Chapter 1
Education for a World Worth Living In

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Abstract In a rapidly changing world, education is vital for humankind and for the world itself. Education is a contested space. This chapter takes a view of education as being for the good for each person and for the good for humankind. The five broad questions that the book explores are outlined in this chapter, as are key concepts addressed throughout the book, including pedagogy, education, bildung, practice, and praxis. We also briefly introduce the theory of practice architectures. The chapter concludes by providing an introduction to the chapters in the rest of the book.

Introduction

Education is a major concern for communities around the globe, not least because of its role in the formation and transformation of societies and the human beings who comprise them. There are important and urgent questions that researchers, educators, and policy makers need to consider and address in order to ensure that education today and for the future meets the needs and challenges of our times. This book asks and attempts to respond to such questions in order to better our understanding of, and capacity to, transform education.

Education, as Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer, and Bristol (2014) have defined it, refers to the “process by which children, young people, and adults are initiated into forms of understanding, modes of action, and ways of relating to one another and the world that foster (respectively) individual and collective self-expression, individual and collective self-development, and individual and collective self-determination and that are, in these senses, oriented towards the
good for each person and the good for humankind” (p. 26). This calls for scrutinising what it means to educate and study education, recognising the role of education in today’s changing world and striving to discern what the “good” consists in.

Yet in an “era of schooling” (Kemmis, 2018), it is not always clear how teaching, learning, researching education, and leading (in) educational institutions lead to “good” outcomes. Indeed, what constitutes the “good” is being increasingly defined by ideologies of neoliberalism and managerialism. It is not clear whether and how the current trend of the systematisation of educational practices will benefit the individual or humankind in the short or long term, or if it will result in irrational, unreasonable, unsustainable, unjust, and undemocratic schooling practices. What is clear is that “the good” is not a fixed construct, nor is it universally agreed upon. Indeed, what is widely agreed upon is likely to change with time. For example, much in our societies is built on illusions of unlimited resources and constant growth, but we now understand that both are false hopes. Education needs to change for changed times and conditions, as the recent coronavirus pandemic has made abundantly clear.

Considering what constitutes education for the “good”, and indeed “good” educational practices, in a time of constant change has been explored over the last decade by the Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis (PEP) international research network. This network, established in 2006, has brought together educational researchers from Australia, the Caribbean, Colombia, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The participating researchers share a deep concern about issues such as the bureaucratisation and deprofessionalisation of education, and the erosion of moral, social, and political commitments that inform educational practice and practice development (Edwards-Groves & Kemmis, 2016). They also share a conviction that such commitments need to be revived (Edwards-Groves & Kemmis, 2016). The PEP network has provided a collaborative cross-institutional and cross-national platform for exploring these issues and other aspects of education practice and practice development through a research program aimed at investigating the nature, conditions, and traditions of pedagogy, education, and praxis, and how they are understood in different settings.

Since its formation, the PEP network has been guided by three kinds of aims for its research:

1. **Theoretical aims** concerning the exploration and critical development of key concepts and associated understandings, from different educational and research traditions, of pedagogy, educational science and educational studies, and social and educational praxis and practice;

2. **Practical aims** concerning the quality and transformation of praxis in educational settings, including schools, teacher education, and the continuing professional development of teachers in relation to contemporary educational problems and issues as they emerge in a variety of educational contexts; and

3. **Strategic aims of**

   (a) encouraging dialogue between different traditions of theory, research, and practice in education;
(b) enhancing awareness about the origins and formation of our own (and others’) presuppositions and understandings as participants in such dialogues; and
(c) fostering collaboration and the development of networks between scholars interested in these problems and issues across traditions.

These aims have been addressed through a focus on the following five broad questions:

1. What is educational praxis?
2. How, in different national contexts, is good professional practice (“praxis”) being understood and experienced by teachers?
3. How, in different national contexts, is good professional development (praxis development) being understood and experienced by teachers?
4. How, in different national contexts, are the changing cultural, social, political, and material conditions for praxis and praxis development affecting the educational practices of teachers?
5. What research approaches facilitate praxis and praxis development in different international contexts?

