specific always has an instrumental character that is more related to training than education, which transcends instrumental values. In a rapidly changing world, education should be about debate, evaluation and the process of developing one's own judgement, which instrumental training is unable to facilitate and can therefore never be called education, which is really about 'enabling people to think for themselves' (Jickling and Collage, 1994). But Stein et al. (2022) stress how the concept of sustainable development has become something that is inherently unsustainable within the 'growth paradigm'. They propose a shift from 'education for sustainable development' to 'education for the end of the world as we know it' which forces us to consider the inherently violent nature of our modern modes of existence. Here a balance between teaching 'the world as it is' while simultaneously allowing for renewal that is rooted in natality, which Arendt (1954/2006a) describes as an answer to the crisis of modern education, is embodied in the discussion about sustainability education.

[…] of course there are norms that do not make much sense

I think everyone here recognises that there are norms

Highly damaging

Highly exploitative

Values that most people would not hold themselves

\- Harald

Well,

We can look deep into ourselves

And we see a bunch of values

That are full of contradictions

It is always good to have to face that

- Frode

Vulnerable values in the loss of common sense

One of the main reasons for the difficulty of positioning sustainability within social sciences lies with a certain mentality in higher education institutions where most faculty members believe that their role is solely to teach knowledge and not values, while teaching values is seen 'as a necessary component of sustainability education' (Dautremont-Smith, 2017). To teach certain values is however very controversial and often not considered appropriate in academic institutions, which are supposed to be critical and objective. Sund and Gericke (2021) categorise the teaching of values as the *normative* tradition within ESD, where people's lifestyles are the main issue and can be changed with hints from science and education. This is a response to another tradition in ESD known as the *fact-based* tradition which assumes that environmental problems are due to a lack of knowledge and can be solved by science, where certain problems should be prioritised to be solved. The third tradition Sund and Gericke identify is the *pluralist* tradition, which is more complexity-based and emphasises the diversity of views on 'wicked problems', where sustainability is enabled in the dialogue between plural voices and values.

Fougère, Solitander and Young (2014) are advocates for this kind of plural approach which they call 'value-sensitive' education, not to suggest that we should teach specific values and lifestyles but more that we should go beyond strategic implementation of ESD in general. They criticise the increased emphasis that higher education institutions put on sustainability curriculum design, which they imply can result in 'changes [that] amount to little but lip service' (p. 176) and emphasise addressing issues related to values *and* paradigms. They question the very possibility of value neutrality

and make use of Flyvbjerg's (2001, 2006, 2006) interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of 'phronesis' as a potential tool for breaking out of the institutionalised dominance of 'positivist value neutrality' (p. 176), but without having to rationally agree upon certain universal and central values for business. *Phronesis* is an intellectual virtue according to Aristotle that goes beyond both analytical or scientific knowledge and technical 'know how', and is rather concerned with balancing instrumental rationality with reflections on values and power. While technical solutions (*techne*) are concerned with 'know how' and knowledge (*episteme)* is concerned with 'know why', *phronesis* emphasises practical ethics (Flyvbjerg, 2006), where we regain our common sense, the common sense that is often lost in the shadow of *techne* and *episteme* (Arendt, 1954/2006a;1971/1978; Kostera 2019). This disappearance of common sense is according to Arendt 'the surest sign of the present-day crisis' (Arendt, 1954/2006a), illustrated in business studies through the disappearance of 'the common world' which is thought of as utopian in business schools while in fact it is most definitely not (Chrostowski & Kostera, 2019). The fact that we all share this world, is namely real (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 11) and nothing could be more common sense than that.

To activate *phronesis* in education, Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 374) believes can be done by simply integrating the right questions, which are: (1) Where are we going? (2) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? (3) Is this development desirable? and (4) What, if anything, should be done about it? This perspective reflects what Scott and Gough (2008) call ESD 2, where sustainability in education becomes a matter of critical thinking and value transparency rather than being about scientific knowledge. This pluralistic view on ESD can be traced to deconstructivism and the development of thinking around conflicts and paradoxes. This Birger, an educator at SSE, says is avoided in business schools.

> *We are afraid of being political.*
> *Gender is not a part of our models for example.*
> *Gender is political*

> \- Birger

In general, it seems that ESD experts all over the world are increasingly highlighting the importance of being conscious about inevitably value-loaded education, emphasising that the most relevant and crucial competency for education to contribute to sustainable development is to develop the future professional's capacity for thinking, not by brainwashing students with particular moral values, but by asking the right questions. The plural perspective thus becomes not about teaching values but rather recognising them and accepting that they live within and among us, at all times, even in education and science. Why is sustainability more normative than other things such as business or economics? As I described in the brief historical background to business education, it becomes hard to ignore that business is as well a highly normative concept. Here is where thinking becomes crucial. In a study involving 70 ESD experts around the world, Rieckmann (2012) stress twelve key competencies in education for sustainable development where the most relevant ones are those for systemic thinking, anticipatory thinking and **critical** thinking.'

All of the ESD scholars mentioned above emphasise the need to promote different and broader ways of *thinking* in higher education.

In business schools, like in any other higher educational institution, it has been highly frowned upon to teach values, where the classical myth of the 'value-free' business school has been comparatively powerful. Fougère, Solitander and Young et al. (2014) argue though that it is important for responsible education in business schools 'to create learning environments in which values and value tensions […] can be explored and exposed' (p. 175). 'A more responsible way of designing management education in-volves exposing values and value tensions inherent in management educa-tion […] thereby providing a safe environment for students to explore their own values.' They stress that to give rise to this kind of awareness and learning, the teacher has to play the role of a moderator or a facilitator instead of transmitting specific content (pp. 176-177). The idea of the teacher as a facilitator who moderates and brings students' values out into the open has gained a solid acceptance among sustainability educators, and in my conversations with business educators I observed a general agree-

ment about this philosophy of education. However, there were also concerns about the values that the students bring with them to university. The educators often described the students as 'consumer oriented' with their 'small money-making ideas', rarely interested in politics or the world in general and if so, most definitely 'anti-Marxists', which was a common signifier for resistance to sustainability. The students were in business schools as a 'way to get a job' or so that they can 'take over their dads' businesses'. While the educators talk about the need for a certain resistance to traditional economic thinking, they see it getting increasingly popular year after year, with more and more students reading financial economics. 'Their values are pure economics […] it is dangerous,' says Sune at CBS, who like many other educators was sceptical of this sustainability transformation everybody is promising. In all of the schools I visited, educators smiled cynically when I mentioned the idea of transformation. Erik asked rhetorically; 'Who are trying to transform?' seriously doubting my assumptions about CBS's 'commitment' towards sustainability. Gudrun, his colleague, nodded her agreement. At Hanken, Knut explained a parallel process to the integration of sustainability that is going on in business schools right now, a process that has little connection to values around sustainability.

> *Well now it is economic boom time,*
> *half of all our students are going to read financial economics after the first year*
> *because there you get the jobs,*
> *you get the contacts,*
> *I don't know,*
> *but it has become amazingly popular during the last few years.*
> *They have hundreds of students*
>
> -   Knut

For most of the educators I spoke to, finance represented the opposite of transformation and objectification of the status quo. In this purely 'fact-based' education, there was no space for *phronesis*, no space for *critical thinking* and no *common world*. Knut confidently described finance as a 'private use of power bought by the monopoly of violence', which he later emphasised illustrated the concept of business in general and not only finance.

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Arendt[43] (2003) questioned how we tend to make quick judgements about the roots of violence that is caused not by evil thinking but rather thoughtlessness (or 'the banality of evil' in Arendt, 2006b). For her, this kind of violence rather stemmed from the broader organisation of society, or 'mass society', where people are no longer persons but only functions in organisations and systems (Arendt, 1965-1966/2003, p. 57), apolitical functions that manage and are managed. Are the finance people within business education the only people who might be blamed for that kind of being with education?

When we lose sight of educators

The responsibility of educators in this story of education becomes a matter of an interesting debate which Arendt sheds light on in her writings about education and thinking. Arendt points out that even though the purpose of higher education institutions, 'truth institutions' as she called them (Arendt in Rider, 2018), is to propagate *the truth*, the fact is that they have been founded and sustained by private and political power. What is so ironic about this is that truth and politics have never stood on common ground (Hill, 2020). The only ones who are able to save the common realm from private and political powers are 'unrestrained and hopefully non-instrumental' educators (Arendt in Rider, 2018, p. 42) who ultimately decide what happens in the classroom, and what stories are told there. Storytelling creates the shared world, as Arendt reminds us (Jackson, 2019). It can lead us to dangerous places, as we have seen with the creation of cultural artefacts like money and markets, which in fact only exist in the stories we tell about them (Harari, 2023, April 28th). However, stories can also open up for creating a more viable life. This puts the storytellers of education, the educators themselves, in a very important position in terms of the future making of our common world.

To be able to continue any discussion about how to promote sustainability through education, Gough and Scott (2006) agree with Arendt that we will need to learn to rethink our thinking about politics in education, and to

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[43] Among many others, such as Kostera (2019) .

understand the educator's responsibility in that process. 'If sustainable development, in any credible definition, is to be promoted through education, this requires, perhaps above all, that we learn to re-think our thinking about politics' (Gough and Scott, 2006, pp. 287-288).

Today, much focus is put on speculating about what future students want, as if they were already educated. They are looked at as 'consumers' who need to be 'served', where the institution becomes dependent on the students' 'happiness', with obsession with the 'right' to individual joy or happiness (Segal, 2017). If it is true what I continually heard from the educators, that it is in fact the students that are the ones that come with values into business schools, and that it is the students' thinking that we educators 'try to facilitate' the 'best we can' to then 'send them out to the world' in the hope that 'they'll do good', what becomes of the educator's role and existence in the process?

> Rather than a transcendent judgement of a student's achievements on an exam or in a course, a grade stands as a marker of the dynamics of the university context, dynamics that include the lure of corporatized promises (why else do we grade students, anarchist professor Denis Rancourt asks, than to present them as future workers to corporations?). The transcendence that marks existentialist teaching, in contrast, is of another order entirely. While the existentialists themselves will differ on the nature of transcendence (Kierkegaard, Arendt and Beauvoir present differing accounts of where, exactly, the possibility of the new resides), they share commitments to the possibility of emancipatory freedom. It seems likely, then, that existentialist teaching, in whatever form it takes, needs to encourage exploration by students and professors of the degrees of freedom in the classroom, while always keeping in mind the capacity of freedom to redress harms and address each other in new ways. (Jaarsma et al., 2015, p. 459)

This is in line with the dance Arendt describes between the promises of conservation and of revolution in education, where the responsibility of educators lies in the authority to tell the world as it is, not to be able to constantly reproduce it, but to be able to redress the harms of the world as it is in order to find new ways forward (Arendt, 1954/2006a). Gert Biesta (2013) is troubled by a sense of a lost sight of what he calls 'the gift of teaching' and argues that by considering the role of the educator merely

as a facilitator of fixed values and opinions, we are assuming that all students already have access to complete sets of knowledge for collective exchange, forgetting the important role of guiding the students through a shift in self-understanding to be able to engage more maturely with knowledge claims – in the process of *being* (imminence) and *becoming* (transcendence). The storytelling of educators is namely a strategy in this process which cannot be ignored. What stories are educators telling around sustainability in business education and how do they manage to be *with* it, with the trouble.

This view questions 'objective' knowledge development and the 'objective' role of the educator, where the teacher should solely transmit knowledge to the students or facilitate external values. They point out that 'ontological freedom of students seems subsumed by their status as perpetual debtors, future corporate workers and consumers' but at the same time remind us that 'the more we embark upon practices that shape ourselves and our classroom in emancipatory ways, the more at odds we are with the regulative ideals of the corporate university' (Jaarsma et al., 2016, p. 458). According to Arendt, storytelling is a way to transform the private into public meaning, which few could deny is also the main role of higher education. But storytelling also has an existential thesis which sees it as a 'vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances' (Jackson, 2019, p. 34).

Why aren't we all acting like Greta?

In the past, most people would have reacted to her as someone completely insane

And what if a teacher were to say

HOW DARE YOU! [like Greta did]

I mean, it is about what is possible at the moment

- Frode

The political nature of sustainability raises questions around the complex relationship between education and politics. Here we come to an im-

portant turning point in this inquiry, where *sustainability education* stops being *a thing* to study and rather becomes a reflective partner that reminds us not to lose sight of its important role in society, to be able to take care of the future. This we do, according to Osberg (2009, p. v), by going beyond the traditional academic discourse of 'representational epistemology' organised as a 'representational practice', and rather engage with political and ethical conversational practice (Osberg, 2009, p. v), where the conversation leads the content, not the other way around. The content gets to be undecided for it ever to be able to be changed. It is the very magic of education, or at least its potential, because it is free of political decision making, at best right there in the moment of teaching and learning.

But how to be political in education? We have this idea that things need to be definite when engaging in politics. In Western thought, there are deeply rooted assumptions that 'left and right', 'good and evil', 'right and wrong' are essentially dichotomous and it is impossible to be both at the same time. This is 'the very stuff of politics' (Gough and Scott, 2006, p. 287). While 'truth institutions' like business schools are supposed to teach the world 'as it is', sustainability education reminds us that this is not so easy, because it questions what we are, in fact, trying to sustain. This question illustrates the importance of better understanding, in a qualitative and deeper sense, how educators in business schools *think* and practice *the political* with sustainability in their own storytelling. '[S]torytelling is both a process of engaging with ourselves and the power relations that we are a part of' according to Arendt (Jørgensen, 2022, p. 52). Storytelling can help us understand in what circumstances we can act politically in education, as well as in higher education institutions. How we can understand the requirements that the promises of sustainability put on *thinking* and *the political* in education?

The power of promise and plurality

'The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves reveal an agent', writes Arendt. However, 'this agent is not an author or producer'. Embroiled as we are in 'innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions', the outcomes of our actions collide and coalesce in wholly unpredictable ways. Such is that un-

predictability, claims Arendt, 'that action almost never achieves its purpose' (Arendt 1958/2018, p. 184). This unpredictability, she maintains, 'is the price we pay for the irreducible plurality of the human condition: a condition which results from our freedom of will and results in the tangle of unforeseen—and unforeseeable—consequences' (Arendt in Nixon, 2020, p. 19). This light that Arendt sheds on unpredictability is similar to Brunsson's (2019) model of organised hypocrisy, based on the observation that organisations tend to say one thing but act in another. Brunsson's solution, however, is to separate talk and action, where the former describes ideas while the latter describes reality; ideas are isomorphic, while reality is plural and messy. This distinction Arendt is very careful not to make, between subject and object, ideas and reality, promise and practice, because it erodes a sense of agency in our ways of *thinking* about the world. Thinking acknowledges your interconnectedness with the world and enables awareness of its plurality. Human plurality is the basic condition of both action and speech (Arendt 1958/2018, p. 175) that reveal distinctions in appearances that are impossible to conceal. However, action is never 'forced upon us by necessity, like labour, and it is not prompted by utility, like work'. To act means 'to take initiative' (p. 177). To take action is to begin something new, based on the plurality that is acknowledged in thinking. People's thinking reveals their uniqueness, and every action that a human being initiates is unique. Once we stop assuming non-plurality and understand how action is different from labour and work, we finally can begin to expect the unexpected. For Arendt, thinking is the most active we can be. When we start to 'think what we are doing', speech finally gains its power again. When speech and action are separated, 'something common to us all gets *destroyed*' (Arendt, 2006a, p. 175), and the only thing we can offer to the world are fabrications, through production and consumption. A common space gets lost. Our plurality vanishes into a singular commodity. Our thinking disappears.

> There may be truths beyond speech, and they may be of great relevance to man in the singular, that is to man in so far as he is not a human being, whatever else he may be. Men in the plural, that is so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves. (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 4)

What Arendt provides us with is a new (or perhaps forgotten) understanding of the human condition, which is vital in the attempt to reconnect to sustainability; to be response-able to a damaged earth by staying with the trouble (Haraway) in resonance with an ever-changing environment instead of echoing the illusion of a stable environment (Rosa, 2019); to move from the economic paradigm to the ecological paradigm (Latour, 2014), a paradigm that is willing to experiment with the emergence of the unknown. Arendt does not go specifically into non-human agencies, unlike Haraway, Latour and Rosa, and is anthropocentric in her view that being human is the prerequisite to being political and having agency. However, this human agency that lies in the realm of action, where we use storytelling to renew the world, requires that we make *the other* a part of our perspective (Arendt in Young-Bruehl and Kohn, 2001). In this sense, Arendt reproduces a certain dualism between human and non-human while still recognising the interconnectedness between humans and the world.

Based on Arendt's ethics illustrated in her description of the realm of action and how action is the only connection we have to the common, where we share our 'doxa' with the world, Jørgensen et al. (2022) suggest that we engage in story*making* instead of story*telling* to rediscover how one can engage with sustainability in business education. Inspired by Arendt, Latour, and Deleuze and Guattari, they propose storymaking as a process of *agencement* that enables us to 'be with' and 'in relation to' through 'ongoing connections and relations of multiple entangled agencies'. In this process, labour and work become important for *making* stories, but do not *tell* our stories for us.

This does not mean that we are 'in control', because there are no specified ends. We allow for the uncertainty and with that dare to say what we think, to act out what we think. Our actions can never be separated from our thinking, and if they are, if 'talk' and 'action' are separated, potentially resulting in what Brunsson (2019) calls hypocrisy, we are lost in the idea of action as fabrication. Action, on the contrary, is the 'realisation of our capacity to initiate something new'; it is the ability to interrupt and begin again' (Gordon, 2001 p. 43).

While Arendt has been referenced extensively in research around higher education, her ideas have recently started to take more space within business studies as well[44] – and for very good reason. I argue that the distinction that Arendt makes between the private and the public realm is crucial for business studies to connect to sustainability. To understand this shift from private to public, it is important to understand Arendt's theorising towards what she calls *vita activa,* which is central to her book *The Human Condition.* To Arendt, the human condition can be categorised into *labour, work* and *action* (Arendt 1958/2018). Labour (*animal laborans*) consists of the embodied efforts we take to meet our biological needs, what we need to simply survive. Work (*homo faber*) involves the production of artifacts, '[t]he work of our hands' that are mostly 'objects for use' (p. 136). Work and labour overlap in that they always involve a specified means to an end. *Action*, however, is something completely different because it corresponds to our plurality that is the condition for us to be able to act and talk with consequences that will always be uncertain. In action the end is not pursued but lies in the action itself. In that sense action is intrinsic and not instrumental. It is in the realm of action that we acknowledge the fact that we are political beings, the fact that we are born into this world with something unique, which Arendt encapsulates in the concept of 'natality'. Natality, she says, is the essence of education (Arendt, 1954/2006, p. 171), and represents the new and the different in relation to the old and the same. Arendt argues that this distinction has been ignored within the intellectual tradition and can help us remember that *being political* is nothing that we have to consider to be or not, but simply a fact to acknowledge. The critique that Arendt has been making towards social sciences and education with this distinction, for almost a century now, has never been more urgent (Allen, 2018).

Arendt shows us how these three human doings—labour, work, and action—can lessen the space between us and give us the opportunity to create a world together that turns our plurality (our differences) into active engagements, enable us to make ourselves visible and knowable to one another, not as armed strangers in the four corners of cold and uninhabitable rooms (Allen, 2018 in Arendt, 1958/2018, p. xv). In the *vita activa*

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[44] See Holt (2020), Jørgensen (2022) and Cator (2022), for example.

you speak '*qua* men – and not *qua* members of society' (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 219).

When we forget to *think* and thus incapable of real *action,* which for Arendt is to start something new we get stuck in *vita contemplativa,* that for Arendt, was moulded by 'the fabricator', or *homo faber,* 'whose job is to do violence to nature in order to build a permanent home for himself' (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 304) and where the common world gets lost.

> *…among the outstanding characteristics of the modern age*
> *from its beginning to our own time*
> *we find the typical attitude of homo faber:*
> *his instrumentalization of the world,*
> *his confidence in tools*
> *and in the productivity of the maker of artificial objects;*
> *his trust in the all-comprehensive range of the means-end category;*
> *his conviction that every issue can be solved*
> *and every human motivation reduced*
> *to the principle of utility;*
> *his sovereignty,*
> *which regards everything given as material*
> *and thinks of the whole of nature as of*
> *'an immense fabric from which we can cut out whatever we want to resew it however*
> *we like',*
> *his equation of intelligence with ingenuity, that is,*
> *his contempt for all thought which cannot be considered to be*
> *'the first step… for the fabrication of artificial objects,*
> *particularly of tools to make tools, and to vary their fabrication indefinitely';*
> *finally,*
> *his matter-of-course identification of fabrication with action*
>   - Hannah Arendt's (1958/2018, pp. 305-306)

We become homo faber when we are made to believe that our speech and action are not interrelated, but separated, because action without speech loses its subject to robot-like condition (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 178). While Weberian explanation to this development are 'unable to confront reality

on its own terms' because he always had 'some parallels in mind that helped [him] to understand these terms' (Luban, 1983, p. 231), Arendt refuses to understand and constantly reminds us that through are thinking we are response-able towards a common world. The same can be said about the theory of organised hypocrisy (Brunsson, 2019), which although shedding and important light on the illusion of rationality, Brunsson (1993) labelled 'necessary' where the response to reality makes ethics impossible. Arendt never gave up hope of a renewal of the common world where ethics are intrinsic, unescapable. Ethics as a fundamental human condition could not be ignored and enabled in the real meaning of action, the *vita activa,* that disclosed 'who' one is and not 'what' one is (Arendt, 1958/2018, pp. 175-181), where speech guides action and not the other way around; where story*making* guides the necessary realms of work and labour but labour and work do not story*tell* for us. In that there *is* no action.

I cannot go on stage here and say
'OK! Listen! What we are going to do today is to question capitalism!'
Because the first thing people are going to ask is,
what do I suggest instead?
I do not have an alternative or vocabulary for that.
But I feel really strongly for it.

- Harald, business educator

The *vita activa* allows for us to experiment in thinking without needing to have an already decided alternative or vocabulary. In the *vita activa* you allow for experimenting (political) with the undecided (thinking). To lose sight of the *vita activa* is to lose sight of plurality, of the public realm, of the common world. Noam Chomsky expressed a similar concern in his reflections on the common good and education.

> The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum – even encourage the more critical and dissident views. That gives people the sense that there's free thinking going on, while all the time the presuppositions of the system are being reinforced by the limits put on the range of the debate (Chomsky, Barsamian & Naiman, 1998, p. 43)

Vita activa is the place of thinking where one is never passive because of the nature of the constant response to oneself and *the other*. According to Arendt (1971/1978), thinking is thus the most active one can be. With this acknowledgement, many scholars she her as a good inspiration to renegotiate the promises of business education where a space for action towards response-ablity and sustainability is enlarged. Cator (2022) writes that Arendt renews our hope that critical thinking can make a practical difference in education. Jørgensen (2022) writes that Arendt helps us tell a different story in business schools, a story that can be with 'Gaia'. Holt (2020) tells us that Arendt can help us raise consciousness in business schools where education can become more than instruction. Nixon writes that she helps us to stop choosing evil in education through 'deeply anti-political impulses that inform modernity' and 'the despair of isolation and the anonymity of collectivism' (Arendt in Nixon, 2015, p. 7; Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 35). Luban (1983) says she helps us think, not as an instrument but as a way to share the world' (p. 245) and 'to make new appearance explicit'. I rely on her theorising to sustain the hope for business education to be able to shift our promises closer to sustainability.

The difference between *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* lies in *thinking*. Thoughtlessness engages us in a project that is well known in the field of sustainability in business, and that is the utilitarian project of the 'the least worst decision' (Kopnina et al., 2023, p. 28) or what Arendt (1964/2003, p. 36) referred to as 'the lesser evil', which inevitably occupies one in 'the banality of evil' because of the lack of imagining an alternative to evil, e.g. to exploitation and destruction. It becomes easier to just go with the flow, and not have to think. Like Arendt, Bauman has also pointed out that many of the normal features of organisations make ethically dubious ways of being quite easy, 'irrespective of the horror being visited, or damage done', joining Arendt in wondering 'what makes ordinary people in organisations do bad things' (Clegg, Kornberger and Rhodes, 2007 p. 402).

Is it not time to start to renegotiate the promises of business education?

Are we heading towards a 'speechless horror'?

Arendt illustrates how acceptance of 'lesser evils' can be used in conditioning people to the acceptance of evil as such. She takes the example of how the systematic killing of Jews by the Nazi regime was preceded by a series of anti-Jewish measures which were accepted on the basis that refusal to cooperate would have made things worse, 'until a stage was reached where nothing worse could possibly have happened' (Arendt, 1964/2003, pp. 36-37). She observed how unwilling the human mind tends to be to face realities that in one way or another contradict of its framework of reference, which often leads us to apply categories and formulas whose basis of experience has long been forgotten, where intellectual consistency is chosen over adequacy to actual events, and where thinking and making judgements is considered too ambiguous, too complex. A professor in business studies at the University of Iceland, when I told him I had discovered that business educators were teaching things towards a world that they did not want to be part of. He asked me if they did not just say so to be politically correct going. 'No, not exactly,' I answered. 'Economic correctness might be more accurate,' because there were already made promises that needed to be fulfilled.

My struggle to come to terms with how we can continue to create a life that enforces the evil of exploitation, where people are mainly *doing* evil instead of *being* evil (Vetlesen, 2001), is similar to Arendt's attempts to understand how normal people, who loved their spouses and children, could have contributed to something so evil as the Holocaust, one of her cases being Adolf Eichmann, who was responsible for manging the transportation of millions of Jews to extermination camps (Arendt, 1964/2006). 'Her undertaking was to see how much light philosophy – meaning thinking as such, not the academic discipline – can throw *on* evil' (Vetlesen, 2001, pp. 1-2, emphasis added) and how *thoughtlessness* 'as such' can contribute *to* evil.

> *The sad truth of the matter is*
> *that most evil is done by people*
> *who never made up their mind*
> *to be either bad or good*

(Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 180)

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Arendt argues that the true moral issue in the Nazi crimes, for example, did not arise with the behaviour of the Nazis themselves 'but of those who only "coordinated" themselves and did not act out of conviction' (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 54). It is commonly thought that Eichmann was Arendt's first and only case study on 'the banality of evil', but the truth is that she had been theorising about it since she was a doctoral student writing her thesis, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Arendt, 1929/1996). There the seed was planted in the emergence of the concept of evil in Arendt's theorising, inspired not by Eichmann but by Augustine who wrote that seeking the cause of evil 'is like trying to see darkness or to hear silence'. In Augustine's ontology, evil is denied a specific reality in itself since for him 'only the good can be radical' (Vetlesen, 2001, p. 3). It was through these eyes that Arendt saw Eichmann, and later applied the same thinking to the modern world, also taking inspiration from Socrates and his ideas about the connection between *thoughtlessness* and evil, where totalitarianism became inverted (i.e., incorporated) (Wolin, 2008) into what Haraway (2016) would call the *Capitalocene*. What Arendt's study of Eichmann does for business studies is that it 'places extreme focus on how organizational rationality and knowledge can preclude ethics' (Clegg et al., 2007, p. 403), where organisational action is authorised, routinised and dehumanised (Kelman in Clegg et al., p. 403).

Sorsa & Fougère (2021) find that responsibility in organisations has in fact taken a normative 'political turn' where organisations actively engage in political processes and have political impact This is a dangerous development, argues Rhodes (2022) in his book *Woke Capitalism*, accusing corporations jump on fashionable trends with ethical but superficial obsessions, and are then dismissed by conservatives for their promises not to be taken seriously. He finds that this development poses a 'deadly threat to the very promise of democracy.' (p. 16). Promises of business turn into crises for democracy. Rhodes stresses 'politics moves from the public-political sphere to the private-economic sphere' organisations start a process of 'de-democratization' (p. 13), similar to Arendt's argument in her distinction between private and public, where the only way to be with the common world is in the public sphere (Arendt, 1990). Businesses thus become 'doomed if they doomed if they don't'. Can we even make good promises in business education when it comes to sustainability or responsibility?

And let us imagine
if business schools were being reflective and critical,
but students were still doing their careers in management consultancies and banking,
nothing will happen.
They might be more reflective over a glass of wine.

- Birger

Arendt makes a similar argument around education and says that 'education can [neither] play no part in politics' (Arendt, 1954/2006a, p. 173), while at the same time stresses that people cannot decide to be political or not. The very fact that we are born into this world makes us political which she illustrates with the concept of *natality*. While her thoughts on politics are extremely complex and often paradoxical, after reading her over and over again, I can convincingly claim that she would not want us to go into the discussion of business and politics before we start to see the political for what it really is. For her, political is a process of becoming, and with different perspectives. Thus, even though education should not play part in politics, the political will always be part of education and business. The question is just how? Hinton (2020) suggest that the only way for us to be able to live a bearable life in the near future is that we rethink our relationship to profit.

> Business schools need to make more room for people who are willing to bite the hands that feed them: to prick business bubbles, expose management fads and generally rough up the most feted managers. Kings once employed jesters to bring them down to earth. It's time for business schools to do likewise.

(The Economist, 2009, September 26th)

Arendt's theorising suggests a way to stay with these core reflections, in constant exploration of the interrelationship between thinking and judgement that forms her philosophy on responsibility (Arendt, 1971/2003). As I understand her, the only way to explore and stay with questions of responsbility (and sustainability) in organisations is through the individual person. This is not to say that individuals should be held responsible for

the societal and environmental impacts of organisations, but the stories have to come from there, because functions cannot 'bite' nor have any convictions or conscience (Arendt, 1965-66/2003). Moreover, 'there are so many stories yet to tell, and not just by human beings' (Haraway, 2016, p. 49). No, not just humans, but if we stay with Arendt for a while longer, leaving aside her sometimes anthropocentric view in terms of the high value she put on the human agency, her theorising on thinking, which she called the 'two-in-one', assumes that we are not only singular self but many, in between our plural selves and others, non-human can easiley be included in our pespective due to our earth-bound relational nature. Yes, there are many stories yet to tell. It is time we bring these stories out in the open and into the classroom. It is within the promise of sustainability education.

Essay V: Towards a one-world-ontology

This essay focuses on two emergent moments in this inquiry that *illustrate* a certain environment that I needed to respond to before I could continue my search for a certain sustainability lens in studying business education. In this response I was looking for, not only a lens to *observe* sustainability, but also to help me *be with* sustainability, as something other than a function or an idea, but as a fundamental part of our existence in business education. The issues are real (IPCC, 2023; Oxfam, 2020; Ripple et al. 2021); the need for sustainability is real. This is no myth we are dealing with here.

How could I study sustainability?

Is sustainability a trend?

With the assumption that 'what we teach makes a difference' (Holt, 2003) in business education, where business graduates carry the message with them out to the world (Engwall, 1992/2009; Engwall & Sahlin-Andersson, 2002), the question I carry with me is how we business educators could deal with that enormous responsibility.

Beginning my PhD studies with a course on philosophy of science, in a dark meeting room with portraits of important men on the walls. It became clear that I had to decide whether I was a nominalist, making complete distinction between theories and empirics. This is where the research process all started. I just had to find my categories and I would be fine.

In an early discussion about paradigm shifts, we read a book by Thomas Kuhn (1962/2012) on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. All the examples we took up from the book were however related to natural science, such as when the earth went from flat to round, or when Galileo disproved Aristotle's thousand-year-old theory of gravity. How could we relate to this, as social scientists? Can we even prove a theory wrong, and if so, would it result in a fundamental paradigm shift that would forever change worldviews of people and societies? What is an example of a paradigm shift in social sciences? Can there be a paradigm shift in business?

Sustainability was never going to be one of those paradigm shifts. It was just one *case study*, among many others in an organisation. Sustainability came up in the discussions we had at the department, again and again and again, as just another management problem. At first, I thought: But wait a minute – are we saying that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a myth? Because it is obvious that sustainability issues, in times of great loss of biodiversity, increasing inequality and equity, are not a myth. Has CSR become something else than a repose to various social and environmental sustainability issues? It is debated (see Bansal and Song, 2017; Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Strand et al., 2015). But unfortunately, Banerjee (2003) convinced me that this concept of 'sustainability' had, just like CSR, been hijacked by the economic paradigm, despite all claims of paradigm shifts. What to do?

I applied to do a PhD in a business department to explore how organisations could connect better to the 'common world', make the common world a common sense, and not just a utopia, because it is not (Chrostowski & Kostera, 2019). Arendt calls this belief in the common world as utopian 'modern "deaths"' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 11) in response to Nietzsche's distinction between the real world and the apparent world.

> …modern "deaths" – of God, metaphysics, philosophy, and , by implication, positivism - have become events of considerable historical consequence, since, with the beginning of our century, they have ceased to be the exclusive concern of an intellectual elite and instead are not so much the concern as the common unexamined assumption of nearly everybody. (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 11)

Arendt stresses that we have switched our concerns away from the world. St. Pierre (2019a, p. 25) is also worried about how we tend make this separation in research, where the one world we have is turned into two, what she calls 'Plato's two-world ontology.'

In a two-world-ontology, sustainability is an 'outside of *this* world' idea of 'goodness', which we in our material world will never get in touch with anyways, because 'the good' is just an idea. In this unreachable world of

forms and ideas, in the same way as organisational theory talks about structures and flowing ideas, which are in fact not as they seem, sustainability will never become real in our world. For Arendt, however, 'our world' or the 'the world of appearances' and 'the real world' are one and the same. Once we started to separate them, i.e. to 'separate the medium in which we think, and the world of appearances, the medium in which we live' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 8), the common sense of a shared world got lost and all of a sudden we had to spend all our time talking about something 'metaphysical' which in fact is one big delusion (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 8).

> *The disappearance of common sense*
> *in the present day*
> *is the surest sign of the present-day crisis.*
> *In every crisis a piece of the world,*
> *something common to us all*
> *is destroyed*

(Arendt, 2006a, p. 175).

However, it became challenging for me to find a lens or theoretical foundation from which to explore sustainability in business from this point of view. Arendt told me that however seriously our thinking as researchers had become involved in this crisis of separation 'our *ability* to think is not at stake; we are what men always have been-thinking beings.' (Arendt, 1971/1979, p. 11). She encouraged me to do more with this *ability to think* than use it as a sole instrument for knowing and doing. 'To think beyond the limitations of knowledge' (pp. 11-12).

I started to be curious about the questions that were asked in 'my field,' around these issues of sustainability and CSR. I slowly discovered that questions were usually not about how we can take responsibility for our common world, through business, organisations and education. Instead, we were asking why anyone would even want to engage with the 'movement' of responsibility in a *modern* organisation at all (Sahlin-Andersson, 2006, p. 595). I did not find many studies on sustainability or resposbility in my research environment but just to take one example of a text that go presented to us when we started our research process, where Sahlin-Andersson (2006, p. 597) engages in what she calls '[o]ne salient discussion

concern[ing] why and how business corporations should engage in this trend,' about the concept of CSR. The subject of responsibility was treated as if there was nothing worthwhile to take care of. What I felt was being reproduced was a dualism between business and ethical thinking.

> […] the CSR trend is driven by a criticism that corporations are exploiting the world. Following such claims, the responsibility and scrutiny of corporate actions are being reconsidered. The dominant view of the dynamics of corporate social responsibility is one of companies reacting to new stakeholder demands. (Sahlin-Andersson, 2006, p. 596)

The exploitative practices of business were merely a *claim* from an *external demand*. Furthermore, organisations in this context are at times described as 'brokers between regulatory and self-regulatory initiatives' as if they were something entirely disconnected from the world that is at stake. If they do not follow these 'trendy' rules they are 'blamed and shamed' (p. 597). Let us stop there for a moment. I do not mean to say that these observations are not true, that CSR is not a trend. The point I am trying to make, is that this just an example out of millions that show how we live in a two-world-ontology with our research. However, while reading this text about CSR, I wondered what came first: the chicken or the egg? What does it do to the world to describe sustainability and responsibility as a trend? As Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) point out, it is important to be conscious that embracing a particular and popular view of discourse and constituting it as a reality is always a political act.

Moura-Leite and Padget (2011, p. 528) claim that it is quite evident that throughout the decades, business researchers on responsbility have shifted from 'explicitly normative and ethics-oriented arguments to implicitly normative and performance-oriented managerial studies.' Going from businesses' responsibility towards society in the 1950s where society was the main subject, to applied traditional management function in the 1970s, 'with enlightened self-interest models' (p. 536) ending up mainly in strategic approaches in the 2000s (Bansal and Song, 2017) where eventually responsibility and sustainability became an important source of institutional legitimacy, what Sahlin-Andersson and Wedlin (2008) would describe as 'circulating ideas' in a 'logic of appropriateness'.

Would we ever question responsibility for our children in this way? asks Hans Jonas (1984) in his book *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age.* Jonas makes a distinction between substantial responsibility and formal responsibility. Formal responsibility is when an actor is held accountable for his actions, whatever they might be, and only may be praised or criticised in retrospect as the outside world deems appropriate. Substantial responsibility, in contrast, is inherent in our ways of being and reflects our emotional and moral motivations. This 'sense' of responsibility is *a priori,* and cannot be taken into question. Why should we take responsibility for our children? We do not even think to ask the question; it is *a priori.* Similarly, when Arendt writes about what she calls *the crisis* of education, she does not ask whether we should take responsibility for our children, or whether we should love the world. Rather, she departs from the question of 'whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it' and 'whether we love our children enough not to expel them from the world and leave them to their own devices' (Arendt, 1954/2006a, p. 193). I think it is time for those questions in business education.

Could this kind of questioning responsibility be harmful to the *common* world, I started to wonder? Or is it ok to question everything? I stared to see that we might have larger problems in the field then just the 'bad management theories' propagated in business schools (Ghoshal, 2005)? Ghoshal stresses that theories of 'opportunistic behaviour' like Porter's 'five forces' that suggest that companies need to compete with everyone that crosses their path, have reached out with their assumptions far outside the borders of business schools, 'legitimizing some actions and behaviours of managers, delegitimizing others, and generally shaping the intellectual and normative order within which all day-to-day decisions are made' (Goshal, 2005, p. 75). These assumptions are serious storymakers.

Another theory that had quite an obvious connection with the paradoxical concept of sustainability in business was the theory of organised hypocrisy. The view that sustainability in business is a perfect case of hypocrisy. Yes, I saw the hypocrisy, the contradiction between sustainability and business. During my master's thesis, I had seen that sustainability and responsibility were in fact floating ideas, at least for the deans in the business

schools (Eiríksdóttir and Engelmark, 2016). But when does our studies about sustainability become a matter of transparently deciding what assumptions we want to make? Isn't it strange that we look at success as knowledge but let care to abolish?

Arendt (2006a, p. 95), like Latour (2014), provides a different ontology to depart from. Arendt reminds us of the fact that it is namely us who make up the common world and perform the '"miracles" in the political realm' with our 'twofold gift of freedom and action'. She warns us that if we decide to distance ourselves and look at these miracles objectively, 'the chances that tomorrow will be like yesterday are always overwhelming' (Arendt, 2003, p. 169). What she means is that we have to understand that we are a part of this world and not disconnected from it. Latour, in a slightly different way, also encourages us to try to be more *with* the world when we are trying to understand, more precisely, how to shift from the paradigm of economic progress to ecological process, or from a paradigm where the world is external to one where it is common.

'While the older problem of science studies was to understand the active role of scientists in the construction of facts', which I am doing now, new problem arises. Latour (2014, p. 2) asks, how we can understand the active role of human agency, 'not only in the construction of facts, but also in the very existence of the phenomena those facts are trying to document.' My interpretation of this for the purpose of my own work is that it is time to talk to business educators, as they are in a position that makes change.

Hughes (2017) asks: 'What sort of agency can this new Earth be granted?' (p. 3) 'What do we lose by always looking at agency as 'distributed'? Arendt (2003, p. 33) warns us about the similarities between modernity and totalitarianism, which she calls 'totalitarian society'. 'Master narratives' can claim domination and are followed by the masses in thoughtlessness, a 'much more frequent [phenomenon] than wickedness' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 164). Agency within those master narratives has to be rethought (Latour, 2014).

> The era of the change agent as expert, of purely instrumental knowledge and leader-centric change management is over. We need forms of distributed learning that extend into the deepest reaches of organization and embed us in the world. We need human agency that allows us all to practice our capacity to learn and to be part of the human and not so human world we inhabit. If I had one wish, it would be to define an ecological conception of agency that by its very definition would change how we see the world and how we seek to change it. (Caldwell in Hughes, 2017, p. 261)

Caldwell (in Hughes, 2017) calls out the problem of what he calls 'the process perspective' in research, where it is hard to claim agency, because one just follows the process. He claims that practice theory is more suitable for addressing the problem of agency. Latour (2005) calls out the word 'networks' to not assume agency but to understand it as a constant response to different actors. Arendt (1958/2018; 2003) suggests that our agency is actualised in thinking.

How I see it, is that all these different struggles is a response to the same problem that is invested in a two-world-ontology. Just by distinguishing the world into many, our common sense about the common world gets lost, we are damage our connection to the world. However, we do not need to (re)connect to the *world*; the connection is always there. Rather, we need to reconnect to *the fact* that we are a part of this world and everything we do reshapes it. Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall (2002) point out that educators and researchers play an extremely powerful role as some of the major carriers of management knowledge. Thus, and in light of that, I wonder whether if there is a need to reconnect to the *fact* of response-ability (responsibility/sustainability).

It is my interpretation that the value of this organisational analysis of responsibility has become less about showing what corporate responsibility really is, and more about how meaningless it has become; how stupid. It is treated in terms of hypocrisy, instrumentality, or *functional stupidity* (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016). This leaves the field of management and organisation – if truly wanting to engage with sustainability, through responsibility – with the question of: *how to stop being a hypocrite or simply stupid?*

Do we want the stories we tell to be about 'myths' and 'stupidity'? Or rather, can the story be something else? How can we participate differently? Latour (2012, p.1) points out:

> Weick and many others have excellently shown (Taylor 1993; Czarniawska 1997), one of the difficulties of grasping an organization is that it is impossible to detect its type of agency without defining the ways in which we *speak of* and *in* it. As soon as you speak about an organization, you lose the specific ways in which it would have appeared had you attempted to participate in its organizing by telling and retelling its story. (Cooren 2001, 2010)

For Arendt, the tendency to separate action and speech, ideas and reality, which I have argued is common in organisational studies, is what makes 'life dead' (Arendt in Charter, 1992, p. 293). In a book review where Charter (1992) engages with the theory of *organised hypocrisy* he also finds relief with Arendt in *response* to a certain feeling of despair when reading about the convincing theorising of Brunsson's (1989/2019) when he separates talk and action and with that separates the world into different realities.

> To separate the two in Arendt's terms is to make life 'dead'. For Brunsson, their separation is what makes (organizational) life possible. In his terms, talk is there to make actions rational, actions which the talker does not undertake but for which s/he has responsibility. This separation of the rationale for action from the action itself seems to contravene all the precepts of authenticity, responsibility, judgment and ascription of value. It seems to assume that action has an autonomous authenticity, even though separated from a discourse of legitimation, which thus has no genuine authority to specify the goals for which it seeks legitimation. The advocacy of hypocrisy to cover the gap serves to re-elevate convenience above morality, to make values and norms obsolescent. This seems not merely cynical but even nihilistic (Charter, 1992, p. 293)

Charter continues;

> The manager will find much comfort in this book. Almost everyone else, I guess, will feel rather depressed. Certainly, I was left, at the end, wondering disconsolately whether, if, as part of any organization's environment, we make demands on it, for example for ethical practices, we do not warrant some better response than hypocrisy (Charter, 1992, p. 295)

What does it do when we describe reality in this way? Or are concepts such as hypocrisy and myths just telling the 'world as it is'?
I had to look elsewhere to keep on to this critical hope that we could in fact do what we say we want to do, within organisations.

Avoiding the 'speechless horror'

One of the most valuable insights I gained from Hannah Arendt's (2003) *Responsibility and Judgement* was that it is impossible to study responsibility from an organisational or 'mass society' perspective, because 'when all are guilty, no one is' (Arendt, 2003, p. 28). According to this understanding, studying sustainability in social sciences is not possible from a strategic or organisational perspective, if we agree that sustainability is about taking responsibility for one's environment.

Arendt raises the question of evil in relation to World War II in her attempt to understand why millions of ordinary Germans considered it right to kill six million Jews (Arendt, 2006a). Her argument is that the true moral issue did not arise with the behaviour of the Nazis themselves 'but with those that only "coordinated" themselves and did not act out of conviction' (Arendt, 1965-1966/2003, p. 54). This lack of conviction and thinking about 'what we are doing', she says, is the essence of 'the banality of evil' (1964/2006), where people do evil without actually being evil themselves. The banality of evil describes actions that can lead to evil consequences without being motivated by evil thinking, but merely *thoughtlessness*.

When we claim something from an organisational perspective, a manager's perspective, a consumer's perspective, a corporation's perspective, we lose sight of thinking, as if we were all the same, holding some specific stake at heart as 'stakeholders.' When we have become stakeholders, we freeze thinking. This allows for huge bureaucratic functions where the inevitable

tendency is 'to make functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery out of men, and thus to dehumanise them'. In the cog theory, as Arendt (1965-66/2003, p. 29) calls it, '[e]ach cog, that is, each person, must be expendable without changing the system', an assumption underlying all bureaucracies. 'If I had not done it, somebody else could have and would have.' We become disconnected within ourselves and the shift of responsibility becomes a matter of daily routine.

You *become* someone; a teacher or a lawyer, for example. But through these roles, something else manifests itself, 'something entirely idiosyncratic and undefinable', and yet 'unmistakably identifiable', for us to not be confused by sudden changes of reality. You freeze your personality. 'Language is the house of being' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 190), as opposed to *becoming*. It is what freezes our thinking. For instance, *'The word "house" is something like a frozen thought which thinking must unfreeze [...] whenever it wants to find out its original meaning'* [45] (Arendt, 1971/2003 pp. 172-173), because changes occur whether we like it or not, and the advantage of adopting the notion of a *persona* (beyond our professional roles) enables us to be fluid *with* them.

> The advantage of adopting the notion of *persona* for my considerations lies in the fact that the masks or roles which the world assigns us, and which we must accept and even acquire if we wish to take part in the world's play at all, are exchangeable (Arendt, 1975/2003, p. 13)

Based on this assumption, a way opened up for me to start to talk to my colleagues about love. What we care about taking care of. I wanted to engage with the question of *why* we have become functionaries in this hypocrisy, this dogma, this myth, rather than simply *how* it happened. This makes more room for peace and love, which are a necessary part of the search for sustainability because it always entail *the relational*. The question of why, namely, does not assume a linear process that cannot be stopped. For me,

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[45] For Arendt, the house is a metaphor for our shortcuts to meaning, and it 'holds the limits of all things'. It is an illustration of many different things – for example, a building, a home – which has to be unfrozen by thinking to find out its original meaning. This unfreezing 'meditation' practice is always without definition and totally without result; 'it might however be that for those who, for whatever reason, have pondered the meaning of the word *house* will make their apartments look a bit better - though not necessarily so and certainly without being conscious of anything so verifiable as cause and effect.' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 173)

those stories had the potential to light the way towards understanding sustainability within our field.

Even though Arendt had clear opinions about certain 'essence' of things, like that natality was the essence of education or instrumentality was the essence of 'the banality of evil,' she also believed that claiming essence of things could be dangerous, because it can freeze our thoughts. Similarly Latour talked about our tendency to fix 'the essence' of things when he wonders about *Organising as a mode of existence.*

> We all say that "it is in the blueprint" and in the "DNA" of our school only "after" we have decided what to draw from this heritage, and yet there is no question that we are really in search of an answer to the present crisis by going back to what our institution "really means" – yes, exactly: "What's the story?" (Latour, 2012, p. 169)

One way to decide our heritage in business education is to decide not to ignore the evil in the story. Evil is usually not an act but rather a consequence. 'The real evil is what causes us speechless horror, when all we can say is: This should never have happened' (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 75). *Are we already in the moment of speechless horror?* where we just observe our way out of the story? One day we will suddenly find that we have consumed ourselves to death, because we could not imagine a common world, because we could not imagine life without capitalism. '[T]here is something deadly serious in looking back to what our school means in order to decide which past to inherit,' says Latour (2012, p. 169). It is indeed deadly serious if we decide that the story of sustainability in business education, within the university, belongs in the category of a trend or hypocrisy. That is a clear example of the speechless horror, but in fact our decision to make.

From stupid to evil

Is capitalism evil or dumb? asks Jaeggi (2016), coming to the conclusion that the critique of our unsustainable system can be conducted in several different ways. In simply calling a case of 'functional stupidity' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016), we become stuck in only one of what Jaeggi suggests are three different types of argument against capitalism. The first is the (dis)functional critique which argues that the system is not working as it

should, but leaves out all moral and ethical considerations about how we could potentially move forward. In this argument, we easily forget what the crises are to begin with. The second is the ethical critique, which relates to how we can see sustainability as being and becoming, in a constant response to a common world rather than many private, alienated worlds. Here is where we experiment with new ways of becoming, because we believe we can do right. Evil, however, becomes important in Jaeggi's third argument, which he calls the moral critique, where we not only try to do right but dare to engage in a dialogue of right and wrong, good and evil. In Jaeggi's second and third arguments mentioned above, ethical and moral consideration lifts us to stand in conspicuous contrast to the zeitgeist of our modern times, call it capitalism or something else, zeitgeist built on exploitation and alienation (Jaeggi, 2016).

As I have already mentioned, when I came to start this inquiry, I had been feeling angry for many years, angry at:

My economics teacher for not acknowledging the injustices of the corrupt fishing quota system in Iceland.

The 'successful' and 'renewable' energy 'company of the year', the 'master's in CSR' that I was working for but quit when they started planning to destroy our rivers.

My education which I felt was not addressing, and more importantly did not care about, the major challenges of exploitation and injustice in the world.

I started to realise that my anger was towards normal people, including myself at times. People who were simply doing their jobs. Nice marketing people at energy companies who facilitate the building of more power plants (mostly for aluminium companies). Nice business educators simply trying to help their students to secure a career. Nice economics teachers who read bedtime stories to their kids. The question I wanted to became: *why do nice, normal people contribute to injustice, exploitation and destruction?* Or, more simply: *why do normal people do evil?*

I thought about all the good people whom I had had the privilege to know throughout my life, many of them in the 'business world' – people who were doing business and teaching business. How can business sound so

dark in relation to sustainability, with all these good people aboard? In my 'dialogues' with Hannah Arendt (2003), I was reminded that the grand challenges of the 21st century are not the first example of people doing evil just by the process of 'doing their job'. After Arendt attended the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, she came to the conclusion that Eichmann was not a monster but simply a 'banal bureaucrat' (Elon, 2006, p. xii). She observed a vulnerable man, an ordinary father of four who had just happened to work for Adolf Hitler to prove to the world and himself that he could be someone; a career man. It was there he got the chance to be 'a big man', while 'actually stupid […] but at the same time he is not' wrote Hannah Arendt in a letter to Karl Jaspers (in Elon, 2006, p. xii-xiii). It was not that Eichmann lacked knowledge about his wrongdoings, but simply that he was stuck in the mindset of 'doing his job' without being capable of thinking beyond that frame. There lay the boundaries of his consciousness. '[H]e remembered perfectly well that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to do – to ship millions of men, women, and children to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care' (Arendt, 2006a, p. 25). His focus was on doing his job well. As I write this, I cannot agree with Arendt that this man was not a monster; but the fact is that Eichmann had been certified as 'normal' by half a dozen psychiatrists. '[H]is attitude towards his wife and children, mother and father, brothers, sisters and friends, was not only normal but most desirable', one of them said, while a minister who visited Eichmann in prison following his appeal described him as 'a man with very positive ideas" (Arendt, 2006a, pp. 25-26).

Even though Eichmann knew that he was sending people to their deaths and certainly did so, he did not necessarily believe that it was the right thing to do. He simply did not think (in those terms). What is right and what is wrong. Do we bother to think about it? 'It happened so quickly and suddenly,' he said during the trial. As Arendt puts it: 'He had no time and less desire to be properly informed; he did not even know the Party program, and he had not read Mein Kampf' (Arendt, 2006, p. 33). You might wonder why he would have joined this evil association, then. 'Why not?' (Arendt, 2006, p. 33), was Eichmann's answer. Thinking outside his job description was nowhere present. This interpretation of Arendt's has been highly criticised (see Mozer and Sitt, 2022; Åsard, 2022) after tapes

were discovered of interviews with Eichmann, where he indeed talks about his Nazi ideology. In any case, it was clear that he was both a murderer and a loving family father, and whether his speech was out of true hatred or just a bureaucratic rhetoric to justify 'his job', no one knows. The evil was in any case a consequence of him doing his job.

I got the feeling that in the field of business, we had totally given up on the idea that we could engage in moral judgement about what is right and wrong. Or more importantly, we had given up the time to think. Why are we working in business school? I asked my fellow educators.

To keep us off the streets

- Birger

It is challenging to explore 'the banality of evil', especially where the context for this kind of evil necessarily concerns real people, 'flesh and blood', people you would not wish to call evil. It is so close to you; it is you. The banality of evil is concerned with a system, organisation, business or other depersonalised functions, but our response-ability towards it can never be about that. To be more precise, theorising around the banality of evil is always concerned with 'the behaviour of normal people' (Arendt, 2003, p. 278) who simply go along with a system that has been created for them. Arendt (165-166/2003, p. 278 [footnote no. 10]) explains:

> We are concerned with the behaviour of common people, not of Nazis or convinced Bolsheviks, not with saints or heroes, and not with born criminals. For if there is any such thing as what we call morality for want of a better term, it certainly concerns such common people and common happenings.

Fifty years after Arendt wrote on responsibility and judgement in the crisis of her time, these questions could not be more relevant, as we face arguably the most dramatic crisis in our history. Climate change, inequity, inequality to name a few have all reached their tipping points (see for example Gammon, 2021, Jul 27th). Arendt would say that people within organisations have to start to develop their moral character, what she called 'personality', or be given the time and opportunity to do so. Personality has

nothing to do with gifts or intelligence but is simply the 'almost automatic result of thoughtfulness' (Arendt, 2003, p. 95).