The aim of this book is to provide a response to each of these questions based on an integrative review (Torraco, 2005) of publications produced by the network between 2008 and 2018. In doing this, we hope to help extend and deepen current understandings about the most crucial challenges for education in these neoliberal times and thus inform and stimulate forward looking discussions among and between educators, researchers, policy makers, and educational communities about education today, at local, national, and global levels.

A Conversation of Traditions

What has transpired within the PEP network, through endeavours to address the questions listed above, is what we might call a conversation of traditions with respect to theory and practice in education. A conversation of traditions is not about supporting a conservative, unchanging state of being, nor a “return to the good old days”. On the contrary, a conversation of traditions, approached reflexively, is an opportunity to raise awareness of how our current thinking about, our research into, and our doing of education through everyday practice and praxis in various settings have been and are being formed and shaped. In other words, it is a means of interrogating the origins and formations of our own understandings, presuppositions, and traditions. When diverse perspectives are put into conversation with each other, there is potential for greater understanding of contemporary educational issues and about how they might be addressed. A greater understanding of different traditions and ways of engaging with the world arguably allows for the development of new, forward thinking approaches,
and resources for hope that may lead to positive transformations for individuals and for societies.

Through the network’s conversation of traditions across our diverse countries, cultural and institutional contexts, and approaches to understanding education, researchers participating in the network have come to appreciate how differently a number of concepts that are central to our work are understood and used in different contexts. Not surprisingly, given the ways concepts and language travel and evolve, words that are commonly used across contexts, such as “pedagogy”, “education”, and “praxis”, have sometimes turned out to mean different things in different contexts, while different words appear to have been used across contexts to capture more or less the same idea or phenomenon. PEP researchers from the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, for instance, have drawn attention to the European intellectual traditions (and internal debates about) concepts like praxis, pedagogy, and bildung (in Swedish, bildning). In the following paragraphs, we briefly introduce some of the concepts that are foundational for many discussions throughout the book.

The Theory of Practice Architectures

While a range of theories have informed the research upon which this book is based, the theory of practice architectures features prominently. This theory was developed by Stephen Kemmis with PEP colleagues (see Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014) drawing particularly on Schatzki’s (2002) notion of site ontology (related to the situatedness of practices in time and space). The theory of practice architectures has been used as a theoretical, as well as an analytical, device in much of the research discussed in this book, as a means to better understand practices and the practice architectures that shape them across various educational contexts. This understanding, as demonstrated in some empirical examples provided in the chapters, can inform actions that ultimately lead to the transformation of educational settings and education itself.

The theory of practice architectures is an account of what practices (such as teaching, learning, leading, researching) are comprised of, and how they both shape and are shaped by the arrangements (referred to as “practice architectures”) that exist in, or are brought to, or are newly created in, a site of practice. A site can be a physical site, such as a school or a classroom, or a site in space and time, such as the site of a daily morning tea.1, 2

According to the theory of practice architectures, practices are composed of sayings, doings, and relatings that hang together in a distinctive project (or end/telos). The practice architectures that are present in a site are combinations

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1See also Kemmis and Edwards-Groves (2018), Kemmis (2019), Kemmis and Rönnerman (2016), Kemmis and Heikkinen (2012), Kemmis, Wilkinson, and Edwards-Groves (2017), and Mahon, Kemmis, Francisco, and Lloyd (2017).

2See Schatzki (2002) for a more detailed explanation of the site of a practice.
of the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that together prefigure practices by enabling and constraining the sayings, doings, and relatings of the practice. In the semantic dimension, cultural-discursive arrangements in a site prefigure what is said in and about the practices (sayings). For instance, the language used, the issues discussed, and the ideas thought about on a building site are likely to be different to the language used, the issues discussed, and the ideas thought about in a courtroom. In the dimension of physical space-time, material-economic arrangements prefigure what is done in a practice (doings). The material-economic arrangements include physical arrangements in a site (such as a lesson taking place outside under a tree or inside in a lecture theatre); scheduling arrangements such as a school timetable; artefacts such as an assessment task; the availability of resources such as an electronic whiteboard; or staffing arrangements for particular classes. In the dimension of social space, social-political arrangements prefigure the relationships in a site (relatings). Social-political arrangements are realised in relation to issues of power and solidarity. For instance, hierarchical organisations are often marked by the exercise of role-related power. It is important to note that the practice architectures in a site prefigure, but do not predetermine, particular practices and particular actions.

In addition to focusing on arrangements that enable and constrain the practices that happen in a site of practice, the theory of practice architectures recognises the agency of individuals and groups to make changes to pre-existing arrangements. In some sites, like prisons and army camps, the practice architectures are such that agency is tightly constrained. In many sites, however, this is not the case, and individuals (and especially groups of individuals) are able to make innovative transformations. Even in sites where pre-existing conditions are tightly constrained, changes can and will be made—consider for instance, the French revolution (1789–1799); the present day “Me Too” movement; or the climate change action protests. Each of these has been started by individuals resisting the way things are arranged in their semantic space, physical space-time, and social space. Many of the arrangements in established, institutionalised spaces have a long history, and they effectively constrain practices that challenge them. Yet they do not necessarily stop the change and transformation of practices completely. For example, while the apparently fixed, harmful, and somewhat hidden arrangements in societies that turned a blind eye to practices of harassment of women, the “Me Too” movement celebrated and encouraged resistance and the overthrow of those old practices, powered by new oppositional practices, enabled by different arrangements like social media. The “Me too” movement transformed from small-scale resistance in local sites into a world-changing practice, at the same time, changing old arrangements and establishing new ones played out in different ways at local sites across the world. On a smaller scale and in the context of education, individuals make changes in their educational settings regularly. For instance, teachers can change the cultural-discursive arrangements by implementing a syllabus differently in their everyday work; change the material-economic arrangements by organising the desks in the classroom in a different way; or change the social-political arrangements by facilitating discussions about school values that include previously excluded groups.
Theorising practices and arrangements through a practice architectures lens is to see them as separate only in theory: in reality, practices and arrangements are intertwined and interdependent. In relation to education, for example, it is easy to see how the practices of (students’) learning, teachers’ professional learning and teaching, leading, and educational researching rely on and make one another relevant. Sometimes, the relationship between practices is more obvious and more designed (e.g. the relationship between teaching and learning), while sometimes the relationship is more implicit and more organic. Moreover, sometimes there might not be a relationship where we expect to find one (e.g. when the student does not learn despite the teachers’ practices of teaching). The interdependence of the practices of learning, teaching, professional learning, leading, and educational researching has been termed the education complex (see Kemmis et al., 2014, pp. 51–52). References to this can be found in Chap. 3 of this volume.

Praxis and Practice

The theory of practice architectures highlights, then, that practices are not solely dependent on the experience, intentions, and actions of individuals (or groups of individuals). Practices are also shaped and conditioned by practice architectures and circumstances beyond each person (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Each person can, through their practices, shape their circumstances and act “rightly” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). The intentional and morally committed actions taken by individuals and collectives in an endeavour to “act rightly” within these circumstances can be called “praxis”. Consider the climate change protests, for example. The praxis of the children, young people, and adults involved in these protests is shaped by their interpretation of the “good” (or what is necessary) for the survival of a habitable planet now and in the future. Their practices are guided by their commitment to “doing the right thing”—a conception of praxis. Their practices consist of their sayings, doings, and relatings, based on their reasoning and knowledge of the best possible way to act in their current situation amidst the arrangements and circumstances that they encounter.

A detailed discussion of the origins and different interpretations of praxis, and specifically educational praxis, will follow in the next chapter. However, here we highlight two points. The first is the critical importance of praxis in the research we are discussing in this book. The word “praxis” appears in each of the five research questions. Praxis has been central to PEP work because it signals a kind of action that is so necessary and relevant in education today: action that is informed and morally committed rather than action that is rule-following or merely technical or instrumental.