You challenged me personally
because you were asking me what I think
and I never really thought about that
because I always just put my professional hat on
and work within the system
with what is available
Your interview challenged me to think

-   Leif

Arendt points out the uselessness of looking at responsibility from a de-personalised functional or social perspective. Thus, to explore responsibility we will have to focus on the individual person because it is they who collectively hold the life in banal organisations. Furthermore, the only way to look evil in the eye is to get in touch with 'the personality' or 'the thinking being'.

> If he[/she] is a thinking being, rooted in his thoughts and remembrances, and hence knowing that he has to live with himself, there will be limits to what he can permit himself to do, and these limits will not be imposed on him from the outside, but will be self-set. These limits can change considerably and uncomfortably from person to person, from country to country, from century to century; but limitless, extreme evil is possible only where these self-grown roots […] are entirely absent (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 101)

The organisation owes its existence to its members, even though they often think that they owe their existence to the organisation. 'There is no such thing as a collective guilt or collective innocence; guilt and innocence make sense only when applied to individuals' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 29)

The Eichmann case created a total paradigm shift for Hannah Arendt which coloured all her work after that. Her astonishment at the 'normality' of Eichmann led her to make a clear distinction between 'radical evil' (a Kantian term), which is rooted in malicious intent, and 'banal evil', which involves taking actions that can lead to evil consequences without being

motivated by evil thinking, but merely *thoughtlessness*. She saw Eichmann as a 'middle-level manager who efficiently and even creatively' obeyed and implemented unethical orders, enabling massive harm (Nielsen, 2014, p. 381).

One way to theorise around the absence of thought in our modern society is to connect it to the concept of *functional stupidity,* which is distinctly similar to the concept of 'banality of evil'. Very early on in Alvesson and Spicer's (2016) book *The Stupidity Paradox: The Power and Pitfalls of Functional Stupidity at Work*, I find a direct link to my frustration around higher education, an environment where there are:

> […] too many kinds of stupidity to mention: pointless rebranding exercises, ritualistic box-ticking, misguided attempts at visionary leadership, thoughtless pursuit of rankings, to mention just a few. We were worried that all this stupidity was detracting from the core purpose of our institutions: to educate students, develop new knowledge and contribute to the wider community. (p. x)

However, I cannot agree that our biggest concern is whether or not we are dedicating enough time to educating students and developing knowledge. Higher education for business remains highly influential and a major driver of economic, social and environmental development (selective reference). The scientific knowledge community also has an uncontrolled technological and ideological power that almost never considers the cost of its development and thus takes no responsibility for it (Jonas, 1985). Thus, the questions should rather be *how* we educate, *how* we develop knowledge and *how* we contribute to the wider community – when we finally get the time or inclination to think (about why we are doing it at all).

A central phenomenon in Arendt's philosophy is 'crisis'. She wrote many essays around different kinds of crisis, including crisis of education. The conclusion was mostly very similar and connected to the absence of the 'thinking being'. When in crisis, which has 'overtaken the modern world everywhere' (Arendt, 1954/2006, p. 170), we are forced to make direct judgements, but these judgements cannot be based on current model or a strategy from the old world that created the crisis The answer does not lie

in believing that that all answers lie in the past but rather in encouraging and becoming involved in 'renewing the common world' (Arendt, 1954/2006a, p. 193). Whether it is World War II or the climate crisis of the 21st century, it is safe to say that it would never have happened if people had not simply signed up to a particular system, a totalitarian or inverted totalitarian system like capitalism (Wolin, 2017), without thinking. It seems that Alvesson and Spicer (2016) agree with this philosophy and apply it to the modern organisations.

> Smart organisations and the smart people who work in them often do stupid things because they work – at least in the short term. By avoiding careful thinking, people are able to simply get on with their job. (xi)

Just like Arendt observed in the case of Adolf Eichmann, people in the modern workplace may do their jobs correctly but without reflecting on the purpose and the wider context. Alvesson and Spicer (2016, p. 78) refer to a study that found that 'middle-level managers' often live in 'a morally ambiguous universe'. According to the study, the managers did not reflect on general assumptions that prevailed in their firms, even when they found them morally questionable. They simply followed a few simple rules that prevented them from too much thought. One manager explained:

> What is right in the corporation is not what is right in a man's home or in his church. What is right in the corporation is what the guy above you wants from you. (p. 79)

This observation is nothing new and is even older than Arendt. The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1849/2004) called this thoughtless person the 'philistine', someone who completely accepts the limits the world has set on him. As Alvesson and Spicer put it, people become 'seized by functional stupidity' and stop asking important questions, focusing instead on superficial appearances. They may appear to be doing their jobs effectively but often do things that make little sense (p. 9). Thus, they become the object of 'a paradox, simultaneously thoughtless and useful' (p. 13).

Just as Arendt problematises 'mass society', 'where everybody is tempted to regard himself[/herself] as a mere cog in some kind of machinery' (Arendt, 2003, p. 57), Alvesson and Spicer describe how 'thoughtlessness can be a collective function, virtually designed into organisations, and all the more powerful for it' (p. 55). This can often be useful for a specific purpose, just like organised hypocrisy, but in this state, people are always instruments and their existence is solely devoted to the function. Such people may be very smart (in the narrower understanding of the term) and often occupy a high status in society.

Alvesson and Spicer namely make a distinction between functional stupidity and pure stupidity. 'A typical feature of pure stupidity is that it is abnormal. Being stupid is often seen as doing something that is out of the ordinary' (p. 72).

> Those that are truly stupid don't recognise the impact of their behaviour. The stupid person is usually seen as someone who bumbles into a situation they don't understand, sets about doing all sorts of thoughtless things, creates a disaster and the simply walks away with a shrug of the shoulders. (p. 74)

On the other hand, functional stupidity tells a story of the 'normal' people who are simply excessively narrow in their approach to their purpose – good at what they are doing, but lacking reflexivity regarding their impact on society (and nature).

> Employees habitually avoid 'negative thinking' and look on the bright side. Professionals buy into systems that they suspect don't work. Employees follow rules that they know create more problems than they solve. In each of these cases people are thinking – but only in the most narrow and circumscribed ways. Outside the box lies thoughtlessness. (p. 72)

Hence, functional stupidity, just like the banality of evil, gives no space for moral thought. The only difference, as I see it, is that functional stupidity doesn't focus much on the harm that it can cause, and has already caused. The question that remains after reading the book is: is functional stupidity harmless?

Alvesson and Spicer call it a 'stupidity' paradox, where sometimes it can cause catastrophes but at other times it can be useful for a short-time purpose, similarly to organised hypocrisy.

In Mats Alvesson's (2021) lecture on functional stupidity, from a PhD course on Critical Management Studies at Lund University, but delivered online in May 2021, Alvesson mentions Adolf Eichmann as an example of pure stupidity, along with Homer Simpson. To send millions of people to their deaths without reflection or bad conscience must be pure stupidity, right? But Arendt would disagree with Alvesson, because her description of Eichmann perfectly fits the 'functional stupidity' paradigm. His behaviour exhibited all three of the telltale aspects of functional stupidity, namely:

(1) Not thinking about your assumptions (reflexivity);
(2) Not asking why you are doing something (justification); and
(3) Not considering the wider meaning or consequences of your actions (substantive reasoning). (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016, p. 78)

Eichmann did not go into the Nazi Party with any conviction. He was simply given a job there. He had no particular opinion on whether working for the Nazis was right or wrong, but confined his thinking to 'doing his job'. It was more convenient not to think any further than that. Functional stupidity goes on precisely 'when it is normal for people to be excessively narrow and focused' and when it leads to 'largely positive outcomes' (p. 78). The positive outcome for Eichmann was that as many Jews as possible would end up in concentration camps. In the functional stupidity paradigm, 'thoughtfulness can be seen as a time-consuming and a waste of valuable resources' (p. 75), and Eichmann had no time to waste.

Another example of 'pure stupidity' that Alvesson and Spicer (2016) mention is the financial bubble that caused the crash in 2008. They mention that many accounts from the time leading to the crash reveal extreme forms of stupidity, where 'bizarre behaviour was rewarded' (p. 72). But would that behaviour have seemed so bizarre at the time? The majority of people seemed to go along with it, just as the majority of Germans seemed to go along with Nazi policies. It is only after the fact, in light of the evil consequences, that we see these things as bizarre.

And here we come to the question of harm. Would Alvesson and Spicer agree with me that functional stupidity can be evil?

In their book, they admit that there are some cases when widespread functional stupidity can create dysfunctional outcomes. 'Often these problems can be overlooked,' they say, but 'there are times when they are so great that they become impossible to ignore' (p. 96). This, they explain, prompts reflexivity, where people start to ask deeper questions and search for justifications, which can lead to the response: 'How could I have been so stupid?' (p. 96). It is this Arendt calls, not stupid, but 'the speechless horror':

Thus, and again, if we now agree that the financial crash in 2008 should be considered a case of functional stupidity, where financial affairs leading up to it were at the time considered completely normal, with smart educated people were 'simply doing their job', afterwards we ended up in the moment of speechless horror, where all we could say was, 'How could we have been so stupid?'. Functional stupidity is thus no joke, especially in our time when we face such complex challenges. We cannot continue to talk about it only in a light and humorous tone, as if it were merely stupidity and not evil. And even though the financial crisis was nowhere near as serious as the socio-economic-environmental crisis of our time, in any case it is about real, drastic and horrifying human action that can never be recognised if the focus remains only on the stupidity itself, on explaining or observing it. Furthermore, we will never be able to connect it to the question of responsibility when 'reflexivity' only leads us to the moment of speechless horror. This is exactly why Arendt finds it so important to avoid ending up in speechless horror, and calls it by the right name, because from there we will never be able to practice our responsibility.

In functional stupidity, people avoid negative and disturbing thoughts and often focus on the positive and 'safer' aspects of organisational life. 'They assume that the way things are done around them is natural. In some cases, they claim it is hard to imagine alternatives' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016, p. 91). This fact we have to start to take seriously, because without alternative ways of thinking and doing, we will continue to reproduce injustice and

destroy the world with practices that harm the environment. Thus, functional stupidity in a modern organisational life is, from a macro perspective, about life and death, and in writing about it in those terms we acknowledge the question of 'whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it' (Arendt, 2006b, p. 193). Education is one platform for addressing these questions, according to Arendt. Alvesson and Spicer acknowledge that if you are able to block out experiences that trigger critical thinking, then you can avoid the vulnerability that comes with asking big questions (p. 93). However, they do not take the argument further than simply acknowledging this behaviour. But the vulnerability they mention is key to the discussion, because it is what allows us to open ourselves up to other alternatives, other possibilities – to 'a new world' (Arendt, 2006b, p. 174), before it even exists. Yes, it is vulnerable, but it is vital.

Both Arendt and Alvesson and Spicer explain that this 'thoughtlessness', which they each discuss under different circumstances, has nothing to do with cognitive shortcomings but is more about limiting yourself to a narrow understanding or description of the world, for reasons of convenience. Intellectual laziness, Alvesson and Spicer call it (p. 95). It seems to me that they are all theorising about the same thing, just using different empirical cases. One is bizarrely horrifying; the other is soon to be. Does it matter whether we talk about it as functional stupidity or the banality of evil?

We could go on and on about the bizarreness of the capitalistic system and the lack of critical reflection that lives within it. Talk about how neoliberalism is destroying the world and so on. However, this way of life is normalised and we have been made entirely dependent on it, where all the most respected and celebrated people practise it. Only when those respected people cannot get access to food any longer, or their homes have been overrun by climate refugees from all over the world, we will we stop and ask ourselves, 'How could we have been so stupid?'. Hopefully, this will be the beginning of a two-in-one dialogue with ourselves, where we start to question how we live our lives. But the troubles are so horrifying that when we start the process of thinking about sustainable issues, we will inevitably be led to the question, 'How could we have been so evil?'

Again, it is unclear to me whether Alvesson and Spicer think that functional stupidity can cause extreme harm, which they seem to assign to the category of 'pure stupidity'. They talk about 'dysfunction', but it never gets more serious than that. I suggest that we start to use better words to describe what is going on. All I know is that we cannot continue to mildly criticise this horrifying functional doings of evil, until it is impossible for us to celebrate how impactful and much cited we are in academia, because there will be no world left to cite?

Their examples of functional stupidity are rather harmless, and mostly concern 'meaningless and non-productive work being undertaken: writing plans, ticking boxes, endless meetings take over' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016, p. 93). They describe it as lack of critical thinking where 'we stop asking "why" at work' and 'fail to question dominant beliefs and expectations' (p. 79), like why we are working more hours than we actually want (Paulsen, 2014). But they do not necessarily focus on the potential harm this could cause, and is already causing (for those other than 'the middle manager', of course), and all the focus is on the stupidity itself. What we consider normal today and 'good' examples of functional stupidity, like growth and mass consumption, where we grow and grow without knowing why, and consume and consume without needing any of it, will most certainly lead to a devastating outcome for humanity and nature in the future – and will those practices then be considered 'pure stupidity'? Many have wondered and written about the potential 'whys' or this functional stupidity, like Max Weber, for instance, who links Protestantism with the development of capitalism where economic success is an intrinsic part of being a good citizen (Weber, 2005). But Weber did not call this evil. He simply described what he observed, similarly to Alvesson and Spicer. However, what we need is a warning. That is what Arendt gives us by calling functional stupidity what it (often) is: *evil*.

Alvesson, in his lecture, trivialised academics who use dead philosophers to help them theorise around modern issues 'as if they have something new and interesting to say'. But that is exactly what we need right now, because the crisis we are dealing with today (and most crises in history, for that matter) are matters of morality. Arendt did, however, not like to call

herself a philosopher and she was against finding labels for herself (Heberlein, 2020). She did not create theories either; she just theorised, and engaged in dialogue with friends, as you can read about in letters between her students Young-Bruehl and Kohn, (2001).

In my opinion, what Arendt calls 'the banality of evil' captures best what is really going on within our current sustainability crisis (including the crisis in academia), because it focuses directly on the crisis, on the evil, on the exploitation, on the violence and not just on the stupidity of white people. It confronts us with the potential harm we can actually cause when practising functional stupidity and it gives our responsibility more weight.

According to the extreme natural and social harm we cause under the watch of all our measurements and standards, it is fair to ask whether there is an Eichmann in all of us (Arendt also raises this question, 1965-1966/2003, p. 59) that needs to be confronted with difficult questions around our thinking and judgement of this world. Calling it functional stupidity distracts from the extreme harm it can cause to go through life without giving yourself time to think.

> *I mean I have been teaching international business*
> *I have to introduce theories that are completely irrelevant,*
> *completely outdated*
> *when I took over that course*
> *I was given the literature*
> *I was given what the lectures should be about*
>
> - Frode

At the same time, Frode is convinced that the world would be better off without courses in international business that fuel a multinational and exploitative corporate mindset.

Alvesson and various others in Critical Management Studies have opened up a space for young scholars to do research differently and more reflexively. However, in their book, Alvesson and Spicer do not confront the evil of all the 'normal' aspects of modern society. As they write themselves: 'We often value convenience over confronting the inconvenient truth' (p. 11).

What sparked my engagement with functional stupidity was Alvesson's lecture mentioned above, in which he described Eichmann as an example of 'pure stupidity', where in fact his own description of 'functional stupidity' was an illustration of Arendt's theorising on Eichmann. I confronted Alvesson after the class with that observation and he admitted that he had never read Arendt's book on Eichmann's case.

This kind of ignorance of Arendt is not new. Arendt's book on Eichmann started a 'civil war […] among intellectuals in the United States and Europe' (Elon, 2006, p. vii). Many thought she was releasing the Nazis from responsibility because she described Eichmann as 'banal evil' and not 'radical evil'. She certainly does not release him from responsibility, but uses his case to advance an understanding of how 'normal', otherwise good people can easily do harm, and more importantly, how we could create conditions to prevent it, and make them (us) take responsibility for the world. Some people question the legitimacy of her theorising, saying that she leaves a lot out of her description of Eichmann, and claiming that that his evil was not so banal (Åsard, 2022, 10 September). Arendt was more criticised than read, and her book on Eichmann is still controversial. Isaiah Berlin, a prominent philosopher, and Edmund Wilson, 'the well-known man of letters' (Elon, 2006, p. vii), argued for example about Arendt's book, but both accused each other of not reading it. I myself have also experienced that when Arendt is the subject of the discussion, whether at conferences, art exhibitions or lectures, her affair with Heidegger becomes the focus rather than her work, and now, when her actual case is used, it is misinterpreted. This unfair treatment of Arendt, as a woman philosopher, saddens me – a sadness that rose up again when I realised that Alvesson and his colleague had written a whole book on functional stupidity without reading what is probably the most famous case of functional stupidity the world has ever known. Can it be that Alvesson was not aware of this, given that he uses Eichmann as an example? 'Three years after the publication of the book, people were still bitterly divided over it. No book within living memory had elicited similar passions,' Elon (2006) writes in his introduction to Arendt's book on Eichmann, in an edition published after her death, even though 300,000 copies had sold before that.

This comparison of 'the banality of evil' and 'functional stupidity' will I hope contribute to the field of Critical Management Studies, where the main point of the matter is that we are dealing with dark forces that are a matter of life and death. Thus, sustainability in business education cannot continue to be compared to terms of a trend, a myth, or functional stupidity. It is way more urgent than that.

> Why is it important that we teach business? I ask
> *Why?*
> *You can also ask why do we exist?*
> *I would say, when you do some kind of a research project,*
> *the big why – why bother?*
> *It is too devastating to ask yourself that question too many times*
> - Birger

Management theories according to Alvesson are either 'meaningless' (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013) or 'stupid' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2018). But why do we have to be meaningful if we are mostly just stupid? Why is it so important that management theories become influential? Whether management theories are influential (Engvall, 1992/2009; Sahlin-Andersson, 2006) or not (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013), I suppose we have to figure out why it is meaningful to be influential at all?

All these important opening wedges into my thinking around business and sustainability, those of hypocrisy, trends and functional stupidity, have moved me, so much so that I had to write a whole essay of the struggles with exploring them. This process towards a one-world ontology along with the comparison of 'the banality of evil' and 'functional stupidity', in my call for *urgency* within our education, I hope will contribute to our field of organisation and Critical Management Studies.

Essay VI: Evil

> *Many people want to think about hope and the future as a better space, but this 'better space' depends on what we do today, on us building our capacity to compost this shit, which is not necessarily a pleasurable process.*
> (Andreotti in Chayne, 2022, January 4th)

The concept of evil has a multifaceted relationship to this inquiry. Firstly, it is a concept that has guided my research process from the very beginning. What sparked this research was the desire to understand how nice, normal people, in businesses and in business education, could contribute to so much evil in the world, or at least be ignorant of it; to be with 'the banality of evil' (Arendt, 2006b).

Hannah Arendt asked this exact same question about how normal people do evil, and quite organically I started to engage with her theorising on evil. In reading Arendt (1971/2003), I felt empowered to express the struggle I perceived in the relationship between business and sustainability. At first, this question was purely methodological in the sense that it legitimised the question I wanted to ask in the field of business studies: the simple question of 'What are we doing?' (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 5). Arendt reminds us that people tend to forget to ask this question, which she claims enables us to do the greatest of all evils.

> The greatest evil is not radical, it has no roots, and because it has no roots it has no limitations, it can go to unthinkable extremes and sweep over the whole world [...] in rootless evil there is no person left whom one could ever forgive. (Arendt, 2003, p. 95)

This emergence of evil lies in what Arendt calls 'the banality of evil', which refers to a certain bureaucratic and collective mindset where we withdraw ourselves from making judgements. I started to wonder how business educators whom I knew to be normal and nice could sign up to the continuation of current business practices, when the correlation between business (in the form of economic growth) and sustainability challenges is so evident (Pisani, 2006; Kopnina, 2012). This is the first connection to the

concept of evil. In using the word evil to *think with* sustainability challenges helped me, as well, to stay in *with* the trouble. To no lose sight of it beneath various theories of explanation.

Secondly, the concept of evil presents an opportunity to define sustainability without having to narrow down the definition into something specific. Instead of defining sustainability towards a specific new world, which is yet unknown, you rather work on engaging with the 'no more' on the other end, in the world that has been, where we already know what cannot work. In this way sustainability becomes 'the end of the world as we know it' (Stein et al. 2021; Kopnina, 2020).

A third connection with evil arose from my empirical dialogue with business educators on sustainability in business education. In our conversations, I discovered an evil sound. Hazen (1993, p. 20) inspires us to pay attention to sounds within organisations. 'Organisations are sound,' she insists while calling out to us to listen to one another within organisations in all our multiplicity.

> Understanding organizations as words - stories, discourses, or texts - is an alternative. Dialogue and polyphony, borrowed from literature and music, are metaphors which assist in understanding and allowing for inclusive change in patterns of organizing among people who perceive, value, and act from different appreciative system (Vickers, 1968) and speak with diverse voices (Hazen, 1993, p. 15).

Hazen encouraged me to trust in the sound I heard and emerged in the different conversations with the educators when in dialogue about the difficulties of teaching sustainability in business education. When speaking of sustainability business started to sound evil.

> If we conceive of organization as many dialogues occurring simultaneously and sequentially, as polyphony, we begin to hear differences and possibilities. We discover that each voice, each person, is his/or her centre of any organization. And it is from each of these dynamic centres that change occurs (Hazen, 1993, p. 16).

I started to wonder if listening carefully to this sound would help me (or us) to engage with sustainability in new ways, while our world is burning,

and where if not different, in the end, all we can say is: 'This should never have happened'?

In this essay, I attempt to describe this sound and how it manifests with relation to different themes. A certain dark reality emerged in analysing those conversations through the concept of evil. However, the analysis also points us towards a possibility for a different kind of engagement with sustainability. I argue that telling a story about sustainability through the lens of evil gives us business educators an opportunity to confront ourselves in a different way, opening up new possibilities of becoming in business education.

The evil sound of business

[...] transformation is if you can get a student
that dreams of becoming a businessperson
to not dream about that anymore
-Harald

One of the most prominent finding of this inquiry is that the 'business-like' idea clearly becomes something that has a negative meaning once sustainability becomes a part of the discussion. So negative that not even business educators want to be part of it anymore. Business educators who have taken on questions of sustainability in their teaching have a hard time feeling as if they belong to the context of 'business'. This is perhaps nothing strange and may not have anything to do with sustainability, but rather academic practice in general. Many of the educators thought of themselves as *academics* in search for truth or meaning. In trying to put meaning into something, 'in the realm of being human' often tends to involve distancing oneself from one's immediate environment, in order to claim academic power (Ihde, 1986, p. 27). However, this raises the question of what it means to educate for something one cannot imagine being or becoming. Is that sustainable? Imagine educators in medicine not believing in the medical profession, or lecturers in engineering feeling sceptical towards engineers. For the educators I spoke with, being a 'businessperson' was something that they obviously did not aspire to. I recognise this feeling myself. I asked them to close their eyes and imagine a businessperson, a

graduate of their school. What was it that they were separating themselves from?

I see someone in a uniform
dark uniform

I see a man in a suit
quite busy
dealing with the external world
it is limiting
he is not thinking very much

A financial magician
he wants to get a job in London
international-oriented person

It is a very neutral person
not someone who stands out
completely normal

I have never been a businessperson
these people are not very reflexive
not interested in deep understanding
very specialised
I look at the MBA populations
it is rather depressing

What is a firm?
Extension of a state power
and businesspeople are those
that use this kind of power
for their own private purposes

It is a person working for a profit-making company

It is limiting
It is not me

-   Chorus of voices

What does it mean to educate for something you do not want associate with?

I reflected on this question with a few of the educators when meeting with them for the second time. They did not see anything strange about separating themselves from the field of business at large.

> I assume we all identify as academics, and as academics we study business as an object of investigation, so it is fairly natural for most of us to see ourselves not as part of business but rather as someone looking from the outside in, so I think that is probably an answer, and even people who are doing relatively functionalised research that is meant to enhance business benefits, I think they would probably see themselves also in that manner, I don't think that they see themselves as part of business...
>
> - Frode

The educators that educate within sustainability see themselves as the 'critical voice' in business, but it is hard for them to deny that they are educating students to become businesspeople. Taking a step back, the subject of this essay is not the detachment in itself – the fact that the educators detach themselves in order to be the 'objective observer'. The question is *what* exactly they are choosing to detach *from*. Answers can be found in listening to the evil sound that emerged in our dialogue about sustainability in business education.

'Historically, business has always been dirty,' Birger tells me during a conversation where we are discussing our sense of struggling to belong to business. Birger is a scholar of organisational theory, which he describes as being the ultimate hiding place in the Nordic business school. Behind organisational theory, 'you can do anything!'. He paints it as a free academic playing field where you can stretch your arms out in any direction. At the same time, however, he emphasises the importance of belonging to a business school. 'Why?' I ask. Well, because no one outside of the business school is interested in corporations. It is dirty. But Birger does not have so much of a problem with being in business education. He is paid by the business school to do research on what interests him, which he considers as not really belonging to business anyway. This is what allows

him to cope with the dark reality of corporations. Organisational theory, he implies, is not overtly about helping businesses to make money (like other subjects in business schools).

The great thing about being in a business school
is that people think that you are doing something 'useful'
to make companies more effective.
But I am just a sociologist who can get away with a lot in a business school.
You get money to do research about what you think is interesting
You criticise companies,
but the companies don't care anyway
because they don't hire sociologists.

\- Birger

Birger's educational background is in business studies, but still today, after decades in this field, he does not feel that he belongs to the field of business. He is not alone. As I travel around business studies conferences and seminars, I find that pretty much everyone who is starting to reflect on sustainability issues in their work makes excuses for their being in business.

'I have a horrible confession to make,' says the director of an interdisciplinary research centre run by my university. During my visit to their summer school to deepen my knowledge on interdisciplinary methods towards a more sustainable academic life, the director continued; 'I have a background in business studies.' Shamefaced, he tells us how he began his academic career 'on the dark side', and we listen as he describes how he eventually removed himself from business to find a more honest and meaningful place at the university. A few weeks later, I found myself at a conference about the 'future of business studies' (FEKIS, 2022) where a speaker on responsible management education told a similar story about how he left the context of business to look for a more meaningful role in society. He could not stand the business world, he said, but tolerated to educate for it. It was however unclear what it was that he wanted to change. We were still in search of a 'new grammar', a 'new language', a 'new alternative' for business. Being in business was so painful, yet the opportunities were endless.

'There is room for so much today,' says Ludvik a business educator at SSE I interviewed at my Campus while he was visiting Visby. His word reminded me of how many of the other educators I had spoken with had illustrated this same point in different ways.

There is room for so much today
a lot of mindfulness,
a lot of racism.
More awareness
more growth
more investments in the Amazon
the SDGs
more consumption
more sustainability

- Chorus of voices

I wrote in my diary after our conversation: *What if we were to focus more on what it is that we do not want to be part of, instead of continuously adding more and more to the context of business until suddenly we lose being able to pay attention to anything anymore?*

Living in a world with such extreme sustainability challenges, caused by human activity, it should be hard to ignore the question of *evil*. But somehow, I have yet to come across this word in a sustainability narrative, from either a business or an organisational perspective. There is 'risk', and there is 'cost'. There is 'reduction of harm' and there is 'stupidity', but most importantly 'an opportunity'! In business studies, you seldom find theories or ideas that describe exactly what is happening on the dark side of business. We talk about trends or systems. Rational myths and organised hypocrisy. Alvesson and Wilmott (2012, p. 2) point out that the management narrative in business schools tells us that we are building competencies in innovation and developing corporate culture, while leaving out that it is actually about 'controlling and exploiting'.