The second point, as will be elaborated further, is that the way praxis is interpreted and used in the theory of practice architectures carries traces of, but is also distinct from, the various versions of praxis found for example in the writings of Freire (2014), Habermas (1973), and hooks (1994) and other feminist educational research
(e.g. Fine, 2016; Cahill, Quijada Cerecer, & Bradley, 2010), all of which use the word “praxis” to highlight issues particular for their fields, but also issues shared more broadly, such as questions about social justice. On the other hand, some research texts and languages use practice and praxis synonymously. These dilemmas are further discussed in Chaps. 2 and 3 in this volume.

**Education, Pedagogy, and Bildung**

The field of pedagogy has evolved in a centuries-long, contested intellectual history. In earlier times, classical notions of pedagogy invoked the “cultivation” (or “civilisation”) of the individual person imagined as a person who would play an active role in the life of a society or state. In later times, the elitist connotations of “cultivation” were recognised and extirpated, and pedagogy was conceptualised in more democratic terms, as the formation of individual persons who could play active roles in the cultural, economic, social, and political life of their communities and the state. In both conceptualisations, the notion of “cultivation” or “formation” invoked in pedagogy applied to the upbringing of the child and also the child’s continuing education as a young person and adult.

With roots in the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth, the more conservative conception of pedagogy as “cultivation” contested with the more social-democratic conception of pedagogy as “formation”, both in relation to the individual person and to the nature of the community and society being envisaged. Pedagogy emerged as a distinct discipline, separate from philosophy in general (where it stood alongside the field of politics) in the very late nineteenth century, following the enactment of mass elementary education in most Western countries. The separation of pedagogy from philosophy was largely the consequence of its establishment in university departments for the education of teachers; the newly invigorated field of pedagogy was intended to provide the justification for what and how teachers should teach. After mass elementary education was enacted in European countries, gradually from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, states had the problem of finding and preparing teachers to staff the rapidly expanding numbers of schools. Thus, at the very end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, the first professors of pedagogy (in the Anglophone world, “education”) were appointed in European universities, with the task of providing practical answers—in the form of the content of a teacher education curriculum—to the problem of what knowledge, skills, and values teachers need in order to teach. And thus, faculties or departments of pedagogy (or education) emerged as separate from philosophy departments.

Although the discipline of education in Anglophone countries has essentially the same history as the discipline of pedagogy, the word “education” has a “high” and a “low” meaning in English. In English, the high meaning of education is similar to what is meant by pedagogy, but the discipline of education (using the high meaning) is often described as “education(al) studies” or “education(al) science” or (in some meanings of) “philosophy of education” to indicate that it is the discipline that is being
referred to. The low meaning of “education” is similar to the notion of schooling, as in “I sent my daughter to X school to get an education”. The widespread use of the low meaning of education is often confusing to European listeners, who realise that it refers to schooling, rather than to education as a discipline. For those listeners, the low use of the term begins to function as a kind of screen that obscures the more specialist, high meaning of the term as, for example, in the discipline of education studies.

In the United Kingdom, the United States, and a variety of other Anglophone countries around the world (including Australia, Canada, and New Zealand), the discipline of education also emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the rise of teacher education through teachers’ colleges and universities. Since the late nineteenth century, there has also been contestation about how education, as a discipline, should be defined. In general, however, it is described in terms of a double purpose for education, aimed on the one hand at the individual, and on the other towards the society. In the PEP network, we have come to highlight this double purpose as the aim of education to help children, young people, and adults to live well in a world worth living in (see Kemmis et al., 2014).

The intellectual debates within the disciplines of pedagogy and education in Europe and the Anglophone countries have been similar at a very broad level. Both involve contestation over the extent to which pedagogy or education aims to reproduce or transform society, and whether it should function to retain existing social hierarchies (principally in the interests of the aristocracy or the wealthy as opposed to the mass of people, for example) or to transform them (e.g. to produce more democratic conditions in a society). In Europe, the evolution of the discipline of pedagogy has produced very elaborate pedagogical theories of each kind, with a general trend through the twentieth century towards more socially democratic forms of education. In the Anglophone countries, by contrast, the elaboration of “educational” theories was often “exported” to other so-called foundational disciplines—educational psychology, sociology of education, history of education, philosophy of education—with the consequence that these “foundational” disciplines became unmoored from overarching educational (pedagogical) theory, and frequently subjugated, as inferior sub-specialisms, to those other disciplines (psychology, sociology, history, philosophy).

In the Nordic countries in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, ideas of pedagogy have been sustained by the long-standing Nordic ideals and traditions of bildung and folk enlightenment (or folk bildning). Although in most parts, these traditions share a common focus on an organic and evolving relationship between the individual, the community, and the whole of humanity, there are also differences. The folk enlightenment movement has been, from its origin in the late nineteenth century, oriented towards education of the masses and education for citizenship, but its roots in the rationalistic idea of enlightenment (eighteenth century) highlight a set of commonly agreed, more or less universal virtues which individuals should have (Breznika, 2017). The “folk”-addition means that the possibility to be “enlightened” should be available for all, not just an (educated) elite. Bildung, especially allgemeinbildung, also refers to a basic overall education for all but highlights the need
to strengthen each individual’s own skills and capacities. Both bildung and folk enlightenment aim at providing not only knowledge but education for “sentimental attitudes, fundamental ways of valuing and basic aesthetics, moral and political attitudes” (Breznika, 2017, p. 72). The ideals of bildung and folk bildning have been fruitful in furthering the relationship between the needs of individuals and collective interests (Rönnerman, Salo, & Moksnes Furu, 2008, p. 23). We acknowledge that both have also been criticised to some extent. In particular, conversations about bildung have been criticised for the lack of clarity about what basic education should cover and whose values should be followed. Folk enlightenment has also been criticised, for example, for its exclusive messages: if we educate for citizenship, should we exclude those who cannot, for a range of reasons, live up to the expectations of (contributing) citizens?

Traditions of bilding include collaborative practices for learning (study circles, for instance) to support the growth of individuals. As well as supporting the development of relationships of trust between those involved, they also support trust in the state and its institutions (including schools and teachers). The ideals and practices of participation and democracy (Larsson, 2001), characteristic of the arrangements of study circles (horizontal relations, recognition of diverse identities, deliberative communication and action, internal democratic decision-making) are somewhat re-invented in communities of practice (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) and professional learning communities (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). It has been argued that these traditions and the practices established within them reflect a trustful attitude towards, and relationship to, human growth and education, schools as institutions, and teachers as professionals (Salo & Sandén, 2016; see Chap. 7, this book).

It would be possible to sketch a somewhat similar story from nineteenth century Britain, Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand about the rise of adult, community, workers’, and popular education through various political parties, unions, and workers’ associations. These organisations had their roots in powerful political commitments to the education of workers for participation in the political life of their countries. Certainly, adult, community, and popular education developed under the influence of various kinds of progressive and critical pedagogies (Dewey in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Freire in the mid- and late twentieth), but—in Australia, for example—they were frequently more various and contested, and less securely anchored in institutions supported by the state (by comparison with the Nordic local government departments of bildung, responsible for libraries, art museums and adult education, as well as for schools). It is thus less clear that the Anglophone countries developed a shared practice tradition of adult, community, workers’, and popular education, parallel to the Nordic traditions of bildung and folk enlightenment. It must be said, however, that university departments of adult, continuing, popular, and community education in the Anglophone world frequently aimed to nurture and sustain more coherent practice traditions in these fields.
Chapters of the Book

We referred earlier to the work of the PEP network as “a conversation of traditions”. This book is itself a conversation of traditions—it describes how different ideas (like “pedagogy”, “education”, and “praxis”) are differently understood from the perspectives of the authors’ different intellectual traditions, and it is also a reflexive product of those conversations, aiming to reach beyond our individual horizons towards a larger collective perspective. This includes intellectual, philosophical, cultural, methodological, and educational traditions, both existing and emerging. The book draws on a body of work produced by more than seventy PEP researchers dedicated to examining pedagogy, education, and praxis in eight countries. After more than a decade of researching and conversing in relation to pedagogy, education, and praxis, we felt that the time was ripe to take stock of what had been achieved, to critically reflect on what we have been doing, and to look into the future and consider where our focus should be for the next decade. In other words, this book pulls together the research findings of the various projects comprising the PEP research program and invites new voices to enrich the future conversation.