Arendt (1958/1998, p. 131) phrases it so well when warning us about the business of 'the modern age', which is an age of 'labour and consumption', where the problem becomes 'how to provide enough opportunity for daily

exhaustion to keep the capacity for consumption intact' which becomes a conscious abstention from all activities connected with mere being alive'. When confronted with questions of sustainability, we suddenly realise that:

Now it seems like we are creating a life that nobody wants

- Estrid

And just like that, sustainability shows us that business opportunities have limits; they are exhausting, not only to the environment but to ourselves, and we have a hard time 'liv[ing] in peace' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 44) with ourselves in this environment. We become 'nonparticipants.' Arendt observed these 'nonparticipants' in Germany in the becoming of the World War II.

> … they asked themselves to what extent they would still be able to live in peace with themselves after having committed certain deeds; and they decided that it would be better to do nothing, not because the world would then be changed for the better, but simply because only on this condition could they go on living with themselves at all. Hence, they also chose to die when they were forced to participate. (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 44)

When the idea of sustainability enters into our lives, in all its plural forms, all of a sudden, we cannot participate with 'them' (the businesspersons).

[…] of course there are norms that do not make much sense

I think everyone here recognises that there are norms

Highly damaging

Highly exploitative

Values that most people would not hold themselves

…says Harald, so effortlessly that I could almost believe that he had stopped caring about what he was educating in. I know better, though. Harald dedicates himself to implementing alternative ways of being in his school, focusing solely on teaching sustainability and responsibility, but

explains that there is a certain lack in the vocabulary within business studies that hinders him from getting closer to a more genuine becoming in business.

> *And I spend a lot of time thinking about my role,*
> *how it contributes to and maintains this system*
> *a system that is clearly built on modes of exploitation*
> *done so blatantly*
> *mechanisms that we say we cannot resist*
> *it is fairly pathetic*

Harald has some hope, though, and sees the educational sphere in a slightly different way than the 'business world'. He feels there should be more room for resisting exploitative ways of being:

> *the tensions are not as severe*
> *but perhaps we are cynical*
> *we don't believe that we have the possibility to resist*
> *we see it as inherently dangerous*

Harald is talking about us, business educators. I started to wonder if it is this pressure to resist that is the problem. Resistance means that you are refraining from taking action. Could engaging with what we 'ought' to resist be a better alternative? As I see it, the danger of resisting lies in non-participation and is not about non-acting. You can namely act in other ways. Instead of constantly trying to define sustainability as something specific, narrowing it down to a particular set of values to favour or not favour, resist or not resist, what if we could engage with this potential resistance in other ways? Keeping the definition of sustainability open by defining it through engagement *with* evil, instead of forcing a resistance *to* evil, could perhaps help us to better connect to an area in our field that needs 'maturing'.

Arendt's (2003) theorising on responsibility and judgement recognises the importance of paying attention to evil, specifically evil that is a consequence of us suppressing parts of ourselves, parts that we do not want to live with. Parts that we constantly try to resist. In my conversations with educators, it became quite evident that even though they certainly did not

want to be 'businesspeople', they had not started the process of engaging with the question of what exactly it is that they are rejecting. What they 'knew' was that they were different from 'the rest' and 'the mainstream', but they did not dare to reflect on what they were defining themselves against. It was hard to decide on what not to be, to engage with what is considered damaging or evil, because according to the educators, it is exactly that side of business that the students are interested in. 'Students seem to be interested in courses that, from my point of view, are not that relevant. We [actually] do not need more bankers in this world,' Birger says, before acknowledging the role of the business schools 'in influencing the students' preferences. For the educators' part, they try to keep their distance, and let the consultancies and bankers take care of teaching the students about 'what the businesses want'. Birger continues: 'I don't know if we in academia are trying to keep too much of a critical distance from what is going on in the real world, but consultancies are out there doing what business needs and wants.' The educators had a common understanding of why certain sectors are so dominant in business schools. 'Look at the banks in London and New York; I mean, people make a lot of money and have a high status.' Birger becomes silent for a little while, and seems to downplay the role of the business schools in the rapidly growing economic development. '[A] lot of the companies that come here to visit the school are representatives from those kinds of companies, so it is coloured by that.'

I mean,
this is an elite school.
It makes sense
from an instrumental point of view
that companies from these sectors are guests here that we represent
because that is the top-of-the-line work
in terms of prestige coupled with money

- Birger

Prestige and money represent the 'common sense' of business schools. Erik at CBS puts it like this: 'I mean, people are getting socialised into big corporations in all kinds of ways here.' At the same time, most of the educators spoke about these more prestigious and multinational industries

that the schools have connections to as completely useless, irrelevant, and even dangerous in relation to sustainability.

We don't need more bankers in the world
we don't even need more business-trained people
there is this certain idea of what you should teach in a business school
that is very instrumental
A lot of these choices we make in terms of career
is part of the fundamental problem

- Chorus of voices

However, Birger goes on to explain how the students value the 'main-stream courses more, because that is what they are going to work with'. Listening to him speak, I felt a sense of scepticism about the world that awaits the students outside the business school; an evil world that might be turned into 'too much of a fantasy' within the schools, like Frode phrased it.

It would be good
if the shock were dampened somehow
for the students
in terms of what might come in the future,
in terms of this incredibly unsustainable nature of capitalism
as a sort of a market system
or as a political system at large

- Harald

I asked the educators to imagine what they would choose to have instead of bankers and consultants. Instead of what they have now. 'Well, first of all I would not work in a business school, which I am doing now,' says Gunhild, who is clearly struggling with these existential questions. I was surprised. 'Can't you choose whether you are here or not?' I asked.

Yes, maybe I can
I am becoming,
more and more
I don't believe in this

-   Gunhild

The educators expressed their concerns about how the students are mostly interested in 'trivial' industries like 'clothing and electronics'. Even those that are 'serious-minded' and 'have the mission to change how businesses do business' are still 'going to go out and be[come] start ups' with their 'tiny super-niche hipster' ideas. Gudrun explains with a sense of exhaustion how she does not believe that 'bringing your own jar' to the store is going to change how businesses do business. 'I can't see where that will take them.'

When I teach my students about sustainability.
I see environmental catastrophes
they see business opportunities.
That is not what I want them to see.
But that is usually what it becomes
when we teach sustainable business.
It becomes about green technologies.
We are just continuing producing.
It is not taking responsibility.
It is the opposite of taking responsibility.

-   Gudrun

Estrid shares this concern with her colleague, but explains that the struggle with teaching sustainability in business education could have other explanations than solely a lack of imagination, beyond production and consumption. The students seem to struggle with the competitive environment in business schools, and have a hard time stepping outside of what has become the norm, where the place to be is investment banks and consultancies. 'They feel the pressure of doing what everybody else is doing', which makes it difficult for them to listen 'to their own values or what really motivates them'. It seems scary to Estrid that the schools have such power to shape their students in that sense, 'that [they] should all be the same'.

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There are these expectations
There is a certain rumour
That you should be a certain way
They reproduce this norm within themselves
But it is also forced upon them
Or maybe not forced
But matured

-   Estrid

Nobody could really say where these 'rumours' about business came from, but it was also clear that the educators did not feel they had much authority to influence the students' decisions once they exit the education.

And let us imagine
if business schools were being reflective and critical,
but students were still going into careers in management consultancies and banking,
nothing will change.
They might be more reflective over a glass of wine.

-   Birger

Through rumour and rational reasoning, a certain sound emerges within the schools. The traces of cynicism in the educators' voices created a rather depressing and hopeless atmosphere in the space between us. In the chorus of the educators' voices, a powerful story of *the others* emerged: the students who spread rumours, the other teachers who create expectations, and the outside world that is so dangerous that it cannot be saved.

I was drawn to the debate about sustainability in part because I felt so much evil coming from the economic perspective that is represented in business schools. I wanted to understand how we in the field of business education could be contributing to this evil to such a high degree. Us – the normal people. This happens to be one of the main questions Arendt grapples with in her philosophy, specifically in relation to World War II

and how millions of ordinary Germans could have considered it right to kill six million Jews (Arendt, 2006b). More than 50 years later, I sit in the grounds of my university campus on Gotland trying to understand how me and my ordinary colleagues can continue year on year to send our students out to be businesspeople – a significant group in society often considered to be the greatest contributors to the three Cs: control, consumption and competition, the essence of business today. These Cs are exhausting our environment, exploiting people and animals, and currently the greatest antagonist to equity and equality.

> *I never thought I would end up in business education.*
> *It was the 80s.*
> *It was a horrible time.*
> *The Wall Street spirit,*
> *neo-liberalism,*
> *making money,*
> *greed is good.*

> \- Gunhild

This essence of business has not only created a disastrous climate crisis, but also a dramatic injustice represented in growing inequity and inequality. Sheldon S. Wolin (2003) interestingly argues that this neoclassical paradigm, which he calls *managed democracy*, is the totalitarian system of our time, but inverted and hidden under the promise of freedom. Here, individual freedom actually becomes impossible because of the oppression of this unsustainable system, in which only a few hold the power, but all are a part of reproducing it, horrifyingly similar to a traditional totalitarian systems. Even though Arendt (1964/2003) would not agree with Wolin about the impossibility of freedom under these conditions, she makes it clear that totalitarianism is not only connected to government, and that total domination can reach out to all spheres of life. She calls this 'totalitarian society', formed by 'the masses' (p. 33). While the business sector is flourishing and growing by the day, along with the business schools and business departments, with more students than any other subject (Parker, 2018; PRME 2020), climate change, inequity and inequality are increasing

(Ripple et al. 2021; Oxfam, 2020). Why are we not doing anything to challenge it? This is the core question in Arendt's philosophy around responsibility. Why are we – the nice people, the normal people – not doing anything?

But people actually are trying to do something. All the schools I visited had various initiatives related to sustainability, under the framing of 'global challenges' and/or 'global responsibility', in the form of introductory days or entire programmes that run in parallel with the 'traditional curricula'. However, the educators involved in these efforts had little faith in their potential success.

> *And now every student is taking this programme*
> *and I feel it is very meaningful*
> *[but at the same time]*
> *because everybody is taking it*
> *they can say*
> *– we're fine now,*
> *we can continue to destroy the world*

> \- Gunhild

I became curious, no longer about how sustainability works within these business schools, but more about how the educators had become 'functionaries in the organisation' that has such an evil sound. This is the question Arendt (2003, p. 58) recommends asking to try to understand why we are not responding to urgent and dangerous challenges, such as those that sustainability confronts us with.

The most fundamental question in Arendt's philosophy on responsibility is: why do normal people do evil? The difficulty of opening up a discussion on evil and resisting the fairytale of business studies – a fairytale that is not rooted in public good but more attached to private gain – became the greatest barrier to enabling sustainability within the educators' work. But the fear of addressing evil as a consequence of our decisions can eventually lead us to what Arendt calls the 'speechless horror'.

*The real evil is
what causes us speechless horror,
when all we can say is:
This should never have happened.*

(Arendt, 1965-1966/2003, p. 75)

'Green capitalism' was the new 'fairytale' of the PRME Champion business schools, according to the educators, and it was quite clear that they had limited faith in it. What was sad to see was that those educators who had the least faith in this 'green strategic turn' tended to adopt the mindset that the only thing left to do was to 'wait and see' until the sustainability catastrophes force us into a general change of necessity in orientation. Some educators did not even believe that such a change could happen while human beings were still living on the earth. 'I don't even care whether humans [continue to exist] or not, because apparently we are the ones that have destroyed this planet, so maybe it is better that we disappear,' Sif told me; she had a harder time, however, imagining the end of capitalism. Gunhild took a similar tone when reflecting on why business educators even do sustainability at all. Maybe we do it 'to save the planet in order to survive, but you know, sometimes I just feel maybe we should just do the opposite; let humanity die so something better can come along.' It becomes 'easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism,' is the famous phrase written by Jameson (1994, p.xii), and here we had good examples of that.

This hope for the end of the world, Isabelle Stengers (2021, p. 138) writes, is fuelled by despair, and concludes that it seems we will have to put our trust in capitalism until we are forced to do otherwise. Everything else is uncertain. Placing trust in uncertainty, is another way of becoming, a becoming that is worth living and being, but 'may seem foolish', as Stangers (2021) points out. Placing trust in uncertainty might however be the only ways we can escape the moment of speechless horror. In this regard, Arendt encourages us 'to think what we are doing' – to simply ask, 'What are we doing?' (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 5), because knowing 'what we do, or do not do, the way we consent to the fight or give it up, is part of the making of the future' (Stanger, 2021, p. 139). However, it seems to me that

this simple question is not discussed in business schools in general, because it leads us into dangerous territory; namely, towards questioning their very existence, as Harald implies:

I feel like the changes that are being made here
are only Band-Aids for the kind of problems that we are producing,
because the fundamental question is so dangerous
that it is illegitimate to ask in a business school

- Harald

When crafting the educators' comments into polyphonic prose of voices that emerged in conversation with me and with each other, a certain sound emerges. What are these voices telling us? What does this dark sound tell us?

Evil as a 'reality check'

This essay is one attempt to define sustainability as it is thought of in Scandinavian business schools that have committed to be Champions of sustainability. Searching for sustainability is difficult. It can be everything and nothing; 'an empty signifier', Harald calls it.

Sustainability
is like motherhood and apple pie,
it represents the kind of values everyone wants to hold,
but produces an idea that no one is accountable
no one is responsible.

- Harald

Early on in my attempts to discuss sustainability with business educators, it became quite clear that we needed to start making sense of 'business' first, before welcoming sustainability into the discussion. Because despite the increased focus on sustainability in business schools, educators within them seem to feel that business is everything sustainability is not.

In this way, the evil sound of business becomes the core of the definition of sustainability in business education, which is namely:

An attempt to enlighten and provide opportunities for students

To learn

Not about the fairytale world of management textbooks

But about something that is rooted

in the harsh reality we are living in

- Frode

Frode wants his courses to provide this kind of 'reality check' to be able to live up to the promise of education, to teach 'the world as it is' (Arendt, 1954/2006a, p. 186). Frode continues:

In comparison with what business studies will tell you

They are in a world of their own

They are in a world where you isolate history

There is no story of how business came about

- Frode

Awareness of the evil exploitation businesses engage in becomes the core of being with sustainability in business education. However, once confronted with that obvious matter, business studies all of a sudden becomes *they* and not *us*.

Why is it important to address evil when thinking about sustainability in business? The concept of sustainability is so ambiguous in this context that people get away with doing whatever they like with it. It is perceived as external to the field and has not yet found a home there. Lost in the sophistication of observing it as an external trend or a movement in the most abstract and general way possible, we might forget that sustainability could be more about economy and business than we dare to realise.

'When all are guilty, no one is,' wrote Arendt (2003, p. 28) on the impossibility of engaging with the idea of responsibility from a 'mass society'

perspective – or in our case, through an organisational perspective, a managers' perspective, a consumer's perspective, a corporation's perspective, as these functions are all holding some kind of specific and private stake of own interest, where the only thing they have in common is the enemy, an external pressure or burden.

We can all agree that we do not want climate change to happen
but it remains this kind of abstract notion
that has very little connection to what corporations are doing,
so it becomes a common enemy,
but it is not climate change that is the enemy,
it is the people and corporations,
so we do not always speak with the right vocabulary about this

- Harald

What we hear from the chorus of educators in the Champion schools is that sustainability in business education has to be an attempt to change and become 'anew' (Kohn in Arendt, 2003, p. xi), become something different. Moreover, and more importantly, it could be defined as an impetus to start to simply but seriously think about and engage in a dialogue about 'What are we doing?' (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 5). This would make sustainability less abstract and help to situate it in relation to the process of becoming in business, to define it through the stigma that exists in the field. Maybe it is no more complicated than that. Dixson-Declève et al. (2022) write in their new book *Earth for All* that sustainability now should in fact be engaging mainly with questions about business and economy and much less about the environment and climate change.

In my conversation with educators, it became impossible to pin down a specific definition of sustainability, and the discussion easily shifted towards what needed to be changed within this harsh reality that the educators were trying to illustrate (and detach from) in their academic life. It seemed unbearable for them to imagine a personal responsibility for the 'harsh world' out there. The faceless enemy becomes an overwhelming and external character in the illustration of this harsh reality, where the world was evil instead of looking at evil as a consequence. I experienced how difficult it was for the educators to confront it or talk about it in a

concrete manner. On personal responsibility, in contrast to corporate responsibility, Arendt (1964/2003) discusses the importance of confronting harsh reality in a concrete manner while referencing to the Holocaust. The discussion would disappear into nothing if we were to ignore the fact that six million innocent people were actually killed. This idea she adapts to modern society as well and puts it into a bigger context where she flirts with the idea that the matter of concern becomes, not about in this particular case, that six million Jews were killed, but how all the others became functionaries in a system that does those kinds of horrific things. And here I am writing this thesis that in all likelihood very few will read, while thousands of children are dying in Gaza, while the country I live in is exporting weapons. While glaciers are melting, while corals are disappearing, and while gorillas and polar bears are losing their homes, bumble bees are fighting for their lives (and ours), and my home country, Iceland, is killing whales because few men benefit financially. Perhaps I should stop writing? But how can we bring these stories to our education? Should we not tell 'the world as it is'?

The sound of evil I try to listen to, and compose at the same time here above, is more shocking than simply talking about 'decreasing harm' or 'lesser negative impacts.' It is thought put in flesh towards a judgement that says, 'I don't accept to live in a world like this'. Today, people are forced to drink dirty water, gorillas are losing their habitat, whales are becoming storage for discarded plastic bags, and twenty of the world's men have more wealth than all the women in Africa (Oxfam, 2020). This is the world we are legitimising every day in business schools.

> *Business theories legitimise the state of the world*
> *without any mention of colonial history*
> *or patterns of exploitation.*
> *It is important to make the students*
> *understand the amount of exploitation in the world of resources*
> *they might have a bit too rosy a picture of reality*

>   - Frode

Educators described sustainability as a kind of response to an evil reality and a way of giving the students a 'reality check' against the rosy picture

of the 'social entrepreneur' with their 'tiny super-niche hipster' ideas, as Gudrun so wryly put it. There was not much about clearly defined sustainability values that the educators believed in, and thus the definition of sustainability developed more through a certain despair than hope for something in particular.

Teaching sustainability is about
understanding complexities,
creating people that can think on their own
and are capable of taking new developments into account,
but I do not believe that I should raise a very particular,
clearly defined,
awareness of sustainability

-Ludvik

Ludvik was clearly already past the idea of sustainability as a particular concept to be defined. 'I try to create opportunities for students to know themselves, to be a little bit more present with themselves and other people. To give them tools for self-awareness, to give them opportunities to explore what their values are and to do exercises where they can discover their [own] privileges.'

It is reflection
it is interdisciplinarity
it is a leadership theory and a multi-stakeholder approach
it is about time
it is challenging the students' thinking
it is provoking the students
it is critical thinking and reflexivity
it is values
it is ethics
it is responsibility
it is about imagination

it is about the SDGs
it is about corporate citizenship
it is about innovation
it is about legitimacy
it is strategy
it is just another management concept

- Chorus of voices

The educators frequently jumped between practical, theoretical and methodological definitions of sustainability, but most often landed in the need to *change*. 'I think that we need to kind of change [our] awareness, collective awareness. How can we do that, and how can we become more present in the world instead of being more absent?' Estrid wondered as we spoke, and questioned whether raising awareness was enough. 'It seems like we really need to rethink things. […] it has to be …

new ways of looking at value,
new ways of looking at status,
new social relationships […]
but that is not happening,
it is going the opposite direction.

- Gunhild

Rethinking business education entirely was what the educators were calling for, yet nobody seemed to feel they were actually doing it. They did not want to 'just add another track' *on* business, as Estrid put it, 'and continue destroying the world', in Gunhild's words. They stressed the need for a drastic change in business education, where much doubt was expressed about ongoing 'champion' work.

Instead of focusing on the definition of sustainability in business schools and the current methodological approaches around it, I started to pay more attention to this apparently common sense of conflict in business studies, this need to excuse and distance ourselves from 'the field' when confronted with sustainability questions. In our conversations it became much easier to define yourself away from business. Can this distancing tell us something more about how to connect differently to sustainability in business education?

We know that people that have big jobs in big companies
are trying to be sustainable
playing the corporate game
finding ways to do good things
while also improving the companies' competitive standing.
There is a lot of green washing,
rainbow washing
or whatever it is called these days
these people think
that talking about moral issues
is just going to mess things up.
There are strong beliefs
that we can just use cost-benefit analysis
on pretty much everything
and come up with the best solutions
…
cost-benefit analysis leads to horrors
and that needs to be challenged

- Erik

The 'mysterious necessity' of evil

Staying with evil is an attempt to better connect to the need to let go of certain things within business education that once confronted not many would disagree of their harmful practices. Slowly we will need to engage in judgements. Calling out the evil in business is just the beginning and has little to do with *engagement*. Calling business exploitative, instrumental and alienating, or counting the victims of climate change and inequality, can perhaps give us an idea of what elements we do not want and cannot include in the definition of sustainability. Engagement, on the other hand, lies in the realisation that the evil happens within the current framework of business and business education. In her analysis of the trial of former Nazi official Adolf Eichmann, Arendt points out that he objected not to the charge of murder but to that of cruelty. Thus, the moral point of the matter in that case was not calling it 'genocide' or counting the many millions of victims. The moral point is reached only 'when we realised that this happened in the legal order' (Arendt, 2003 p. 42). It is first hen we *engage* with morality. Without this realisation, an ordinary person can commit evil and easily become something that they 'fundamentally are not' (Arendt, 2003, p. 14).

The educators found it difficult to discuss, both with me and the students, how the reproduction of the prevailing order in business schools was related to the drastic sustainability challenges of our time. They had no data, no correlation to prove that business education could be somewhat responsible. However, most did not doubt that there was a relationship, and it was not a good one. They simply did not know how to tackle it, but it was not *rational* for them to step away from the evil.

On Harald's 'half joke' about sustainability in business education being about trying to persuade the students not to go into business, I asked why he was only 'half' joking.

Well, I cannot have any impact on what they choose to do
it is not like I can have that as a learning outcome
I do not want the students to drop out
I want to be able to support them in their aims.
What I can do is to give them a vocabulary
they do what they want with it.

- Harald

'All is permitted' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 42) is how Arendt describes the nihilism of modernity, and this became very evident during my research. Educators did not want to sit in any judgement of their students. 'All is permitted', and if we do not support the students aims, somebody else will, seeing little relationship between their students' aims and the framework that we business educators provide for them.

'If I had not done it, somebody else could have and would have' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 29) is the ultimate expression of the cog theory, where '[e]ach cog, that is, each person, must be expendable without changing the system'. We become disconnected within ourselves and the shift of responsibility becomes a matter of daily routine.

To refer to the sustainability problems caused by business activity as *evil* is obviously not enough to remove oneself from it. One still remains part of a 'mechanical screech' (Auden in Arendt, 1975/2003, p. 10), and at the same time, steps into dangerous territory. Because it comes to the question of: who am I to judge? Arendt points out that the discussion of right and wrong, good and evil (the ability to judge) touches on the most important moral issue of all, namely: 'How can I tell right from wrong, if the majority or the whole environment has prejudged the issue? *Who am I to judge?*' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 18). Behind the unwillingness to judge right from wrong, or good from evil, she writes, lies the suspicion that no one is free of their will, and hence the doubt that anyone is responsible or could be expected to answer for what they have done.

> The moment moral issues are raised, even in passing, he who raises them will be confronted with this frightful lack of self-confidence and hence of pride, and also with a kind of mock-modesty that in saying, Who am I to judge? actually means We're all alike, equally bad, and those who try, or present that they try, to remain halfway decent are either saints or hypocrites, and either case should leave us alone (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 19).

Arendt (1964/2003) explains how incredibly difficult it can be to explore responsibility because of this 'deep-seated fear of passing judgments' (p. 21). Why do intelligent people who have not been manipulated speak nonsense at times? Arendt asks. The answer is that it is because the general agreement among those people is that saying, for example, 'Hitler is a mass murderer' is vulgar and lacks sophistication, and should not interfere with the interpretation of history or a certain phenomenon, where deeds or events tend to be blamed on historical trends or dialectical movements, what Arendt calls 'some mysterious necessity' (p. 20) that is then related to some kind of 'deeper meaning' of the phenomena of interest in education. It is easier to be sophisticated when we treat sustainability as a 'trend' or a 'strategy', and when 'emotional' and 'vulgar' language such as 'evil', that is everywhere a consequence of unsustainable actions, is left aside for the 'less intelligent' or 'naïve' activists. Because 'who are we to judge?' But Arendt convinces us that in acknowledging this refusal to judge lies the true moral point.

Confronting evil is difficult, not because it is hard to see, but because it is so very uncomfortable to be faced with moral issues; to connect the evil to cruelty. When we are confronted with this, we are forced to 'sit in the judgement' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 22). Arendt argues that there were very few people under the Third Reich who wholeheartedly agreed with the late crimes of the regime, but many were still perfectly willing to participate in such crimes. The argument was that it was more responsible to 'stay on the job', and the justification thus became about choosing 'the lesser evil', whereas, according to Arendt, it would be irresponsible to refuse to choose altogether. However, Arendt stresses that 'the weakness of this argument has always been that those that choose the lesser evil forget very quickly that they choose evil' (Arendt, 2003, p. 36).

Well, we can look deep into ourselves

and we see a bunch of values that are full of contradictions

It is always good to have to face that.

- Harald

In our conversation, Harald, Frode and Sif agreed that it is difficult to sit in the value judgement for too long because in the end you have to 'stay on the job' and support the students' ambitions. Birger also expressed this difficulty of staying with moral questions, with such cynicism that even I lost hope in the moment.

why do we exist
the big why
why bother I mean
it is too devastating
every tenth year you can ask that question
in a more fundamental way
you answer it
you continue

- Birger

Continue to teach business, that is. I asked him why the theories we teach are important. 'To keep us off the streets,' Birger answered instantly and laughed, before he acknowledged that this was maybe not as funny when we think about how many people we are educating in the world. Or could Briger's joke be good enough reason to just keep producing businesspeople – to at least keep us and them off the streets? Erik also seemed weary when confronted the question of our importance and cynically asked me how I could even believe that teaching business students to act morally is even possible in a business school?

Kopnina and Blewitt (2018, p. 23), in their book *Sustainable Business*, explain that when it comes to ethics in business, there are often these 'grey areas, which leads businesses to take what they consider to be the "least

worst decision"". Bob Doppelt also addresses this 'grey zone', but describes how it gives rise to one of the main beliefs that hinder sustainable thinking: that 'less bad is good enough' (in Murray 2011, p. 254). In settling for the 'lesser evil', we legitimise the bad. This way of addressing sustainability issues is in line with the utilitarian framing of capitalistic modernity that the educators seem to be struggling with. But what would happen if we refused to accept evil? Frode reflects on this question and reflects back on when he has tried to engage with darker issues in his education. 'This reality check is important but [the students] also get depressed, and the question then becomes whether we are making them less capable of acting?'

When talking with the educators about this cynicism we seem to share regarding the possibilities for action, it became clear that it was hard to think beyond opting for the 'lesser evil'. Because business is about 'commodification', Harald reminded me. 'Is it?' I ask. 'Yes, of course! Does it see itself as being outside of capitalism? I have yet to see something that is truly convincing in that regard, and yes, that is business. Of course, business needs to follow the market logic, business needs to follow the system that is capitalism if it wants to exist within that.' Sustainability in business education suddenly became a driving force to acknowledge these boundaries:

> *It is important to say*
> *that the current structures of capitalism*
> *do not allow for the radical change*
> *that we would need*

- Frode

The question of how to do sustainability in business education became a question of whether we wanted to sustain capitalism or not. But because this question is too devastating to ask, giving students a 'reality check' about the limits of the current system – about the limits that commodification sets on sustainability – is as far as sustainability in business schools can go, at the moment. Most of the educators could not see a way out of these limits; but they wanted at least to give their students some hope

within them. To this end, Frode aims to celebrate the 'tiny fraction' of private companies that are the 'least bad'. The ones that 'have a certain vision that is geared towards sustainability and […] reinvest any profit that they can get into, you know, radical innovations for sustainability.' He mentioned the British multinational Unilever as one example of 'pro-sustainability' companies that are publicly listed, and explained that even though the company is 'extremely limited' because of its publicly listed existence, it is at the same time 'so huge that it can make a big change'. Many other educators also took Unilever as an example of 'best practices'[46] but acknowledged as well that 'their entire incentives make it impossible for them to radically change anything', as Frode put it. The only way to genuinely engage with sustainability in business, it seemed, was to confront the 'deeply unsustainable' capitalistic system and specifically 'the environmental and exploitative aspect of capitalism', in Harald's words. 'Engaging with that [in your teaching]'. However, the conclusion was in any case that we can never entirely avoid exploitation of planet and people if we want to continue to exist within business education. Business education is namely:

simplification,
task oriented,
it is about getting things done
in the most effective way.

- Chorus of voices

Not all educators did however identify with this definition of business, and did their best to be critical of the actual critique, 'but not [by] talking about how capitalism is destroying our world. That is not our starting point. But we see a negative sides of the ruthless "for-profit" businesses', Harald says. 'We should be able to suggest something else instead of capitalism and that suggestion would somehow be the rive of science or academic thinking in a sense […] it is actually rather depressing; how few attempts have been made'.

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[46] Which I will come back to in the Essay VII, about *thinking* the limits to our imagination

Even though there was solid agreement that confronting capitalism would represent the only genuine integration of sustainability within business education, no one saw it as a possible option.

> *I cannot go on stage here and say*
> *'OK! Listen! What we are going to do today is to question capitalism!'*
> *Because the first thing people are going to ask is,*
> *what do I suggest instead?*
> *I do not have an alternative or vocabulary for that.*
> *But I feel really strongly for it.*

> \- Harald

Erik reflects on the 'coulds' and 'shoulds' of 'the radical' in business education. 'Many of us are aware of the more radical position you can take here. You can certainly, at least if you felt [inclined] … take this Marxist position, saying that capitalism is rubbish and business is a lost cause and so on and so forth. You could take on a more radical position saying that we need to overturn the entire system, [but] most of us, *very consciously*, do not locate ourselves there.' Erik claims that the problems are bigger than he and his colleagues in business schools can take on, for instance by teaching the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which he says is 'only a small part of the solution'. But Erik does not find it rational or necessary to go any further than they are already doing. 'I think that many of us, at least in my field, are taking part in pushing the machine in some kind of direction that is slightly more responsible and slightly less unsustainable than we have now. But again, we are only one cog in the machine, so to speak.'

Harald describes what is going on in business schools in a similar way. 'So that is what sustainability now has been putting forward, this notion of long-term decision making and that we need to move away from "this-quarter" capitalism. I am not suggesting that it will change much in the long run, but at least it will probably change something.' It seems as though he feels like things are not really changing, I suggest. 'Not changing fast enough, and the changes that are being made are maybe not fundamental', he said. 'I feel that the changes that are being made are kind of a Band-Aid for the kind of problems that we are producing, because the

fundamental question is so dangerous that, I mean, it is illegitimate to ask in a business school.' What question is that? I ask. 'I think that the fundamental question is about whether there is something inherent in the capitalistic system that is so fundamentally unsustainable that capitalism can never be sustainable,' he replies. 'You know, this compound growth, this expectation of growth. If we take that away, you have removed such a fundamental part of capitalism itself that it will become something else. That is the illegitimate question.'

There was a clear sense of the necessity of the 'lesser evil'; the business schools have not yet reached the point of discussion of post-growth or degrowth, something that most of the educators agreed was needed, but ultimately utopian. The educators were simply trying to 'stay on the job', as Arendt would phrase it, and the moral justification that follows is the 'lesser evil' argument which has played such a prominent role in the bureaucratisation of the 'deeply anti-political impulses that inform modernity: the despair of isolation and the anonymity of collectivism (Arendt in Nixon, 2015, p. 7; Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 35).

We are a schizophrenic institution
the chairman of our board is a very well-known investment banker
he is a fan of Ayn Rand
it is terrible stuff
it is worse than neo-liberalism
and then our rector is a professor of finance
there is this notion that there will be more rewards
that you get paid better
there is this certain type of students that are for that
an image that is quite tied to finance

But in a climate like this, how do you radically transform business education?
well, you don't
you cannot say that you radically transform
it is not possible
that is the sad truth

-   Frode

A dialogue

Harald: I think all of us are aware that we are also contributing to the very system that we are criticising, then in a sense, how we deal with that contradiction, in which instances we try to resist, that is probably different for different individuals or also coloured by a sense of their own epistemological and ontological backgrounds. But I spent a lot of time myself, thinking about my role in the profession, not necessarily just in the classroom, I mean how it contributes to and maintains the system and now we began to talk about publishing. I don't personally believe that by contributing to a system that is clearly built on a mode of exploitation that is really blatant, I mean, it is so blatant in a sense that we don't own our own knowledge in a sense, and we are willing to give it. I mean we are all people that are inherently enlightened to a certain extent, at least we have a degree to give some kind of a seal of approval for that and yet, we willingly contribute, maintain and develop these mechanisms that we say we can't resist, such as publishing, accreditations and so forth and there we say - well we must because, you know it is just our destiny or whatever, I mean, actually I think it is fairly, I'm going to use the word fairly, fairly pathetic because unlike a market system, we are not really in a market system. The educational sphere is slightly different, many of these norms are actually not created by the market itself, it is been created by ourselves, so I would say that we as academics have much more room for resistance than many of the managers out there in business because their constraints and their tensions that they must deal with are actually much more severe than some of the tensions that we need to deal with [here]. But perhaps it is like Frode is saying, that we are cynical in a sense, we don't really believe that we have the possibility to resist or we see it as inherently dangerous or something like that. I don't know.

(He takes an example) You can doubt various stuff that we are doing, so why are we doing these editorial jobs? [this] very predatory publishing system […] why do we say yes to it […] tenure track sure, but what is that, what is that? Where is the achievement in getting tenure if the world is falling apart around you […]

Lovísa: Do you feel that the world is falling apart?
[long silence]

Frode: Gradually, yes […]
[sad atmosphere]

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Sif: Well, I am more optimistic […] but it doesn't mean that you sit there and don't do anything.

Harald: Tell us what you are doing with this predatory publishing system, sort of keeping up that system, how do you deal with it if you do not resist it?

Sif: The world is not falling apart because of our publishing system […]

Harald: No, but it is the easiest thing for us to impact.

Sif: To reflect […]

Harald: No to impact […] it is the same as we tell the students, you know, to go out and do things when you are a manager, that is what matters, there is where you have the most impact, then you can go home and recycle and you can take the train or something like that, but the most impact that you have is through your own immediate actions […]

Sif: So, you mean that the most important thing for me to do is to fight against the corrupt publications system?

Harald: Well, you said that you can fight from within, and I asked what do you mean when you fight from within, and what are you fighting for?

Sif: With that I mean my role as an educator, not my role as a person who publishes [but] in order to be able to be an educator I have to publish, how many publications per year […]?

Harald: Right

Sif: Because otherwise I cannot be a teacher in this school, so that is […]
Harald: What I think you are hinting at is that in order to become a professor and thus reach the stage where you can truly have an impact, to be free, you need to do this and that but if this is the case then why don't we see more enlightened professors, who are fighting for these things, I don't see that […]

Sif: […] yes you are right, I could do more.

Harald: Look deep into yourself, do you believe that the system of publishing is corrupt or do you think that the system of publishing contributes to this very thing that you are criticising yourself […]

Sif: Partly, ohhh well, I assume that you are more literal in this one than I am, bear with me. I am a lineman on the fighting within. I would rather say that there is something I could do, and [sure] I could do it better and thank you [she looks at me] for coming and putting us against the wall.

'What to do when the world begins to fall apart around you?', asks Caitlyn DeSilvey (2017, p. 68) in her book *Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving,* where she encourages collaboration *with* instead of fighting against processes of heritage conservation. What do we need to conserve/sustain in business education when thinking about sustainability and could it be that we would need to give thinking a relief from our overwhelming y critique so we can engage in 'immediate actions', that Harald worries about the lack of in the dialogue with Sif, Frode and myself about the publications system in academia?

When listening to the sound of our dialogues the were two main reasons why the educators did not feel that they could go beyond the 'lesser evil' and towards the 'radical becoming' that most agreed was needed for more genuine integration of sustainability: (1) because of the banality of 'the [evil] system' and (2) because of the banality of 'the [evil] others'.[47]

For Arendt, *thinking* was a tool or a capacity to forge a different relationship with 'the system' and with 'the other'. While there have been many attempts to understand critique in business studies, a conceptualisation of *thinking* is less often seen. Could thinking help us act under all these constraints that the business educators have expressed?

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[47] Composed in the Essay VIII on Love

Essay VII: Thinking

Although my composition begins with the concept of *evil,* it was not what initiated this inquiry. As you have gotten to know, *thinking* is the spirit of this inquiry. Thus, it might seem strange to make a special essay on *thinking,* while the theorising with thinking has been a thread running through this whole thesis. However, before I started to put this whole inquiry into a whole story, *thinking* was one way to explore and analyse the insights from my dialogue with the educators.

In my initial reading into education for sustainable development, I discovered that there has emerged a call for *critical thinking* in the field, as a response to the traditional focus on technical solutions-oriented ways of being (Vare and Scott, 2006), where a heroic discourse about saving the world by getting better control over it has dominated. While this is a core concern in Arendt's (1958/2018) theorising, especially around the *Human Condition,* where she worried about 'the future man' losing sight of his earth-bound condition, Val Plumwood (2012) suggests that through thinking, we can practice becoming with nature again, in other ways than in the mastery and control. After a nearly death experience in Australia, where she looked a crocodile in the eye, she started to wonder how we can balance a mutual transformation and response, with the world. All of a sudden, she became a part of the food chain and the only thing that mattered was life itself. How to *think* when all our assumptions about the world disappear like this?

Most would agree that critical thinking is a fundamental aspect of academia, where the assumption is that it is universally practised in higher education. But do we actively practise thinking in education? Scholars of sustainability education question this. Whether through emancipation, system thinking, anticipatory thinking or critical business theories (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Rieckmann, 2012; Scott and Gough, 2003), the conclusion is that *thinking* is what we need more of. But what do we mean by thinking? How to actively engage with it in education, and most importantly, *how* does it bring us closer to being with sustainability?

It is these questions that keeps me with Arendt– not just because the main focus of her general theorising is on the responsibility of resisting unsustainable socialisation (Bauman in Waxman, 2009), such as capitalism and control, and the importance of practising one's own thinking in that regard (Arendt, 1971/2003); but also because of her call for thinking as a way to prevent evil (Waxman, 2009, p. 95).

More importantly, what I started to pay specific attention to was Arendt's view that *thinking* had an intrinsic value. This form of thinking is namely a certain response to *crisis*, rather than being a phenomenon of *critique,* which made me realise that we might be missing out something indispensable in the call for critical *thinking.*

Arendt did not find it surprising that 'professional thinkers', such as academics, did not dare to focus too much on thinking in itself. 'How can anything relevant for the world we live in arise out of so resultless an enterprise?' she wittily asked (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 167). In her essay *Thinking and Moral Considerations* (Arendt, 1971/2003), she approaches a fundamental question which she says 'scientists' most often avoid, but which is so very important for this inquiry: 'What is thinking?', which leads her to a second question: 'What is evil?' (p. 161). Correlating the two, she writes:

> Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining and reflecting upon whatever happens to come to pass, regardless of the specific content and quite independent of results, could this activity be of such a nature that it 'conditions' [wo]men against evil-doing? (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 160)

Arendt posed this question shortly before her death – fortunately for me, since it provides a point of departure for this essay, which is a central part of this inquiry and gives attention to the intrinsic value of thinking.

The question of whether thinking could prevent evil emerged from her best-known work, *The Human Condition*, where she urges us to 'think what we are doing' (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 5) in her response to what she called the modern world. This simple act of thinking, she argued, was the only way to create a relationship with the world. *Thinking* in itself makes it hard

to ignore the *fact* that the world is shared. Only when we forget this simple fact, evil can emerge.

Arendt applied the concept of evil to her theorising about totalitarianism that she later applied to the modern world, with reflection on responsibility and judgements, where she stressed that state power is just one source of power in our modern society (Arendt, 1958/1998). The world is namely shared, not only through government (Arendt in Nixon, 2020, p. 27).

In my conversations with business educators, this loss of relationship with the *shared* world (the only world that exists) became quite evident, and what was *shared* was largely a matter of the government.

> [Sustainability] is about that we stop emitting and we stop throwing plastic in the water and we stop deforestation in the jungle in Indonesia and Brazil and so on. All these things have to be done […] And then there are the social issues that are actually also burning, but it is less evident, it is less physical and immediately threatening, so I think it is going to be hard to convince businesses. […] For example, they forget that taxes are something good, higher taxes is not such a good idea for them, so they have a really hard time getting real on the issue
>
> - Sune

Erik also mentions tax avoidance as an example of a fundamental issue of sustainability in relation to business, and suggests that we should abandon the narrative of 'evil capitalism' which he describes as a deflection 'away from the fact that there are fundamental issues that we need to solve through regulation'. Sustainability in business education should, for example, focus on matters of regulation, such as tax avoidance. I sensed among the educators an exhaustion with *thinking* about things. Focusing on government and regulation became easier.

The educators were not ignorant of the need to re-*think* our relationships to the world and to others. However, many simply did not have the energy to engage with the issues.

I mean, taxation is a beautiful example
but a very difficult and frustrating one
Because it is pretty obvious
that none of us have an idea of what is going on
when these international rat-bastards
do their thing

- Erik, business educator

Here Erik is referring to all the multinational corporations that not only 'greenwash,' but as well try to escape basic standards of a civilised society. Erik felt that we needed to start from the very basic requirements of what it means to live in a society where we adapt to our basic democratic agreements. When not even that is in place, why bother with other additional promises? 'I mean, we are not even close,' said Erik.

What became evident in these conversations was that it was hard keeping 'questions of critical thinking and the question of politics permanently alive and open,' like Zylinska (2014, p. 4) talks about being important in her book she calls *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene*. Once I guided the discussion home, to business education, about what we are actually doing, and away from sustainability as it related to some far-off future, it became collectively difficult for us to find ways to find relevance for business in the present moment.

> In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present. (Haraway, 2016, p. 1)

In thinking, we become present in between the past and the future, where crises of education and crises of politics cannot be escaped (Arendt, 2006a). Everyone agrees that critical thinking plays a significant role in the academic field, but according to Arendt, 'it is the role of a means to an end' where 'the end is determined by a decision about what is worthwhile knowing, and this decision cannot be scientific' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p.

54). The extreme pressure in social science to be acknowledged as a 'real' scientific field has perhaps taken too great a toll, leading us to stop engaging with our moral and political ways of being in education, which is a prerequisite for engaging with sustainability.

There have been many attempts to respond to the lack of critical thinking in business education. One example is a recently published special issue of the journal *Ephemera* called 'Crawling from the Wreckage', which focused on the question of whether 'critique' has a future in business schools (Fleming et al., 2022). The authors claim that 'critical thinking in business schools has reached a decisive and alarming impasse', and even after nearly thirty years of Critical Management Studies, 'the wider world of work, corporations and the economy has never looked bleaker'; 'the business school itself has embraced "extreme neoliberalism", with rampant managerialism and edict-issuing technocrats in full bloom'. 'Sadly', the institutions that 'critical scholars call home' are no better (pp. 1-2). The authors of the special issue call for us to rethink new forms of 'critique'. In one of the articles in the issue, Motta and Allen (2022) stress the need to 'decolonise critique', proposing an 'affirmative critique' that affirms and nurtures 'the continued existence/re-existencias of other(ed) ways of being and knowing' (p. 21).

These different ways of being and knowing, I suggest, can be found in the conceptualisation of *thinking* rather than *critique*. The emphasis in critical thinking tends to be on 'critical' rather than 'thinking', but '[c]ritique in the sake of what?', as Parker (1995, p. 553) names his article about critical approaches to organisation, where he believes that "hard" postmodern epistemology is essentially a way of avoiding responsibility' (p. 562) with little intention for change.

I want to invite you to focus on *thinking*, not in terms cognition (as it is most often defined; e.g., in the Inner Development Goals, 2023), but as 'the actualisation of difference given in consciousness' which is not a 'prerogative of the few but an ever-present faculty of everybody' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 187). Arendt's conceptualisation of thinking gives attention to the process as an open ended, out-of-order ways to connect to uncertainty, and not the other way around. In this way of looking at thinking, narratives about 'future leaders' or the 'heroic agents of change' become

less important, and the citizens that make up businesses and organisations become the main characters for change.

Asking the educators about how they taught sustainability and/or critical thinking became less interesting, and I started to pay more attention to the ways in which they themselves think around sustainability, as well as to thinking with them. Why? Because in the end, it is their thinking that influences the students, the future businesspeople. Arendt explains why it is important to acknowledge this way of approaching thinking in education. One can only teach thinking by practising thinking oneself. She illustrates her point with a metaphor that Plato used to describe Socrates's way of teaching people how to think (even though Socrates himself did not feel he could teach anything for he had nothing to teach). Plato said that Socrates was often compared to an 'electric ray':

> […] "the electric ray paralyzes others only through being paralyzed itself. It isn't that knowing the answers myself I perplex other people. The truth is rather that I infect them also with the perplexity I feel myself." Which, of course, sums up neatly the only way thinking can be taught. (Plato in Arendt with Arendt herself at the end, 1971/2003, p. 173)

Guided by this, I actively became transparent with my struggles around sustainability in business education while engaging with the educators, in hope that the educators paralyze a process of 'staying on the job' or unfreeze the discourse of sustainability as bullshit, a trend or a myth, to more importantly approach the educators as in *becoming* or *ongoings* or responseable (Haraway, 2016) towards the world. Could it tell a story about something missing but important?

> The myth system associated with the Anthropos is a setup, and the stories end badly. More to the point, they end in double death; they are not about ongoingness. It is hard to tell a good story with such a bad actor. Bad actors need a good story, but not the whole story. (Haraway, 2016)

Thinking forces us to take a break from myths or heroic stories about fixed realities because thinking is constantly ongoing, where today is never the same as yesterday. In the attempt to conceptualise *thinking* and its relevance to sustainability in education, Arendt warns me before venturing into metaphysical questions about thinking, or evil for that matter, because, as she puts it: '[…] we all know [metaphysics] has fallen into disrepute' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 161). While my post qualitative self is also inspired by both Derrida, who declared the end of metaphysics, and Deleuze, who claimed that we should always be metaphysical for our inquiry to be meaningful (Smith, 2007), I started to feel that deciding whether this inquiry is metaphysical or not had become irrelevant. When in response-ability we are always meta-physical, because it is always in between one and *the other*. Arendt desired the truth as it emerges in dialogue, 'the truth inherent in the other's opinion' (Nixon, 2015, p. 6).

"It seems like you are making some metaphysical claims,' a professor at my department remarked with concern during a seminar where I was presenting the introductory chapter to this work. He implied that this could be a problem. However, engaging with metaphysics, whether being metaphysical or going beyond it, whether we like it or not, is no choice that I feel I can make. As I see it, similar to Deleuze (in St. Pierre, 2019), to fail to engage with the metaphysical is to supress a vital part of the inquiry that is always and already there, always ongoing. It would also go against the main argument I make in this thesis about the need for a one-world ontology, with sustainability education, where we understand that the most important *fact* in this world is that we share it. Arendt taught me to dare to dismiss the absurd discussion about the problems of the modern expression of metaphysics, because once you enter a one-world ontology (a world she calls 'the world of appearances'[48]), there is no separation to make (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 11). She points out that the modern death of metaphysics, and of philosophy for that matter, is solely of importance for positivists, because although these developments 'concern intimately our ways of thinking, they do not concern our ability to think'. Once we started to think in terms of separate worlds, the common sense of a shared world gets lost, and all of a sudden, we had to spend all our time talking about

[48] Referring to Nietzsche's distinction between the true and the apparent world.

something 'metaphysical' which in fact is one big delusion (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 8).

Latour (2014) also makes the similar point that there is no use in 'going beyond' something because we have in fact 'never been modern', and the distinction that we make between subject and object is not 'real'. Arendt would disagree, because just making the distinction between the 'real' and the 'unreal' is engaging in a two-world ontology. Reality can certainly never be dismissed, except in thinking. What we say is namely also a part of this one world. Furthermore, what others think and say is also real. The educators featured in this thesis are the flesh and blood of the business school. What they say and think makes up a reality that perhaps and sadly is often ignored in a certain discourse that claims what we say become 'rational myths,' separated from reality.

Thinking is namely an activity which, for Arendt, goes beyond the constant fight between nihilism or realism, for it is an intellectual ability of all human beings that surpasses the limitations of knowledge. Thinking is actually where we are most active, and that is why the distinction that we make between ourselves and the others, ourselves and the world, is so harmful, because we limit our thinking from flowing in between us when we get stuck in critique or talks about myth. It destroys something fundamental to us. However, 'the *ability* to think is not at stake' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 13).

In thinking, there is always an ongoing flow of us in between us, where *the other* becomes a part of our perspective. Wandering off in our thinking is the only way to get in touch with what is absent. The magic of the activity of thinking, in its purest form, is namely not instrumental for knowing and doing, but only satisfies the thoughts of yesterday, in 'think[ing] them anew' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p.163). It is here we can libertate thinking from 'the critical scrutiny of metaphysics' (Burke, 1986). And here lies our hope. It is this capacity of thinking that can be awakened in education (both research and teaching) quite easily, because we have the capacity to say and be something different today compared to yesterday.[49]

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[49] This is one finding from my research on which I will elaborate further at the end.

How can thinking then be so fundamental for education, and why is it important to conceptualise and make use of it for a better relationship to sustainability in business schools?

There are several good answers to this. Departing from evil; a certain closure and realisation of what we need to leave out of 'the field of business' to feel comfortable with sustainability, starts to flow towards the immanence of thinking, which opens up and does not closed down like evil or critique. Thinking is uncertain, undecided, out of order, with no concrete result other than thinking anew the thoughts of yesterday. What makes *thinking* so fundamental in the theorising of responsibility and judgement around sustainability, and what makes it so magical to me, is that it allows us to move in a world 'as it is' while at the same time 'undoes every morning what it had finished the night before' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 163), without separating the past and the future. In thinking we constantly move between the past and the future, still always in the present. This enables us to allow for a certain judgement in education, a judgement that says, 'I do not accept a world that looks like this', not to dismiss the past from the future but rather to:

> […] purge people from their 'opinion', that is of those unexamined prejudgements which prevent thinking by suggesting that we know where we not only don't know but cannot know, helping them [the students and ourselves], as Plato remarks, to get rid of what was bad in them, their opinions, without however making them good, giving them truth. (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 174)

Here is where thinking can define sustainability not towards 'the good' but away from 'the bad'. Thinking becomes the engine towards an undecided, but careful, space of action. As Charlotte Cator (2022) so beautifully illustrates in her article, with help from Arendt, on the connection between climate change and business schools and on the need to go beyond the 'neoliberal' solution:

> For Arendt, reflection, judgment and critical thinking enable action with an awareness of the future, which thereby paves the way for political action (Vino, 1996). This close connection she draws between critical thinking and action gives renewed hope that critical thinking at business schools can make a practical difference. (Cator, 2022, p. 86)

But don't we think all the time?

Arendt (1971/1981, p. 4) reminds us of the all-too-common 'absence of thinking […] in our everyday life, where we hardly get the time, let alone the inclination, to stop and think'. She finds it extremely important to be concerned with the overwhelming majority of people that thoughtlessly support and reproduce a given structure. I mean 'we': normal people who hold no particular power of state or capital and who would largely consider themselves 'cogs' in a machinery system. The 'middle-level manager', like Eichmann. The educators who hold the power to lecture in their courses, but somehow feels they 'must' say certain things and where we end up 'simply doing our job' irrelated of what will become but still with a clear vision of what should become. A business man.

Thinking with relief from 'critique'

Arendt calls thinking a 'two-in-one dialogue', which illustrates the interaction between the different subject positions that we tend to favour or suppress within ourselves, before we decide or act in a certain context. This two-in-one happens in solitude, according to Arendt, in conversation with yourself, when you finally allow yourself time to get in touch with your own consciousness.[50] This process cannot be studied except from within oneself, Arendt emphasised, because the two-in-one (i.e., thinking in its purest sense) is a silent dialogue, and the only space where one can imagine what is absent from 'the world of appearances'. Here is where *thinking* and *critique* differ. Critique is already a judgement made in the world of appearances, while thinking is still undecided. This is why it is so important to analytically separate thinking and critique. In thinking you are present with yourself, but the real gift of thinking is that it can make present things that are absent from our direct visual experiences. 'This gift is called imagination' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 76). That which is in between thinking and the 'world of appearances' (the only world that exists) is accessed through

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[50] In a similar way as Simone Veil (1951) wrote about attention.

the faculty of imagination. The faculty of imagination makes what is distant, present. Arendt describes the relationship between thinking and imagination as follows:

> Thinking is 'out of order' not merely because it stops all other activities so necessary for the business of living and staying alive, but because it inverts all ordinary relationships: what is near and appears directly to our senses is now far away and what is distant is actually present. When thinking I am not where I actually am; I am surrounded, not by sense objects but by images that are invisible to everybody else. It is as though I had withdrawn into some never-never land, the land of invisibles [...]. *Thinking annihilates temporal as well as spatial distances. I can anticipate the future, think of it as though it were already present, and I can remember the past as it had not disappeared* (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. emphasis added).

Thinking holds the past and the future together and plurality is the fundamental condition of it, just as Arendt (1954/2006a) would argue that plurality is the essence of education. For Arendt, plurality is the 'law of the earth'; the plurality within ourselves (the two-in-one), which is then the condition for entering and contributing to the plurality of the earth, as sustainability seeks to do. This is what happens when you disclose your 'doxa' to others.

> In this world in which we enter, appearing from a nowhere, and from which we disappear into a nowhere, *Being and Appearing coincide.* Dead matter, natural and artificial, changing and unchanging, depends in its being, that is, in its appearingness, on the presence of living creatures. Nothing and nobody exists in this world whose very being does not suppose a *spectator.* In other words, nothing that is, insofar as it appears, exists in the singular; everything that is meant to be perceived by somebody [...] Plurality is the law of the earth. (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 19)

Everything that is happens between being and appearing, and the bridge is *thinking.* Thinking is a process that eventually ends up under the faculty of judgement, whether we like it or not. It is under this faculty that the world is shaped, but judgement cannot happen without thinking. Decisions made without judgement are 'worldless' (Arendt in Jørgensen, 2022). We become worldless when we forget to think. We start to live in the world without connection to it, and the quality of our relationship to the world gets lost. Thus, if education should prepare us 'for the task of renewing a common world', (Arendt, 1954/2006, p. 193) then:

> […] the training and cultivation of judgement are not just an appropriate but vital educational task. This task can be pursued by providing conditions for representative thinking - conditions that encourage the mental operations of imagination and reflection […]. In such contexts, young people will practice judgement in ways that simultaneously form and reveal their political opinions and their identities as political opinions. (Smith, 2001, p. 90)

It is here where thinking starts to take shape within education. If *thinking* is essential for sustainability education, the definition of *education with sustainability* thus becomes about the time and space to activate the ability to think, which will then manifests itself in a judgement towards the realm of the action (the political). To not engage with thinking (in its purest sense of resultlessness) is to ignore this beautiful possibility of education to experiment with and explore the uncertain and complex reality (Osberg, 2010). And even though one cannot study thinking, it is well possible to create a space for people to think, and to think about thinking, by being conscious of their own two-in-one and then sharing it with others in the process; 'holding open space' for mourning as Haraway (2016) phrases it, which intrinsically cultivates 'response-ability' (p. 38). Thinking provides space for us to mourn things we tend to do but have discovered is evil. We will need time to mourn old ways of being, to be able to become anew.

'The trouble is that few thinkers ever told us what made them think and even fewer have cared to describe and examine their thinking experience' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 168). This does not in fact prevent thinking from being of 'practical' use to the world. We shape the world with our thinking whether we like it or not, and thus it is always practical. However, the risk of the absence of thinking means that we start to shape the world on the bases of 'worldless' matters.

Think we must;
we must think.
That means simply,
we must change the story;
the story must change

- Donna Haraway (2016, p. 40)

In conversation with the educators, I pay attention to their 'two-in-one' reasoning with themselves. But why would educators' own thinking be important for the question of sustainability in business education? Giving educators the time and space to *think* about what they *think* about sustainability is not only a crucial step in understanding why we become functionaries in a system or oppressive ideology that we do not believe in (i.e., the old), but also allows for us to step into an environment where it no longer controls us. Thinking is *out of control* and allows for the *undecided,* but it is in the space of thinking that we practise responsibility (Arendt, 1971/1978).

A two-in-one:
-WHEN THE CRITICAL CRUMBLES-

My dad was so upset when I decided to go to business school
he even said that I might as well become a drug addict or a prostitute

These were some of the first words Gunhild said to me when I met with her in her office on a cold October morning in 2019. She came late to the meeting, but when I saw her come running down the hallway, I felt her energy and eagerness to talk to me about sustainability. She had been fighting for it for a long time within her school. We got straight to the point. I asked her about how she ended up here. She comes from an academic family – liberal arts and humanities. She takes more pride in that than in her own current role as business educator. 'Business was something very evil in their minds […] It was almost like a rebellious thing for me to go to a business school.' At first, she was only going to stay a year. Now, Gunhild has been working in a business school for almost 30 years, but she has always focused on sustainability-related issues. She started to work with and study low-income countries in the 1980s. 'It was a horrible time: Wall Street spirit, neo-liberalism, greed is good, that kind of thing.' After graduation, she started working in a bank.

I will never forget
I was called 'little miss morals'
because I was interested
in sustainability

She decided to quit business school for a while and 'go back to university'. For her, university was something else than a business school. She started studying arts and humanities, like her father wanted, but eventually returned to the field of business. 'Well, my whole life has been a struggle,' Gunild sighs, 'whether I am in the right place or not.' After almost 30 years in the field, she still wonders whether she is in the right place.
I asked her what creates this struggle within her.

The struggle is really like
is the business school the right place to be?
When I wake up happy then I feel like
– yeah, we really need to change,
we need to change the thinking,
this is really how to reach a lot of people,
in power positions
where else do we find voices to change and rethink

But then she has her darker days:

Well, wait a minute
I am meeting a lot of resistance
I find myself being so delusional sometimes
sometimes I feel like – shit!
I have been here for 30 years and it is never going to change!
I am actually just being part of it
I am being a part of a community
that makes business schools look better,
and then I am actually doing something really bad,
I am really struggling with this.

She takes down a Russian doll that sits on one of her shelves. It is a little red doll, rounded on the bottom, so that it rocks back and forth when you nudge it. 'I actually started to work with our [sustainability] programme in 2011. I have been working so long and hard. I wanted to get sustainability in as a mandatory thing and I had this little Russian doll on my desk, because I felt like every time I walked in [with this idea], they always tried to knock me down. I would always stand up again, just like this doll.' It seems clear that you have to be resilient to work with sustainability in a business school. 'And now, every student is taking the programme!' However, Gunhild doesn't say this with joy. I feel no sense of victory in her statement. She becomes silent for a while, and then adds:

[...] I feel it is very meaningful
[but at the same time]
because everybody is taking it,
they can say
– we are fine now;
we can continue to destroy the world.

I ask whether she really feels like we are destroying the world.
'Sometimes I do, yes [...] the whole, just the way we are living, the [dominant] ideas about consumption and growth; I think we need a system change.' Such a change, she implies, is not at all what the school is pushing for. She then recounts a conversation from that same morning, where two important people in her life were sitting on the sofa either side of her, having their morning coffee.
'So my partner is a journalist and he was very much like:'

but the owners [of businesses]
need to kind of stop thinking about profit
take responsibility
change their ways of production

On the other side was her son, a political scientist.

Well, it doesn't matter what they do
because we need system change,
because do not think people will ever give up their privileges,
the only way to do it
is to change the system

Gunhild associated with both of these different perspectives. They became her *two-in-one*.

This discussion got her thinking about what she was actually trying to do in her teaching. 'I am constantly trying to change mindsets, shift mindsets towards less greed,' she says, but also wonders if it might be better to work more with system change.

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Business and 'the system' were two different things. She turns our conversation towards the students. 'Twenty percent are super aware and really want to change the world,' she says, explaining however that the same number of students hate the sustainability-related modules.[51] 'They think it is a leftist thing, a political correctness thing […] some of them don't even believe in climate change!' Then she takes a deep breath '[…] and then we have the large majority' who do not even engage with it.

> *Ohhhh, the large majority*
> *I find the haters easier,*
> *because at least they take up the discussion.*
> *The majority in the middle is more difficult*
> *they are indifferent,*
> *they don't even show any resistance,*
> *just going with the flow,*
> *if it's good for their grades*
> *they'll do it*
> *not because they think it is important.*

She talks about the extreme challenge of dealing with this large majority of people that do not even care to enter the discussion, and stresses how important it is to at least give an opinion, engage with the world. As a result of this widespread indifference among her students, Gunhild explains that she herself has begun to lose the energy to discuss sustainability issues. She feels that she has become 'overly comfortable'. 'I have not been training my critical mind enough recently, which is weird because I am a researcher, but I feel like research today is going in the opposite direction than towards sustainability, in many ways, with all the publishing, so I feel like I have lost some of my critical ability […] I have been falling asleep over the years.' She expressed the importance of a renewal in business education. 'I am teaching now with a younger teacher; she's just finished

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[51] I sent Gunhild a transcript of our conversation via e-mail in the summer of 2023 and asked her how she felt now. She answered: 'I recognise myself and my loved ones, but the students have changed. They are more aware now.'

her dissertation and she is super hungry and super critical; she is more like you.'

'I came in to business school much more critical than I am today'
'Why?' I ask
'I've become more pragmatic I think, I've become blinder'

Gunhild's two-in-one here does not provide us with any answers or definitions regarding sustainability; but does it give us something else? Could there be value in turning away from the critical, if only you are transparent with your 'doxa',[52] i.e., your own opening to the world? Can *thinking* provide us with something additional to *critique*?

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The active life of thinking

One key question of this essay is whether thinking could inspire for a different practice and becoming with sustainability in business schools, one that reflects plurality among us, moving away from reports and towards our own consciousness and judgement. Arendt criticises the Marxist tendency to separate practice and thinking: 'Marx used the word Praxis in a sense of "what man does" as opposed to "what man thinks"' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 7). She argues that the two cannot be separated, because once you start to *think* in a two-in-one, you access the active life ('vita activa') as opposed to the contemplative life ('vita completativa') and you become with action, instead of fabrication (Arendt, 1958/2018).[53] According to Arendt (1971/1978), thinking is actually the most active one can be. Once you dare to engage with the two-in-one, it will automatically change

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[52] 'Doxa' has many different meanings. In this thesis it means opening up to the world by sharing your personal opinion in the public realm, based on the one-world-ontology that your opinion, in being shared, shapes the world that is shared. This opening to the world Arendt rooted in the ancient Greek word 'doxa' where the assumption is that the world opens up differently to every [wo]man (Arendt, 1990, p. 81) but cultivates through the faculty of judgement, that is done with others, whereby the opinion can both be expended and tested by others through interaction with other opinions. I thus interpret 'doxa' as a fundamental condition for *resonance* (Rosa, 2019) and *response* (Haraway, 2016), rather than *echo* and *control*.

[53] In business studies, fabrication, which belongs to *homo faber* and is grounded in production, is often confused with action, which is grounded in thinking (Arendt in Holt, 2020).

the 'world of appearances' because you will show up differently, more plural.

While *thinking* is done in solitude, 'invisible to everybody else' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 85), where you connect only with yourself in a two-in-one discussion, she believed that if we can finally allow our plural self to flourish, with all our complex and often contradictory thoughts, then we will be able to be more rooted in our ways of contributing to the common world, even though it might not have the utilitarian, instrumental 'service' effect that we are so often trained into. Can we sometimes focus on unlearning instead of learning?

> Even though I am one, I am not simply one. I have a self and I am related to this self as my own self. This self is by no means an illusion; it makes itself heard by talking to me – I talk to myself, I am not only aware of myself – and in this sense, though I am one, I am two-in-one [emphasis added] and there can be harmony and disharmony with the self. If I disagree with people I can walk away; but I cannot walk away from myself, and therefore I better first try to be in agreement with myself before I take all others in to consideration. (Arendt, 2003, p. 90)

In thinking you *go visiting,* and listen to, your own conscience, which allows for our moral self to be in harmony with other selves we might consist of. 'If you do wrong you live together with the wrongdoer' (Arendt, 2003, p. 91), but when you are conscious of your plurality – whether it is at home as a parent or a partner, or at work as a manager or a minister, educator or editor – it is easier to be in agreement with yourself. When do you really engage with the two-in-one? More importantly, do you listen?

It took me a long time to be able to include my own two-in-one struggles in this inquiry. I was so alienated in the beginning – from everyone else, from 'the powerful' who actually had the power do things differently, if they wanted to. I wanted to confront *them*. In the midst of this inquiry, I did not feel comfortable in the company of myself. I was trying to control the control. How could I be differently? More *with* and less *against*. It became a point of constant reflection. I told myself; Not *Them! - Us! We! – Listen!*

For Arendt, friendships constitute an in-between space, one that is necessary for exploring responsibility and judgement (Nixon, 2015). If I had not slowed down and decided that I wanted to engage in further discussion with the educators, to really listen and allow for this in-between space, I would have lost sight of the story I needed to tell in order to reconnect to sustainability.

To give yourself time to *think,* for Arendt, is in itself to be critical. But rather than being critical of something specific, you allow yourself to 'go visiting' the possible. Things that are absent. One goes visiting through the faculty of imagination,[54] where you are in constant *response* to *the other*, that is what is absent to you. You would not need to imagine anything if it was already there. But imagination can never be enabled without accepting that others' 'standpoints' are fluid, always differing within each individual and from one to the next, depending on context. The vital aspect of 'going visiting' is to listen to and represent others within you *fluidly*. What sparks imagination is not to try to understand different perspectives from yours, but to *listen* (Arendt in Bickford, 2018). Arendt writes that the point of the matter is that one's judgement of a particular instance does not merely depend upon one's perception but also upon the representation of things that one cannot perceive for oneself. She illustrates this with an example:

> […] suppose that I look at a specific slum dwelling and I perceive in this particular building the general notion which it does not exhibit directly, the notion of poverty and misery. I arrive at this notion by representing to myself how I would feel if I had to live there, that is, I try to think in the place of the slum-dweller. The judgement that I shall come up with will by no means necessarily be the same as that of the inhabitants whom time and hopelessness may have dulled to the outrage of their condition, but it will become an outstanding example for my further judging these matters. Furthermore, while I take into account others when judging, this does not mean that I conform in my judgement to theirs. I still speak with my own voice and I do not count noses in order to arrive at what I think is right. […] however […] I can say that the more people's positions I can make present in my thought and hence take into account in my judgement, the more representative it will be'. (Arendt, 1965-1966/2003, pp. 140-141)

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[54] Discussed in the next section of this essay.

Representative thinking makes the validity of my judgement neither objective, universal nor subjective but intersubjective. *Representative.* Although it sometimes seems that *thinking,* for Arendt, happens solely in solitude and in relation to oneself, on closer inspection it becomes evident that for her, thinking is never without a sense of others as well, but represented in one's own two-in-one. The judgement happens in between you and the slum-dweller. You allow yourself time to think in their place. Representative thinking does not happen in a role play, but within yourself under the faculty of imagination, where you visit what appears to be absent within yourself. It becomes about listening to your plural self and being open to the plurality constituted by others.

It was evident that the educators participating in this inquiry wanted to do much more, or even completely different things, than they felt their business schools were doing in educating business students. But many 'reasoned' this feeling away. 'It is about what is possible at the time,' as Harald said, waiting with something that he still consciously felt was necessary towards sustainability in his education.

However, consciousness is not the same as thinking. It is just that 'without it thinking would be impossible' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 185). There is this problem though, that consciousness has nothing to do with knowledge in its traditional meaning.

> The dividing line between those who want to think and therefore have to judge by themselves, and those who do not, strikes across all social and cultural or educational differences. In this respect, the total collapse of respectable society during the Hitler regime may teach us that under such circumstances those who cherish values and hold fast to moral norms and standards are not reliable: we now know that moral norms and standards can be changed overnight, and that all that then will be left is the mere habit of holding fast to something. (Arendt, 2003, p. 45)

What in sustainability education has to do with knowledge – in its traditional meaning of the awareness of certain facts – and what does not? Thinking is not enough to inspire action towards 'renewing the common world'. Here is where practising *judgement* becomes important, done with

others as a transition, where this two-in-one dialogue transforms into 'a more broadly shared public or common interest' (Arendt in Smith, 2001, p. 72). When we engage others in our two-in-one, it constitutes an 'enlarged mentality […] where [we] think in the place of everybody else' (Immanuel Kant in Arendt, 2006a, p. 217). In this opening to the world, 'you learn to put yourself in another's place and see the world – through your own eyes – from there' (Young-Bruhel and Kohn, 2001, p. 227). Doxa is then cultivated through the faculty of judgement, with others, whereby one's opinion can both be expanded and tested by others through interaction with other opinions. This Arendt said assisted in the becoming of a complete human being in connection to the world (Arendt in Smith, 2001, p. 68). Sharing your two-in-one is also where you practice responsibility. Responsibility and judgement become actualised through *thinking*. However, for Arendt, there is also one more necessary step towards judgement, and that is *willing*, which she claims gets lost underneath doctrines and theories. The will is however a necessary companion to thinking where, contrary to the solitude and tranquility of thinking, restlessness and urgency emerge. *Thinking* and *willing* take us towards the faculty of judgement, which belongs to the realm of action (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 13).

Going back to thinking, Arendt was quite clear that the two-in-one, the conversation you have with yourself in solitude, when you finally have time to get in touch with your consciousness, cannot be studied. However, I felt it was necessary to create a space for business educators to think about their thinking, in order for their concerns to come out in the open and be part of shaping our education. Sustainability has for long been established as a matter of fact, through statistics on climate change, growing inequity and inequality and violence (IPCC, 2023; Oxfam, 2022) so now it is time to make it a matter of concern in education.

In the conversations with educators, I give attention to the concerns and conflicts they speak of, and which reflects their *two-in-one*. Why would this be important for the question of sustainability in business education? Because it can help us understand what we as business educators try to suppress parts of ourselves in order to be a functionary in a system that we feel uncomfortable with when we finally are brought to consciousness, but fine with when we try to produce 'knowledge'.

The educators did not consider their thinking fully active. The reason why they were not asking the questions that belong to thinking, like: What are we doing? Why are we doing it? is because they felt they did not have an alternative, and thus I became useless. The alternative was absent. Thinking is a mental act and cannot come into being except for a 'withdrawal from appearances', which makes alternatives that are absent suddenly possible. 'Every mental act rest on the mind's faculty of having present to itself what is absent from the senses.' This is what Arendt calls re-presentation and requires making present what is actually absent. The capacity to represent metaphors and images on what is acutally absent from the world of appearances is a unique gift; 'this gift is called imagination' (Arendt, 1971/1978, no. I pp. 75-76).

'The boundaries' of imagination

I have never ever heard, or very seldom heard a person that goes and says, this is enough salary for me, I don't need more. Or this is enough profit for us, we don't need more. Or this is enough GDP for our country, we are fine. We are internally trying to do more and more and more and that I think is unethical, it is not only unethical in the meaning [that] enough is enough, it is unethical because we are killing ourselves. More GDP for us, bigger car for you, bigger house for you, more profit for companies, more, more, more, [...] we are killing the physical environment and I am not even worried about the physical environment; it is going to survive. But homo sapiens are not going to survive. So, we are actually committing to this growth which is a gradual suicide for homo sapiens [...] or I don't even care if some homo sapiens [continue to exist] or not because apparently, we are the ones that have destroyed this earth, so maybe it is better that we disappear.

- Sif, business educator

When engaging in dialogue with business educators, despair was never far away. To imagine a different world seemed to be more difficult than to imagine their own deaths, as a result of climate change. They often talked their way into a black hole, where on the edge you had to decide either to be the devil or to be dead. Gunhild found herself on this edge, and wondered if it would not just be better if we were to consume ourselves to death. She could not really see any other alternative. Asked about what we are trying to take responsibility for when teaching sustainability, she reflected:

[...] for humanity
but of course, it is also to save the planet
in order to survive,
but you know sometimes
I just feel
maybe we should just do the opposite
let humanity die
something better would come along.
Make everybody consume
so, we can just be over with it.

- Gunhild

I began this section of the thesis with a 'half joke' from Harald, a business educator at Hanken, where he wittily but still quite seriously states that sustainability transformation in business education is:

> *if you can get a student*
> *that dreams of becoming a businessperson*
> *to not dream about that anymore*
>
> -Harald, business educator

From most of my conversations with educators, it seemed clear that formally, sustainability in business schools was mostly about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs were tangible. At SSE, the goals were clearly implemented in a parallel programme that every student expected to take and engage with, while in the other two schools the integration was still unclear. 'We have to have a clear implementation of the SDGs in the curriculum in every single subject,' said Frode, who was working hard with Harald on the PRME initiative at Hanken, which puts great effort in getting 'everyone on board' in the school to integrate sustainability in their education. They had not managed to do so.[55] Harald however stressed something even more difficult than getting educators to 'buy into' the SDGs. 'What we are trying to do is to inspire moral imagination in students, but of course we can only do that by providing them with different perspectives, different ways of describing the world and different ways of seeing the world, but it is still up to them to develop their own moral imagination.' Yet, they emphasised that for now, sustainability in business schools did not go any further than the SDGs. 'That is the limit to our imagination,' said Harald, seeming hopeless. In my discussion with Sune, who works at CBS, imagination also came up as a key aspect of sustainability education.

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[55] In the summer of 2023, I reconnected with Harald and Frode to ask them about how it was going for them now, in terms of integrating sustainability. They laughed and told me that it was actually going really well. Most of their students were 'on board'. But neoliberalism was now just a part of the hidden curriculum. Sustainability and neoliberalism had exchanged places. In a sense, this was an even more dangerous situation than before.

There is one very important aspect
that is very difficult to teach.
Imagination.
I do not know how we do that,
but we have to be able to imagine something different
you have to make people aware
that you do not change things through one service or one product,
but that is as far as we go here

- Sune, business educator

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While higher education is becoming increasingly shaped by neoliberalism, where work is thought of as an object of consumption and where young people learn that the only way for them to make a difference is through consumption (Chertkovskaya et al., 2020), words like 'justice', 'equality', 'happiness' or 'freedom', which are key virtues in relations to sustainability, become too abstract to make a matter of the course. These concepts are 'non-appearing […] and most difficult for the mind to comprehend, but nevertheless holding the limits of all things' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 171, referring to Solon). For us to be able to engage with these aspects of life, according to Arendt, we need to practise our imagination. This Arendt (1989) calls to 'go visiting': not in the form of empathy, where I adopt someone else's view – this is not possible – but in thinking in my own identity where I am not (Euben, 2001, p. 193).

When teaching sustainability, most educators agreed that it involves coming into contact with the world from many different perspectives. We ask, 'What does the world look like from over there?' This is when it starts to become important for thinking to constitute the 'we', the common, and to do so it needs to be representative. To be representative of others, with the common world (the 'us'), we need to practise using our imagination to 'go visiting'. Instead of separating yourself from the other, you allow the other to become part of you. Imagination is what allows for representation of the other, even in the solitude of your own two-in-one. Because when you manage to *think,* to become two-in-one, you are always representative. If it is not representative, you are not thinking.

> Critical thinking[56] is possible only where the standpoint of all others are open to inspection. Hence, critical thinking, while still a solitary business, does not cut itself off from 'all others'. To be sure, it still goes on in isolation, but by the force of the imagination it makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public, open to all sides; in other words, it adopts the position of Kant's world citizen. To think with enlarged mentality means that one trains one's own imagination to go visiting. (Arendt, 1989, p. 43)

This ability to 'go visiting' provides an abstract from the limitation that is attached to your own judgement, and invites other judgements home, into yourself – not as a self-interested and subjective private condition, but as a public figure that is a part of the representative world. The common world.

In a representative world, all are equal, but not in the sense that all are the same. Representative thinking needs to be *plural*, and, for Arendt, plurality is a central condition of human existence. In plurality, 'the who' cannot be described or analysed as 'the same as', because then it loses its uniqueness.

> The moment we want to say who somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying what he is; we get entangled in the description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a 'character' in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us. (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 181)

This is what organisational theorists tend to do when creating catagories within identity work, for example, but it is also widely seen in scientific work. On the contrary, sustainability in education, for many of the educators, means being able to present as many perspectives as possible to the students, to give them different ways of describing the world. Thus, one needs to be able to represent others in one's own thinking, not to find similarities but to allow the plural to appear in parallel.

Imagination, the ability to 'go visit' and integrate what is absent, is an important aspect of sustainability education, which educators struggle to incorporate in their education. We seem to put limits to what we already

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[56] Even though Arendt separates thinking from critique in many ways, she sometimes refers to it as *critical thinking*. For Arendt *thinking* is always critical, although *critique* is not always thinking.

know about the world as it is. What is already there. Because we are used to dealing with 'the similar' and not the different. What we are not able to categorise or have solutions to are, as a consequence, not mentioned.

To resist the limitations of our imagination, the *will* becomes important, as mentioned above. For Arendt, the will is an 'organ of the future and identical with the power of beginning something new' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 29). In willing, all cynicism disappears. The will transforms the desires of everyday life into intentions for the future, and this it does through the faculty of imagination. To access what is not there, we will need to imagine. *Thinking* namely deals with these 'invisibles, with representations of things that are absent' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 189). Judging meanwhile deals with the particular and things close at hand. However, judging is a by-product of the liberating effect of thinking, and sustainability education must prepare us for the important task of building a sustainable judgement, where we can represent as many *others* (human and non-human) as possible. Judgement is namely 'the ability to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly' (Arendt, 1971/2003, p. 189). In education, however, you do not have to make political decisions (Osberg, 2010) and thus have the great privilege to practise and enjoy the 'out of order', the 'undecided', the 'abstract'. While many of the educators were calling out to understand better how we would be able to practice our imagination in our education, at the same time it was seemed hard to stay with uncertainty and the abstract, since there were things in the curricula that needed to be taught. With imagination, sustainability will no longer be a concept in the Socratic sense, where we group together many particulars into a name common to all. It will instead become a 'frame of mind' (as Bonnet, 1999 calls for).

> Imagination alone enables us to see things in their proper perspective, to be strong enough to put that which is too close at a certain distance so that we can see and understand it without bias and prejudice, to be generous enough to bridge abysses of remoteness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away from us as though it were our own affair. This distancing of some things and bridging the abysses to others is part of the dialogue of understanding, for whose purposes direct experience establishes too close a contact and mere knowledge erects artificial barriers (Arendt in Jackson, 2019, p. 249).

The constant movement Arendt describes here, between the too far and too close and the balance needed to be able to get a 'proper perspective' is exactly why *thinking* is important. In education, would it be worth it to give *thinking* a relief from the *critical* or the *anticipatory*, or whatever other words we can attach to it., and first pay attention to the thinking activity itself? Then the question of whether business education should dominate or disappear would turn into other ways of thinking with. How can we make business education *think*able.

'Sometimes I joke that I have fulfilled my mission if I can see to it that as few people as possible will go into business, because I teach sustainability,' says Harald with a grin when I ask him what his aim is with teaching sustainability in a business school. Harald almost exclusively teaches on ideas around corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability. He is also responsible for administrative tasks such as the implementation of PRME. However, he emphasises that he does not consider himself a producer of businesspeople for society but more as a facilitator to give students the broadest education possible.

> *[There is a] big misunderstanding that sustainability can only be achieved through some kind of individual consumer choices. That is not our only role in society, you have other subject positions and you have to understand that so we can make those dreams about sustainable development to become true*

Harald thinks it is important to keep on believing in the capacity of students who come to study in business schools to do good.

> *Well, I am not a defeatist by nature, then I certainly would not be working here. To think that it is the fate or destiny of the people working in business schools or the students to make absolutely terrible choices in their lives and produce a really unsustainable impact, I do not think that there is anything fundamental about business schools that makes that its destiny or fate. I think there is a capacity here. You speak to business people here or professors, you know these are smart people, it is not like they are lacking some kind of knowledge about their impacts…*

For Harald, it is not the knowledge or awareness about sustainability issues that is the problem with business schools but more a cynicism resulting in the belief that we have no agency for change.

> *…we mostly lack imagination about this transformation towards something better. It is not like we at the university are expanding the horizon, pushing the limits and trying to be a transformative force. Academia is very little about transformation nowadays but transformation should be the absolute essence. Especially at a business school. But we are not being incentivised to think in this way.*

Harald feels that the changes that are being made in his school can be describe as more of a Band-Aid for the problems that the field and education in general are producing.

The change is not happening fast enough
the changes that are made are not fundamental.
The fundamental question is so dangerous
that it is illegitimate to ask in a business school
- Harald, business educator

I return to what he really means by this dangerous but fundamental question. 'A business owner is a capitalist and it is the capitalist's mission to accumulate more surpluses.' When I ask him about this dangerous tension between sustainability and the 'capitalist's mission', he corrects me. 'I think that we have shown that over the years there has been very little tension because sustainability, in its current manifestation, is very much about producing consensus, consensus that we can all agree on.' He talks about how sustainability standards and initiatives connected to businesses and business schools fail to recognise this fundamental fact. 'PRME, for example, is a useful discourse to legitimise that we continue what we are already doing and continue in the manner we have always done, because we do not actually have to do anything, we just report on what we are doing and that is good enough.' Even though Harald dedicates part of his work to the PRME championship, he says that work does not have much meaning. The school does not automatically become a champion of sustainability in business education just by being given that title. 'Even though we pay, it does not mean that we are doing more. […] PRME as such does not focus on anything, they do not try to govern us in a direction of transformation.' With the PRME Campion title namely come a financial commitment which does not mean much to the content of the courses.

Harald explains how building consensus can be easy, but deceptive. No one wants to continue the negative development of climate change, but that only tells a part of the story. Harald explains how sustainability becomes this abstract notion that has very little connection to what corporations are actually doing.

It becomes a common enemy, but it is not climate change that is the enemy, it is the people and corporations, so we do not always speak with the right vocabulary about this. We produce consensus which can be effective but it can also be ineffective, and that is also why I feel that there is not any kind of tension in a business school, partly because sustainability is an empty signifier. So, a finance professor can say that sustainability is about ensuring economic growth. Well, fair enough. I speak to someone from geography and they say it is about preserving the environment. It holds very different meanings to many different people. This is why it does not threaten finance people, for example, and why it has actually not been so difficult for business schools to incorporate these ideas into the curriculum at all because transformation is not being asked for.

But what is the fundamental question then, the dangerous question that people in business schools do not dare to ask?

> *I think the fundamental question to ask*
> *is whether there is something inherent in the capitalistic system*
> *that is so fundamentally unsustainable*
> *that capitalism can never be sustainable.*

Even though Harald does not consider himself a part of the 'economic theory paradigm', what Kurucz, Colbert and Marcus (2013) call it the 'disparate view' and illustrates the dominance of that paradigm in business schools. He takes the example of MBA programmes which he believes have had a huge negative impact on society in material terms. 'They have produced a really, narrow understanding of value. It is still going on in business schools around the world, probably this one as well.' He is concerned with questions of values and how values are embodied in business schools.

I do not think [the students] have the possibility to enact the kind of values they actually hold because they are being governed in the opposite direction, they are being governed to display [certain] values to cope with this compartmentalisation. Like being a good father but being able to legitimise making devastating decisions in my role as a manager, for the environment and for people that work with me and below me. With that you leave out the business ethics and make yourself believe that what you are doing is something completely different.

He laughs at the irony:

We compartmentalise
and we are all part of reproducing this [world].
Ethics in business schools is very instrumental
like everything else in a business school

Harald explains how the sustainability narrative in his school is all around the SDGs – goals that are about everything and nothing at the same time. 'That is the limit to our imagination.'

Harald is concerned by the inherent contradictions in the SDGs.

> *You know the goal about economic growth, this compound growth, expectation of capital growth. If you take that away you have taken away such a fundamental part of capitalism itself that you could not call it capitalism anymore […] I cannot go on stage here and say – OK, listen! What we are going to do today is to question capitalism – because the first thing people are going to say is – OK, what do you suggest instead? I do not have an alternative or a vocabulary for that, but I feel really strongly for it.*

Looking towards the future, I ask Harald what he thinks would be necessary to truly change the way we teach and learn in business schools. He seems certain of the answer:

We need to stop teaching
the illusion
that these completely general and generic business models
will have some kind of a social value in the end,
but rather to try to understand the context
of where these business models and transactions happen
in order to understand what kind of impact
our decision-making will have.

He takes consumption as an example:

> *If I ask – how do you make a change? 99% of students will say something about making individual consumer choices. Many of them cannot imagine making a difference as a manager because they know very well the constraints that come from [theories around] principal agency. That shows that there is*

something strange about what we are teaching them about the possibilities of making a change as a manager.

Harald believes that the best thing we can do is to expose students to different vocabularies. 'It is a great struggle, that is for sure.' He explains how he tries to focus on narratives that enable students to contextualise different values and different knowledge than the traditional western and corporate perspective. Harald raises the obvious issue of when we in Scandinavian business schools use pedagogical exercises such as role-plays to attempt to understand how it is to be an oppressed *other*. He stresses the need to bring in 'narratives that are told by people who live in these realities where these sustainability issues arise.' However, Harald does not believe that it is the business schools' role to change people's values, as this would insinuate that the teachers have superior values. 'As if you can get the students who dream of becoming a businessperson to not dream about that; I do not think so.' He talks about the power of critical thinking and reflexivity in education. 'Reflexivity means that you try to question those values you hold dearest to yourself. It is not that you have it as an aim to change ideology or the values of students, but what we try very much to do is to have them questioning those things that have become normalised.' This is not achieved through the SDGs or other codes of conduct, he says.

> *Code of conduct is mostly about reproducing kind of dominant ideas without really questioning or stopping to think about what it is we are really doing. I used to work in the finance sector, so I know this very well. You stop to think about what it is you are basically doing because we are not given the time to stop and think about these kinds of deeper ideas about our [business education's] effects on society. Everything needs to be so quick. And it is not necessarily by design, it is just the norm that exists and we have made it very hard for people to start questioning those norms.'*

Harald points out the when business schools try to move attention towards sustainability concerns about value loaded educations are all around 'but it is harder to make them [students] understand that other things that they have learned are also values. Many of them resist the idea that what they have been taught elsewhere [in other courses] are values.'

He believes that the idea of sustainability has the potential to guide us towards unlearning the things we have taken for granted, but also to promote the notion of long-term thinking in a society that prizes fast results and short-term gains

> *It [sustainability] might change how people see time. There is something fundamentally wrong with the sort of time [that exists] in business and capitalistic thinking. […] If we want to be sustainable, we need to have the capacity to think long-term and we need to make it legitimate that it takes time to make good decisions and it takes time to reflect.*

Thinking the unthinkable

…the dividing line between those who want to think
and therefore have to judge by themselves,
and those who do not,
strikes across all social and cultural or educational differences.

(Arendt, 2003, p. 45)

How are the educators *thinking* about sustainability in their context, really? Can we assume that they do indeed think, just because they are 'enlightened'? And what role does *thinking* play in sustainability education? Critical thinking plays a vital role in sustainability education (see Hjörth and Bagheri, 2006; Rieckmann, 2012; Scott and Gough, 2006; Vare and Scott, 2006, among many others) and we have wondered at length about the role and future of critique in business education, which is currently under greater threat than ever before (Fleming et al., 2020). But what about thinking?

Arendt's writing provides an abundance of incentives to *think for oneself* under genuine crisis, though she believed that this ability often gets lost among the status quo, where we forget to 'stop and think' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 4) in our efforts to keep 'the administration running' (Arendt, 1965-66/2003, p. 29), even concerning the most enlightened people. 'A temporary retreat into the self' (Waxman, 2009, p. 97).

Education, like no other sphere, can be the setting for this kind of activity. However, Arendt emphasised that in times of crisis 'the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity' (Arendt, 2006a, p. 6), which she found to be 'the clearest indication of the need to consider anew the meaning of human responsibility and the power of human judgement' (Kohn, 2003, p. xi). Arendt's conceptualisation of thinking and her constant reminder of the public realm (the realm of action, the only realm that allows for responsibility and judgement) renews the hope that *critical thinking* in business schools, and education in general, can make a practical difference (Cator, 2022).

When Arendt referred to the need to *think* in dark times, she was not only referring to the horrors of the first half of the 20th century. The darkness for Arendt was when the mind wanders in obscurity which she said was 'the condition when traditional categories and theories have ceased to provide answers for the time we live in and how we landed there' (Arendt in Korsgaard, 2018, p. 182). Thinking for Arendt is to retreat into the gap between past and the future to engage with a 'continuous' and 'unfinishable' process of 'confronting what we encounter and are struck by' (Arendt in Korsgaard, 2018, p. 182), to be able to think about what we have suppressed as unthinkable, as impossible to think with. For this Arendt offers a method she calls 'pearl diving' (Korsgaard, 2018, p. 182) or 'pearl fishing' (Young-Bruehl, 1982/2004, p. 95) which Karl Jaspers, her former supervisor, said was a part of her 'anti-academic mood'. In thinking in terms of pearl-diving, you allow for many beginnings and no ending. The only thing to do is to 'interrupt each other' (Arendt in Korsgaard, 2018, p. 183) with judgements, which find their quality in what Arendt calls *Homeric impartiality*. To capture this impartiality, she occasionally referred to this method of 'pearl diving', which she was however reluctant to describe in too much detail because of her inherently anti-methodological attitude and suspicion of schools of thought in general (Korsgaard, 2018, p. 188). In her last book she quoted from Shakespeare's *Tempest* to illustrate the meaning of her metaphor.

> *Full fathom five thy father lies;*
> *Of his bones are coral made;*
> *Those pearls that were his eyes:*
> *Nothing of him that doth fade,*
> *But doth suffer a sea-change*
> *Into something rich and strange*
>   (in Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 2012)

It is in the process of fishing for pearls, where respect for plurality is central. 'Greeks learned to understand—not to understand one another as individual persons, but to look upon the same world from one another's standpoint, to see the same in very different and frequently opposing aspects' (Arendt, 2006a, p. 519). By collecting these different aspects and

perspectives on the common world, you fish for pearls. Some pearls 'suffer a sea-change' but can survive in a new crystallised form if only the pearl diver will come down to them one day and bring them up into the world of the living. With this method you search for meaning in the moment rather than fixed truth. We can use those pearls in teaching and research to gain insights into the world 'as it is' while maintaining a certain impartiality around them so they can be interpreted differently by others.

> [W]e move away from a classical conservative image of the past, where it is the sanctioned neat and tidy pearls that are to be handed over. Here we are concerned also with the entangled, embodied, forgotten, excluded and oppressed materials and experiences that illuminate the past and bring hope for the future by being brought into new constellations with each other. (Korsgaard, 2018, p. 190)

Are the categories we are offered to imagine a different world too poor. We can all agree to that sustainability education should be to engage students, and ourselves, with different perspectives. However, the educators often got stuck in a place of very limited options where the paths were already made, already educated. Marxism or capitalism, stories about *the others* and *the system*. We close our imagination to paths of the past. How can we find new ways of dealing with change? Lea Ypi (2022) writes in her book *FREE* on how we tend to get stuck in metaphors from the past that hinders our ways to be different. Being brought up in the last communist state, Albania, where these dualities of capitalism and socialism met she engages us in the story of how her environment could not imagine other alternatives of organising communities, and one or the other had be right or wrong.

Harald touched upon this, how there was no time to imagine a different world.

> *Nobody has the time to be Karl Marx now a days*
>
> -   Harald

There is something about *time* that makes sustainability impossible for the educators. While some express the lack of time to be critical, others talk about the impossibility to step away from the machine that the university

has become, where urgency of everyday tasks give no time to come up with an alternative way of being and thinking, which you can later transfer to next generation through education.

The simple world we are offered is well illustrated in a Ruben Östlund's movie *The Triangle of Sadness* about the bizarre lives of super rich people benefitting from Capitalism, where a Russian billionaire and luxury yacht's captain that claims to be a socialist trade quotes. While the socialist refers to Karl Marx, Mark Twain and Noam Chomsky, the capitalist is inspired by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The dialogue becomes like a left and right winged football match instead of a constructive dialogue about what it means to build a good society, which was the director's intention. He beautifully illustrated our lack of imagination and our difficulties to put our actual and unfiltered thoughts to flesh.

Many have described the movie as 'too simple' and 'obvious'. When Ruben Östlund screened the film for a select audience in Paris in 2022, one of the richest people in France stood up during a Q&A and started screaming that the film was 'too simple.' In an interview with Independent (2022, November 1st) Östlund responded and explained that in fact it *is* quite simple. 'It is not OK to exploit another human being and pay them s*** salary. And it is not OK to make a huge profit, using other people. It is *that* simple.'

While the limits to our imagination is grounded in the simplicity of alternatives to view the world differently, we seem to wish to hang the complicity on to the impossibility to imagine a world beyond capitalism or communism. The *in-between* the ego or the solitary, or the private and the public does not exist. There was no time to imagine being able to be with the world differently. It was easier for the educators to imagine their own deaths or disappearance from this world.

Sometimes I just feel we should just do the opposite; let humanity die so something better can come along,' said Gunhild. Sif also flirted with this conclusion. 'I don't even care if some homo sapiens [continue to exist] because apparently, we are the ones that have destroyed this globe so maybe it is better that we disappear.

How can we, like pearls, become into new constellation with the world?

Essay VIII: Love

> *'Another face of our pain for the world is our love for the world'*
> - Joanna Macy (2010)

One of the most important discoveries made in this inquiry is that the very definition of sustainability is to be found in our response to *the other*, which can at times also be a response to yourself when in thinking; *the two-in-one*. In this essay, I am to engage with this issue using the concept of love.

Arendt's first research project was about love, where she describes the concept of love as a relationship with our existence, which can only be felt in the togetherness of people in the common and given world (Arendt in Scott and Stark, 1996). Her doctoral thesis was called *Love and Saint Augustine* (Arendt, 1929/1996), and since then we find the concept of love, guided by Augustine's philosophy, in almost all her work. Her diaries, for example, include endless reflections on love, in parallel with evil, where she uses the concept of *amor mundi* to explore the question of why it seems so difficult for us to love the world (Heberlein, 2020). In a review titled 'No Longer and Not Yet' that she wrote on Herman Broch's *Death of Virgil,* she is guided by the ideas in her doctoral thesis where love is described as *a force* to interrupt empty spaces that emerge after catastrophes with a of public space of the in-between *us* where we go from *being* towards *creating* something new. She explains this space like this:

> The chain is broken and an empty space, a kind of historical no man's land, comes to the surface which can only be described in terms of the "no longer and the not yet." In Europe such an absolute interruption occurred during and after the first World War. (Arendt in Scott and Stark, 1996, p. 118)

My intention with defining sustainability through evil, thus, not as something in specific but rather for a world we have to leave behind (with the judgement of 'no longer'), I try to break a chain into the unknown ('not yet'), where the definition gets free from the sunny face of certainty. When we finally are able to enter this space, which I call love, we can perhaps be with the urgency and troubles without having to give evil an intrinsic value,

such as when we look at people and nature as a *resource* think of *the other* as a self-centred force of competition.

In a special issue they call *Teaching what is not there* Kostera and Straub (2022, p. 185) wonder what we might be missing in business education and explain that in conversations with colleagues, teaching tended to be framed as a 'space of suffering' or 'a necessary evil of an academic's existence' where sustainability is taught as techno-cantered business cases that are simplified and standardised as knowledge, and that can be mass-delivered to students as customers.

I wondered if *love* as a metaphor towards an awareness of our relational space of reality could be an attempt to respond to this, not to simplify the complexity of the struggles of sustainability in business education, nor to disregard the evil with innocence. Love is not innocent, but 'a scene of great relational complexity' (Haraway, 2016, p. 20), where we are in the troubles with others; the world as it is, but where evil has no intrinsic value in the stories, we educators tell, or in the space where we teach. Love gives attention to starting anew and showing up differently in the classroom, in transparency with our thinking. The classroom would become a place for *thinking* and *judgement,* instead of the 'anxiety of know' (Boulous Walker, 2017, p. 58), where the stories are not already decided.

What happens when we disregard the emergence of the truth, and only include sunny face 'best practices' of the 'lesser evils', actions become more like fabrications or a simple preparation for vocation, when education becomes successful merely in teaching us 'how to drive a car or how to use a typewriter', as I have mentioned before in this thesis, but unable to make the students acquire the normal prerequisites such as *critical thinking* (p. 179). This Arendt (in Holt, 2020, p. 584), called an 'atmospheric thoughtlessness' pervading the Western world, where we are unable to raise unanswerable questions of meaning.

Birger and I are both in the area of organisation studies, where the tradition is very much to 'go out into the field' and describe what we observe, and then inductively create theories, still with requirements of a statistical mindset instead of metaphysical. This Birger thought made sustainability

a little less problematic for us within business education, because we were not as 'useful' to the harmful and unsustainable companies and even irrelevant because 'companies do not hire sociologists' that do not worship economic theory. I asked him how our theories could then be said to be important.

I mean you could [as well] ask:

- *why do we exist*
the big why
why bother I mean
it is too devastating.
Every tenth year you can ask that question
in a more fundamental way
you answer it
you continue
- Birger, business education

This feeling that Birger describes is what Arendt would count as an alienating experience of the social (Belcher and Schmidt, 2021, p. 104), that sets the political against the social. We get lost in a 'natural harmony of interests' (Arendt in Morariu, 2011) that eventually turns into an apolitical and dominant social sphere of the strongest wills. This ontology is Arendt's (1968) definition of *dark times*. Because once we agree to this illusion, thinking loses its vital purpose in education

In my study, I found that it was often an ontological but hidden confusion that hindered the educators from teaching what they thought was worth teaching. There were mysterious dominant forces that wanted the students to learn Ronald Coase or Michael Porter. While most educators were highly critical of 'bad management theories' (Goshal, 2005) and bought into that discourse, at the same time some did not feel they had time to give these dominant and bad 'wills' too much resistance. 'You have to teach Coase to be able to criticise him, and there I find myself teaching Coase,' said Gudrun. Others, like Sten, did not suffer this insecurity and considered sustainability as a matter of private consumption habits. 'Competition policy is [for example] a concern for the consumer,' he said, with a feeling that economic theory had made the greatest contribution towards

sustainability issues – or at least 'the least worst option', as Kopnina et al. (2023, p. 28) argue the typical response of businesses in their work with sustainability related issues.

Ironically, while we try to engage with renewal in education through sustainability that reminds us of a common or a public world, Arendt would argue that in our modern times we find ourselves in a parallel process where we have lost a sense of the reality of the public space, even though it is the only space that exists – 'the world of appearances'. This has happened, according to Arendt, because we have confused the relationship between *the political* and *the social,* and all of a sudden, the *political* is not a given fact of life anymore, where the ascension of the social is to the detriment of the political (Arendt in Morariu, 2011). Morariu (2011, p. 145) argues that these social science perspectives of the relationship between 'public' and 'private' 'shade away the tendency of 'being together', where the public and the objectivity of the common world vanishes.

> The public sphere designates "that which is common". There are two aspects of the "common", each of them constituting in its turn a new dimension of the public sphere. Firstly, that which is common means that which is seen, perceived by everybody. Secondly, it means the world which is common to all of us, a unitary whole, which "assembles all of us together". Thus, the existence of reality itself is an aspect which derives from the feeling associated with "that which is common" […]. (Arendt in Morariu, 2011, p. 148)

The end of the common world is when it is regarded from a single perspective, how many 'single' perspectives there are, how many various 'already decided' values systems there are, where circumstances are taken away from the individual's multitude of perspectives. We should not be choosing between Karl Marx or Adam Smith, Arendt, (1958/2018, p. 42) argues, and in which Osberg (2010) would call 'already educated ideas' nor are we deciding between Margaret Thatcher or Enver Hoxha, like Ypi, (2021) so beautifully makes a point of in her book *FREE,* where we try to win over the mass to show that his/her perspective is the best perspective (Arendt, 1958/2018). This Arendt calls conformism, which she traces to the discipline of economics:

… whose birth coincided with the rise of society and which, together with its chief technical tool, statistics, became the social science par excellence. Economics […] could achieve a scientific character only when men had become social beings and unanimously followed certain patterns of behaviour, so that those who did not keep the rules could be considered to be asocial or abnormal. (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 42)

If we agree that sustainability in education lies the hope for becoming differently in business education, is it not time that we start to make some room for eccentric judgements?

> For judgement to be eccentric, we must expose ourselves to otherness, which has to do with friendship, if we understand friendship as a public rather than an entirely private matter. While political judgement requires a 'being in the presence of others' Arendt's views on thinking and its role in moral judgement indicate the necessity of solitude, of being alone with oneself. Rather than seeing this a process through which one calls oneself into question, I highlight the importance of the experience of being called into question, which I understand as the experience of 'being taught' (Biesta, 2016, p. 184)

Here Biesta touches upon the important aspect of Arendt's theorising about thinking and how it can open up a space for the other instead of suppressing the otherness. It has to do with allowing yourself to be taught by others, to *listen*, instead of be stuck in the *critique* of others in haste. And here is why it is of such importance that thinking gets a relief from critique. Under these circumstances it matter more what company you choose to be with and that you actively seek those places where your sensemaking might be interrupted.[57]

Some interpret Arendt's argument to mean that she has lost hope for us to be able to live in the common space of multiple perspectives; that we are not able to be at home in the world anymore (Betz, 2020; Jørgensen, 2022) as in that we have in fact become homeless. However, in my reading of Arendt, the only way to exists is the world of appearances with our earth-bound condition and we are certainly in it. We always have a home.

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[57] I am still finding out how to engage in a process towards an eccentric judgement, and I still today have little tolerance to engage in spaces that irrupt my way of thinking. However, one good example of this exercise could be a new method that Emma Stenström, a professor at the Stockholm School of Economics has developed that she calls 'Bubble jumping', where you get the change to exercise your capacity to be in these spaces of interruption and listening (Stenström, 2023).

It is just that we do not have time to 'stop and think', to realise it. In thinking you 'go home' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 187) but when you forget to think you start to use your 'space of freedom' (Arendt, 1998/2018, p. 180) as if we were not free. As you did not have a home.

The modern men, whether they are associate with 'the socialized man' or 'the economic man' (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 42), forget to practise an 'earth-bound' space *in between,* where we are in relationship to *the other* since it is assumed that the world is already fixed for us to be educated of. The consequence is that we reduce ourselves and *the other* to 'the slave, the foreigner, […] the labourer […] the job holder or businessman' (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 199), *or* most importantly in this case to *the scientific man* that is educating for something that he does not want to be part of and we become unfaithful to the world.

In the essay about evil, I found out that the educators are unable to teach sustainability because of 'the system' and because of 'the other', and thus 'there was no transformation going on' in their schools. I myself had a hard time to explore sustainability because 'I', the innocent PhD student, was not part of 'them'; 'the educators of the banality of evil' and was told that speech and action are distinct, separated, and thus sustainability is 'only a trend' that comes and goes. Tomorrow it will be something else, like 'regenerative leadership' or 'care', which are also just trends that come and go.

Instead of embarking on to this exploration of sustainability in business education to provide 'correct' information about 'what it is' I came to understand, by resisting already made explanation, that it is not yet what we want it to be and that there might be time to engage in a discussion of what we need to start mourning and let go of.

Love as teaching what is 'not yet'

How can we start to teach under these circumstances, where we have to let go of things we know and have to start to teach what is not yet? Kostera and Straub (2022) call for these ways of being with organisation and management studies:

> While we and so many other organization theorists today believe in the necessity of systemic change, we are convinced that a necessary condition for stopping one also has to get a sense of what might come instead. Hence beyond the question of how to stop, we keep asking ourselves the possibly more pertinent question of how to start? (2022, p. 186).

It is not about looking for already decided alternatives, but rather aiming to negotiate different ways of starting something new that does not systematically exhaust resources or search for things that might be exploitable (Wolin, 2017, p. xix).

For Arendt, *love* was to dare to develop slow judgements in *response* to *the other* rather than in a relationship of expectations. In love people *move* together in their surroundings where *being* is neither 'the phantom of the Self' nor 'the arrogant illusion that they can be Being generally' (Arendt in Scott and Stark, 1996, p. 118). Arendt distinguished herself from her mentors, like Heidegger, when she exchanged *being* for *creating* (Scott and Stark, 1996) For her *creating* was a response to what she felt was a lost sense of collective authority in the love for the world. The only *being* there is, is *with* the world and *with* others. You *are* nothing without this world that is indeed shared. This is the only ontology possible for sustainability in education.

When Arendt wrote about love, she did not mean love in the traditional understanding of the term; it had nothing to do with romance and roses. I am not trying to be romantic; we are deadly serious. Love, for Arendt, was a way to be *with* the world instead of *on* it, as it was a case study. She always connected responsibility and judgement to *amor mundi* in one way or another. 'Arendt highlighted responsibility and love as two components of educational praxis' (Tamboukou, 2016, p. 1).

After listening again and again to educators' stories about *the others,* the question of this inquiry became: how to educate in a way that we ourselves would want to be part of it?

In the last two essays I have argued that to be able to be *with* sustainability with business education, where sustainability becomes a frame of mind (Bonnet, 1999), we will need to start to dare to be with the world in different ways instead seeing it as an *interesting* case study of a *dangerous world out there.* To dare to engage with what now seems to be un*thinkable*.

'I have somehow become "the critical voice from within" […] the "expert of the social."'

I meet Gudrun in her office, located in a new, modern-looking building. You can see people moving up and down in elevators made of pure glass, and a spiral staircase rises high up through the middle of the building like the Bramante staircase in the Vatican. We sit down in a large conference room on the third floor. She seems a little out of place in this fancy and minimalistic room, wearing a casual cardigan that she wraps around her as she talks. She is a scholar in organisation studies, but explains that the economists work on this floor as well. To her they live in a totally different world. 'For me business is always just an empirical context. […] By saying that, I am being very naïve. I think I am one of those people that can change things from within, but it will probably not work that way.' Gudrun has been teaching sustainability and organisation 'forever', as she phrases it. 'Well, it was always a surprise that I ended up in a business school, but then I forget to think about how surprising that is.'

Gudrun feels out of place, recalling my first impression of her when we met in her office: 'I feel like I have been co-opted.' Just being confronted with the question of what she thinks about business schools gives her the urge to go and look for another job. 'So, I am here, the critical voice, and *they* can use it to say – everything is fine, [the critical voice] is there, we are an open-minded business school'. She looks out the window and continues, with a certain disappointment: 'At the same time business schools are mainly staffed by people who aren't critical voices […] I'm just the quirky teacher you have in the fifth semester, and then students forget about it and go out and make money and "green" something.'

In her department she believes that most of her colleagues have very similar views on their responsibility to teach students to engage with a world that is increasingly facing major challenges, 'but there isn't any of this idealism or imagination that is needed. It is more like a Porter and Kramer idea that good business for society means good business for me.' It has

not been safe to be too critical in her context. 'We have had people that were quite critical and very openly critical, and that was silenced, so now we run after the good grants.'

Gudrun says it is obvious that decisions that are made in business prioritise profit, which she understands to a certain degree; that for businesses to be able to thrive they have to make money. But she acknowledges that there are complicated relationships between businesses and the world, which need to be understood but are still mostly ignored. 'I think that things need to change within finance. […] Or maybe we could be without finance, I do not know.'

She seems sceptical about where her schools is heading. 'I question whether this school is really trying to transform anything.' Gudrun tells me that her department has for a long time been called *the Woodstock department* because they have a fundamentally different methodological and epistemological way of seeing the world. 'Yes, *them downstairs* – they called us hippies.' Now she feels that she and her colleagues at the department of organisation are becoming more mainstream and co-opted. 'Now we are just trying to outperform *them* within their matrix instead of suggesting a new matrix.'

> *'I think I live in a part of this school where we share the same concerns, but still just a part of a bigger wheel that is a business school and most of us have not necessarily been trained in business schools, so we come from outside and we are still a minor sub-discipline. […] I'm just living in a small corner of the school, so I think it is also an institutional problem because we organise the way we do, which can allow me to sort of stay cool about the fact that I teach in a business school.'*

During our conversation Gudrun expressed that, just by taking a little time to talk about the purpose of business schools and the 'big why are we doing all this' question, she had already started to experience an identity crisis. 'We usually do not think very much about the bigger picture and the bigger purpose.'

*'When I teach my students sustainability [in the fifth semester], I see envi-
ronmental catastrophes and they see a business opportunity and that is not
what I want them to do, I want them to think beyond that, so I am trying
to introduce that as being problematic in itself, when externalities become
business openings, but that is what we usually do when we teach sustainable
business, we produce new green technology. We just continue producing
things. That is not taking responsibility, it is the opposite of taking respon-
sibility.'*

She laughs and adds: 'But then again, I cannot really see a business school
doing away with business, so I am not sure it is a workable problem, then
it has to become something else maybe?'

Gudrun wants her students to become something other than the typical
businessperson: 'Not necessarily for them to become Marxists, but at least
to understand the complexities and to be more reflexive about what these
"green" opportunities are […] but we are actually becoming less and less
critical.'

For the most of the time, Gudrun is out in the field doing empirical re-
search, especially with engineers around energy questions. She explains
how her role always becomes being 'the social' in that context; something
that the engineers have to tolerate but do not really care about.

I often end up as this "someone" who is trying to sneak in like a parasite.

Still today, she is not secure in her role as 'the social' and feels like she is
not taken very seriously. But Gudrun hasn't lost all hope yet.

*'The fantastic thing is that a parasite can transforms its host. And then
the questions is: if I am this parasite, what is it that I want to produce
in these engineers or economists? What is this little nagging doubt I could
produce in them that would end up in better judgements? I don't know
the answer to that question.'*

 She explains the existence of the parasite and its host as of two different
worlds and reminds me of *the others* on her floor: the economists. She tells
me a story that I call *the milk metaphor*.

'*We have colleagues on this floor, real economists you see. We have a huge milk problem on this floor. There is non-organic milk and organic milk in the fridge because the economists buy non-organic milk. The head of our department sent the head of their department an e-mail and suggested that we should just share the milk budget so we would not have to have two sets of milk in the fridge. However, that was not possible because the economists did not want organic milk. They said that if we insisted on having organic milk then we would have to keep it separate, strictly forbidding us to drink the non-organic milk. Now we have e-mails going around warning everyone from our department not to drink the non-organic milk. This is clearly not an economic decision but just some kind of refusal to be lured into the organic culture, God forbid. It goes against their principles. It makes me think that these people probably do not share the same worldview and concerns about the future as I do. These people are powerful here. […] I am not sure that the non-organic milk group wants to turn this into a sustainable business school.*'

Breaking a chain into the unknown

When our stories are about *the others,* care is given and instrumental values towards something specific. *I* care about this - *they* do not. I fully understand these stories of *the others.* This whole inquiry started because I wanted to confront *the others* about what *I* cared about, and *they* should as well. The world is falling apart and *they* are doing nothing: the evil business educators. Now, as I am nearing the end of this inquiry, I have come to understand that we all have to be differently. What if we gave care an intrinsic value in higher education, by *opening up* questions around care instead of placing it under the category of already made judgements? If the economists do not care about their milk being organic, what do they care about? Have they been asked? Have we created a space where their true appearances can become explicit (Luban, 1983, p. 232), like I have tried to do in my conversations with business educators, where their thoughts are made flesh (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 47)? 'Love is a slow judgement,' writes Boulous Walker (2017, p. 33).

With a conceptualisation of *thinking* which offers a certain relief from critique, I have argued for the importance of enabling sustainability in education to be slow, open, undecided and uncertain, thus allowing its essence to become a space *in between* us within the public realm. In this sense, the only way to define it is in our response to our troubles, where we direct the definition not towards a particular future but rather away from particular past. Just like Haraway phrased it, on staying with the trouble, sustainability becomes a space between the past and the future, where we *remember* and *promise* not to be lured into staying the same, and thus being something that we fundamentally are not.

> *Thinking annihilates temporal as well as spatial distances.*
> *I can anticipate the future,*
> *think of it as though it were already present,*
> *and I can remember the past as though*
> *it had not disappeared*
> *(Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 85).*

Love does not promise alternatives but rather that there is still something worthwhile fighting for. Love it the only ontology for action towards the common good. Love grounds us in a phenomenology that is 'the social source and moral ground for action in the public realm' (Arendt, in Scott and Stark, 1929/1996, p. 116).

In staying with the trouble, we interrupt the chain of the past and thus are able to create a new space that asks the question of what knowledge deserves salvation, where the evil of the past and the love for the world meet. In Arendt's writings we find a variety of negative and positive guises; a Kafkaesque thinking where the public space 'in between' citizens and the 'empty space' in Western traditions, resulting from the 'catastrophe' of Europe from 1914 to the end of World War II (Scott and Stark, 1996, p. 118), meet with *critical hope* for a different world. Unlike Max Weber, Arendt's way of looking at the human condition imparts a sense of hope, not only to resist but to start anew. She believed that we could be differently, not only with reference to labour and work as in Marx's vision of change, but also in addition to fabrication, in thinking – the only space from which *action* can emerge.

Critical hope is not the same as being blindly optimistic (Ojala, 2017) or blindly in love regarding a specific thing, but has to do with a feeling that there is still something worth fighting for. In this case I used the concept of love to engage with the hope that business education can be more about the public realm – not necessarily 'public' as we would define it in law, but public in the sense that business education becomes a matter of *in between* us and not a matter of *competition* between 'private' interests, assumptions that are so well illustrated in theories of 'stakeholder engagement', as if every one of us were holding a private stake, that *is* and cannot *become* any different.

For Arendt, 'modernity', which for her was the elimination of the public sphere and thus an illusory detachment from the world, was a lost sight of love. Love is to open yourself up to the world and practise your judgement with others in the attempt to 'defend the public sphere' (Arendt in Burdon 2015, p. 240). In love you allow your thinking to become judgement as a 'way of doing justice to the multiplex and ambiguous character of human

reality by regarding others *not as inhuman, but as ourselves in other circumstances* – even though those "others" may include the Adolf Eichmanns of this world' (Jackson, 2019, p. 248).

But what we seem to do instead is to separate ourselves from 'the other', which can in fact be another towards the mainstream or 'the mass' as Arendt referred to it. In her last book, Arendt (1971/1978) tried to transform identity into difference, because of the obsession with separating ourselves from *the other* as a 'unique personality' (Arendt in Young-Bruehl, 2004, p. 304). To separate oneself from the other is not always to be different but also to be the same, within a particular group as Lindblad (2017) illustrates in her doctoral dissertation about the mainstream.

> Perhaps the idea of a mainstream or dominant culture has become tenable only as a straw man that subculturalists use as a comparison by which to mark themselves as special. (Williams in Lindblad, 2017, p. 58)

In the ontology of love, which is a one-world-ontology, there is no such thing as detachment. Here is where Arendt's critique of postmodernism shines brightest, where the break she is talking about is not from modernity but from alienation, not in the sense that Marx emphasised, an alienation from labour, but more generally a human alienation from the world (Tamboukou, 2016, p. 2). Educators cannot just 'give' tools to students and then 'they' decide what to do with them. The educator's perspective will always become a part of the student, so the perspective matters. Slow judgement is when the judgement is placed in the questions you ask, the stories you decide to tell. It is not the same as giving your already educated opinion.

Gert Biesta (2013) is troubled by the lost sight of what he calls 'the great gift of teaching' and says that in assuming that all students already have access to complete sets of knowledge for collective exchange, teachers forget the important role of guiding the students through a shift in self-understanding, which is a great responsibility. Biesta and other advocates for what is often called *existential teaching* emphasise the importance that educators join the learning and re-learning process to inspire capacities for

resisting unsustainable and oppressive vocabulary and prejudice. In existential teaching, there is no such thing as 'objective' knowledge development or the 'objective' role of the educator, where they should solely transmit knowledge to the students or enforce external values. Existential teaching calls for a more subjective awareness in the classroom, especially among educators. Thinking needs to be given space in education for 'being thought' before assigning it to certain purposes. This is where educators start to play a crucial role according to Jaarsma et al. (2016), most importantly in the neoliberal universities, that can be traced to ideas within business schools. They point out that the 'ontological freedom of students seems subsumed by their status as perpetual debtors, future corporate workers and consumers' but at the same time remind us that 'the more we embark upon practices that shape ourselves and our classroom in emancipatory ways, the more at odds we are with the regulative ideals of the corporate university' (Jaarsma et al., 2016, p. 458).

Kostera and Straub (2022) call for teaching what is not there, while Mandalaki et al. (2022) respond and suggest creating a messy, uncertain, ambiguous space that precedes teaching practice towards unknowing, turning teachers into learners. Arendt (1954/2006a) would be very careful with this transformation, as she believed that teachers should have the authority to talk about the world 'as it is' and in doing so take responsibility for storytelling in the classroom. However, 'the world as it is' happens in between us, in thinking, where we have to make others a part of our perspective.

One way to do this is to come together in storytelling practices where *the other* can become a part of our perspective and where we are invited into others' perspectives. For Arendt, *the will* plays a crucial part in this process of reconciling ourselves to reality, that is in-between. The power to preform the choice of the will, which the educators often felt they could not follow because of *the other,* comes according to Arendt from *love* or what she described using the concept of *caritas.*[58] 'I will' and 'I can' are not the same kind of freedom. The political freedom of 'I can' is only possible 'in the sphere of human plurality' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 200), and *action* (not

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[58] *Caritas* is defined by the English dictionary as 'love for all people'.

fabrication) is when human plurality becomes a *We* that is 'always engaged in changing our common world'. When it goes from *We* to *They* is when we split into the Self alone, away from *thinking,* that is our two-in-one, which closes down possibilities for *action.*

Who are *We* in business education of which you and I are members?

> The only trait that all these various forms and shapes of human plurality have in common is the simple fact of their genesis, that is, that at some moment in time and for some reason a group of people must have come to think of themselves as "We". No matter how this "We" is articulated, it seems that it always needs a beginning. (Arendt, 2971/1978, p. 202)

In 'We', action is always engaged in changing our common world, writes Arendt (1971/1978, p. 200), a mirror to a solitary thought between I-and-myself, to think the thoughts of yesterday anew. It is being a member of the unit of 'We' 'where men are ready for action' (p. 201).

This relational 'We' is not reached through politics but through love. Love creates a new 'We' that indicates that a new world will be inserted into the existing world.

> Love, by the nature of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others. […] Love, by its very nature, is unworldly and it is for that reason, rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical forces. (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 242)

So while love helps us acknowledge the relational, making us aware of the public realm, that the world is shared, where meaning happens 'in-between', all definitions that separate us are not needed anylonger. How can We educators start anew with our students?

'I have been a part of strategising this business school for the last 15 years, as a vice dean and now an associate professor. I have followed the process and seen that its [good intentions] always get *watered down into broad and vague formulations, smart sentences that come from a particular discourse of management strategising. Professors do not like to be told what to do because they experience a world where they are constantly inventing ways of understanding and ways of controlling.'*

Sune started his journey at university in 1967. 'I was a conservative when I started, a member of the conservative youth, but I went all the way to the left in '68, became a student activist and a Marxist, until I got to Harvard in '85.' Here he started to see the world in a more complex context. 'I thought I had a solution to everything, and then you come and feel extremely inferior in that context, where they are so smart, like extremely intelligent, so that was sort of a restart of my whole thinking.' Now, Sune explains that he has gone back to 'being more Marxist again', as he phrases it, 'because social issues and the power issues, they are so acute. Nobody can deny some sort of responsibility for that.' Despite that, he still expresses his worries about business schools today. 'Traditional business education is mainly five disciplines: economics, finance, accounting, management and marketing. You could make a business school only with those disciplines and everybody would be satisfied.' He continues to describe the struggle. 'I have been involved in several courses on responsibility which I think is very difficult, it is questionable in a business school. There is a lot of hypocrisy […]. They can contribute to good causes, the management comes to meetings, but when it comes down to hard decisions, it is very difficult for them to decide against immediate profit. Therefore, I do not believe so much in this. I have followed it a lot.'

During the 30 years that Sune has been working in a business school not much has changed in terms of moving towards more sustainable practices.

'These all too famous quotes by Milton Friedman – 'The business of business is business' – this sort of writing off of any moral responsibility, it is almost like the old mafia slogan when they shoot each other and say – 'don't worry, it's only business' – this kind of thinking still exists in business schools today. We have hundreds of finance students who do not care at all about anything else than to find the smartest way of handling the stream of money that goes around the world. The finance professors are no better; they write off any moral or social responsibility and consider their only responsibility as being to make the finance sector more efficient, because then it serves the purpose of economic growth and they assume that economic growth is good for society.'

Despite Sune's cynicism towards sustainable business ideas, he is careful to set aside his views in the classroom. 'I am very careful not to preach, because you need to have an intellectual dialogue with the students and to stimulate their intellectual development [but] my most recent conviction is that you cannot avoid values, in social science. There is no objective social science; you have to have a goal with what you do.' Sune think it is difficult for his business school to have a specific purpose. 'A huge public institution like this, we do not have a purpose. The purpose is to follow the law; we will never write in our mission that we want to save the planet because that is for the minister to decide, to decide what we are here for.'

Even though Sune has worked in business schools all this time, he believes that they have had a generally negative impact. 'We were a part of the movement that founded the whole mafia mindset of business, that business is a technical matter and that you do not need to think socially. […] The finance sector is perhaps the greatest challenge to humanity at the moment. Obviously they did not learn anything from the financial crisis.' He laughs with an ironic look in his eye, but also a touch of sadness. 'Many of them tried but the core of finance is still only about maximising profit, so finance is a very very dangerous sector and a very dominant one.'

At the same time that the school is trying to transform towards sustainable development, there seem to be other parallel processes going on that are working towards completely different goals. 'Now we are having this economic boom, so half of our students will be reading financial economics

after the first year because that's where you get the jobs. It has become amazingly popular and their values are pure economics. They try to make the world fit their mould but refuse to tell what the mould is.'

Sune is sceptical about whether his school is actually transforming. 'I am not sure that the executive leadership of the school is on board [with sustainability]. I just had a meeting with them […] and the thing they push is entrepreneurship, not sustainability. At the moment we cannot say that we are leading in sustainability.'

Sune continues talking about the importance of values in business schools and how they frame the education that is delivered, but in different ways according to whom you are talking to.

> *Well, if you are talking to somebody from the finance department, they are responsible for making as much money as they can and that is something that everyone needs to understand. If you are dealing with people from marketing, their responsibility is to sell things and understand consumer value. In human resources you are responsible for making people feel good so they will be effective employees, so there is no one idea here. […]'*

He becomes silent and seems to be considering whether he should say what he is thinking. Then he continues:

> *'One value is the financial magician. There are many of those graduating from here. They all want to get a job in London. It is a strong trend among most of our majors or specialisations, and there is no trace of sustainability. They get jobs very quickly.'*

Talking to Sune, I wonder why he has been here for so long if he really thinks that these kinds of institutions have had such a negative impact on the world.

'Business schools are dangerous in a sense that we teach logic that is not immediately integrated with the social aspects and the human aspect. It is an abstract logic that we teach students and tell them they should act on that logic, and of course it is a challenge to try to make sure they are not losing their humanity.'

His department has been trying for many years to integrate humanities and social aspects into the teaching, to foster a more interdisciplinary approach, but he emphasises that theirs is just a niche field and the dominant ideology comes from somewhere else, in another building far, far away. 'Well, everybody is interested in sustainability now. It is a huge change, it is always in discussions – in my family, with everybody I meet, sustainability is always a part of the conversation.' But he doesn't believe that this conversation is deeply rooted. "[The students] have a lot of these smart little money-making ideas and [the teachers and management] make speeches about how fantastic it is that young people are creating their own businesses and they see it as a Schumpeterian idea of the active rational man: taking active economic initiative, creating new businesses. That is a conservative idea which I think is very negative for society.'

For Sune, sustainability is about huge challenges which he doesn't see business schools truly dealing with at the moment.

'[…] it is about that we stop emitting and we stop throwing plastic in the water and we stop deforestation in the jungle in Indonesia and Brazil and so on. All these things have to be done. […] And then there are the social issues that are actually also burning, but it is less evident, it is less physical and immediately threatening, so I think it is going to be hard to convince businesses. […] For example, they forget that taxes are something good; higher taxes are not such a good idea for them, so they have a really hard time getting real on the issue.'

As Sune mentioned before, he is fully convinced that the main interest of business schools today is entrepreneurship, 'not climate change, not environmental or social responsibility, but entrepreneurship. In business, entrepreneurship is a big star now.' As he sees it, the vision in the field of

entrepreneurship is solely about making money. 'At this point I say, OK, that cannot be the mission of a public institution, funded by taxpayers, that we help students to make money.

Composing *the others*

There is certainly a divide.
This discussion is an ontological debate.
Economists and social conservatives
believe in classical economics,
engage in markets
they believe in the efficiency of markets.
There are people that belong to a particular paradigm
they are powerful.
They might admit that this [sustainability] is important
but not that it should have
overriding significance
that in any way
justifies that it should be given
'special priority' ……………

…………...I mean, our colleagues,
particularly finance people,
doing their wonderful mathematical stuff,
issues of personal responsibility
just turn into noise in their ears,
something that kind of disturbs
the nice purity
of their strong economic assumptions
about human behaviour.
It is difficult
almost impossible
to integrate sustainability
or responsibility
into their work,
it has never been taken seriously
and is more of an apparition.
There has been a long debate
about what should be the centre of business
and the centre is always economics and finance,
that is the hardcore stuff,
there is where the demand is
and that is how these schools are run
(Erik)

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You see, we are divided here
there are others
powerful others.
The question is:
are we doing this because we have a moral obligation to do this,
to save the world
OR…
should we not talk about moral obligations
but about business
and how good it is for business
how good for growth
There is a divide between us here
(Gudrun)

We are a schizophrenic institution
the chairman of our board is a very well-known investment banker
he is a fan of Ayn Rand
it is terrible stuff
it is worse than neo-liberalism
and then our rector is a professor of finance
there is this notion that there will be more rewards
that you get paid better
there is this certain type of students that are for that
an image that is quite tied to finance
   (Frode)

The majority in the middle is more difficult
They [the students] are indifferent,
they don't even show any resistance,
just going with the flow,
if it's good for their grades
they'll do it
not because they think it is important.
(Gunhild)

The economists' mission
is that everybody contributes to economic growth,
but you destroy as much value as you create in most businesses,
it is an illusion and it is a dangerous one!
   (Sune)

Slow urgency towards home

Arendt calls for slower judgements. This we have to do by telling different stories, where we make the others part of our stories, where we meet in the mutual fear that underlies specific forms of evil and where we all can agree, namely, that we want to live (Arendt in Scott and Stark, 1929/1996, p. 11). Negotiation in the space of love will not abolish all evil, and does not bring us to a particular end of sustainability. Rather, it is a public space where the common world becomes common sense, and where finally there is no in-between us where finally there is no in-between us anymore as we engage in a mutual and unending activity by which 'by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is to try to be at home in the world' (Arendt, 1994, pp. 307-308).

One way for me to engage differently with sustainability in business education has been through poetic inquiry, where I try to compose a sense of urgency, through slow reading. The urgency becomes slow, not in linear time where people react with; 'WE DO NOT HAVE TIME'. In slow urgency questions about desires are made open, attentive to what is particular, rare and new. Different and not the same. Love is then enveloping; passion that connects us and places us in relation to the other, where understanding of desire is put in contrast to the desire to know (Bouous Walker, 2017, p. xxi). Not a desire 'based on lack', but 'a love that approaches, rather than appropriates the other' (Cixous in Boulous Walker, 2017, pp. 157-158). Love has the ability to:

> …open our everyday institutional intersubjective relations in a more generous manner, thus orienting us towards a future philosophy that re-engages the instituting moments of philosophy in practical ways.' (Bouous Walker, 2017, p. xxi).

Love can help us broaden our limited ways of being with education, because love is never about the anxiety to know or some utlity towards an instrumental end, but much more about understanding how we can share this world.

Understanding, as distinguished from having correct information and scientific knowledge, is a complicated process, which never produces unequivocal results. It is the unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is to try to be at home in the world. (Arendt, 1994, p. 307-308)

HOMECOMING

Home as healing

I began this inquiry because I was intensely curious to *know* what sustainability in business education actually means? The inquiry quickly turned into bleeding wounds where other questions became more important; other questions close to business.

The first wound came into view in the viscous cycle of my own alienation from the phenomenon I was studying in combination with the educators' own alienation within their education. Most of us were educating for something they did not want to be part of.

This double-detachment raised the questions of:

What does it mean to educate or study something you do not want to be part of?

and in this case

Where then, lies the possibility to be with sustainability in business education?

The second wound is connected to a more conceptual process of trying to understand what we actually mean by critical thinking when claiming its importance for sustainability in education? How do we actively engage in critical thinking within our education? With this question in mind and in my dialogue with the educators, I started to realise that critical *thinking* might be suffering from overwhelming attention towards *critique*. My simple question of; 'what are we doing?' with sustainability as a 'frame of mind' slowly brought us to dark places where it was hard to find ways of sustainability co-existing *with* business. Sustainability was something completely different and made business un*thinkable*, a place where we did not belong. Eventually, I found that being with sustainability is a question of how we can be with business: and this realization called for a process of homecoming. Sustainability went from being a source for answers to the struggle of 'being at home' in our education.

Kociatkiewicz, Kostera and Parker (2021) explain 'going home' as a process of *disalienation*. Interviewing people in an organisational setting of co-

operatives, they show how *being at home* is described as a way to create a collective space that 'does not rely on simple notions of happiness or well-being, but is problematic, difficult and produces both conflict and collaboration' (p. 952), but at the same time is personal, relational and meaningful. In being at home, you are more able to be with trouble *and* become part of it as a meaningful way of *becoming with*.

Thinking is to 'go home', writes Arendt (1971/1978, p. 187). In my attempt to conceptualise thinking with a momentary relief from critique, I practiced the capacity to *listen* carefully to what we were in fact separating ourselves from. Evil became a way for me to engage with the urgency of a world of 'no more' to be able to begin a homecoming process to a world of 'not yet'. In this way we could depart anew from the 'end of the world as we know it,' and towards uncertain and different ways of becoming.

But what were we separating ourselves from? It was not only separation from men in dark uniforms or economists that do not want to drink organic milk. It was something far more fundamental. It was the difficulty to reconcile with the reality of a dark world where we were not able to imagine an alternative, and thus were not able to put our concerns and thoughts to flesh, like our thoughts were not part of the world. What was the alternative?

St. Pierre (2019a) called this a fear of immanence, when it becomes hard to start something new because 'a fear of the unpredictable,' (p. 4) becomes unbearable. In this state, explaining away the world of business became easier than to be *with* it. But when sustainability becomes a source of separation, we easily lose sight of what is worthwhile sustaining.

To reconcile ourselves to reality is what Arendt calls 'being at home' (in Biesta, 2016), explaining that it is the capacity to stay with complexities and find friendship with *the others* in an explicit appearance of a dialogue that is characterised by our roots and the 'questionableness' of those roots (Nixon, 2015). We are not only educating, we are also in education and it is in the struggle of this homecoming process 'where education becomes crucial' (Arendt in Tamboukou, 2016, p. 2), where we actually get time to

'stop and think' (Arendt, 1971/1978, p. 4) and where paths are not already educated (Osberg, 2010).

The activity of thinking, which should be the absolute prerequisite for education, brings us towards a place where we are able to be more response-able and aware of our earth-bound relationship with the common world.

Evil, for Arendt, provides an opportunity to pay attention when we might be in bad company, with ourselves and with others - away from home. In evil we are homeless (Arendt in Tamboukou, 2016). Evil is a combination of 'a mysterious necessity' (Arendt, 1964/2003, p. 20) and a hasty judgement, but that can be slowed down in thinking, where *the other* becomes a part of our perspective in the becoming together as 'We'. In *thinking* we start a homecoming process to a world that is shared and the wounds I discovered in my inquiry into business education can only be taken care of in this common world; where we educators are part of what we educate for and what we educate becomes part of us.

Thinking with relief from the overwhelming domination of critique provides an opportunity to slow down our judgements *with* instead of against *the other* and the 'apolitical' force of *love* reminds us of our earth-bound relationship despite our differences as political beings, where we together are (response)able to renew a common world. Love is a transformational space where we discover another mode of being together. Being at home is where we reconcile and legitimise plurality (Young-Bruehl, 2004, p. 310) and where Arendt's one-world-ontology lands; where the common world becomes common sense.

Going home to a one-world-ontology

The world,
our world,
is depleted,
impoverished enough.
Away with all duplicates of it,
until we again experience
more immediately
what we have.
-     Susan Sontag (1964, pp. 4-5)

A one-world ontology is an ontology of immanence, where the essence of things is within this world, and not outside of it (St. Pierre, 2019a, p. 4). Arendt called this approach to reality the 'web' of human relationships which she described as an *in-between* space 'no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common' (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 183). In between my reading of Arendt and St. Pierre, I finally discovered why Arendt became my main influence in theorising. She provided a way to stay with the troubles where sustainability was a part of us. When we stop assuming the world as one entity, we lose our earth-bound relationship and *we* are made 'worldless' (Arendt, 1958/2018, p. 115).

The increase in power of man
over things of this world
springs in either case
from the distance which man puts between
himself and the world.
-     Arendt (1958/2018, p. 252)

When we start to explain away the only world that exists, what Arendt called 'the world of appearances', we lose common sense.

- Arendt (1954/2006a, p. 175).

How to be at home in business education *with* sustainability? The educators of this inquiry were in the midst of trying to figure this question out, and many others we have gotten to know in this thesis are experimenting with alternative ways of for example organising and imagining different ways of being with education, where non-instrumental and uncertain paths are allowed and welcomed, and where thoughts are made flesh and in writing with our (re)search in the questioning of 'what is a good business education'? Let us allow our students to become part of this process as well and thus part of healing the bleeding wounds.

It is these uncertain but thoughtful inquiries that are
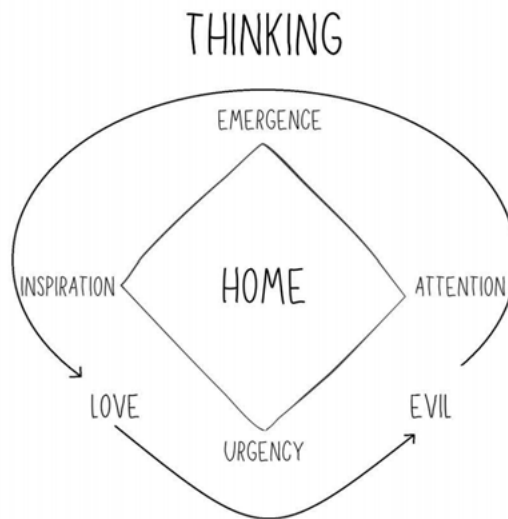…*sustainability in business education.*

Figure 9 – Thinking with one-world ontology of imminence

It is important to me
to be my whole self
not to be a different person
in my so-called private life
and my working life.
To be true to my experience
not to do what sometimes is called service acting

Because you disconnect from the phenomena
that you are actually part of
in my practice of meditation and inner development
I came to feel more that I am a part of this world
and from that perspective
it is much more difficult to do harm
because then I harm myself

- Ludvik

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