The discussions presented in the subsequent chapters, as alluded to above, are based on an integrative review (Torraco, 2005) of over 200 publications (including articles, books, doctoral theses, and published conference papers). The analytical process involved a group of twenty-three PEP researchers working in small cross-national teams, with each team reviewing work on one of the five research questions above, collaboratively and systematically analysing the publications relevant to their respective question over a two-year period. Along the way, authorial teams shared their analyses with one another and the wider family of PEP researchers, all of whom provided critical feedback. Each chapter represents a culmination of this work; each offers a synthesis of key findings and ideas generated through/in the corpus of PEP research in relation to a specific research question (sometimes going beyond the question), and a discussion of any interesting tensions and new insights and questions that emerged in the collaborative review process. We acknowledge that in any attempt to synthesise ideas and insights across so many studies, it is difficult, try as we might, to avoid glossing over nuanced differences, divergent thinking, and tensions across and within contexts.

The next chapter, Chap. 2, lays the groundwork for the book by addressing the first research question, namely, “What is Educational Praxis?” The chapter highlights the importance of the moral-political dimension of educational activity and, taking a phronēsis-praxis perspective, introduces “educational praxis” as a way of understanding and responding to this. Among other things, the chapter explores the forming, self-forming, and transforming nature of educational praxis and calls for attention to social justice issues in educators’ daily work.

After conceptualising educational praxis, the focus of the book shifts to the various theoretical and methodological underpinnings of research approaches that have been used to not only understand but also facilitate educational praxis. These are discussed in Chap. 3, Research that Facilitates Praxis and Praxis Development.
Chapter 4, *Critiquing and Cultivating the Conditions for Educational Praxis and Praxis Development*, examines the underlying conditions that impact on praxis and its development. Some of these conditions are general and global, like the impact of neoliberalism, immigration, and responses to climate change, while others are more explicitly educational, such as the impact of educational policy on teachers’ possibilities for praxis. The remaining chapters “zoom in” (Nicolini, 2013, pp. 219–223) on specific practices in the field of education. Because research related to both teaching and leading has been undertaken in response to the research question, “How in different national contexts is good professional practice (praxis) being understood and experienced by teachers?”, our review findings on these two aspects of good professional practice are presented separately. Chapter 5, *Teaching as Pedagogical Praxis*, relates to student learning and teaching practices in early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, and vocational education sectors. Chapter 6 addresses *Leading as Shared Transformative Educational Practice* in its exploration of the multidimensionality of leading in and for education. Chapter 7 discusses *Collaborative Professional Learning for Changing Educational Practices*, highlighting the crucial role of collaboration for transforming education in professional learning. The chapter concludes with a discussion of a framework for the development of such professional learning.

Finally, Chap. 8, *Critical Praxis for Critical Times*, provides a provocative reflection on the conditions facing education and educational praxis in contemporary times. Drawing on the key ideas presented across the chapters reviewing the work of the PEP network, it comments critically on local, national, and global conditions that challenge educational practice. It concludes by advocating for critical educational praxis as foundational for living well in a world worth living in.

Although all of these chapters are based on an integrative literature review, this book is not a literature review: it can be seen as a story of the exploration of the five research questions listed above, of what is important within these, and of what still remains to be explored. It sheds light on and responds to the present state of affairs regarding education, highlighting both the challenges and possibilities. It shows what praxis, good educational practice, and good professional learning may look like in contemporary times.

In light of the constant state of societal change (which has been acutely highlighted for us in the present time of the coronavirus pandemic), it is difficult to imagine what education might look like one hundred years from now. Will there be robots in classrooms? Will there be classrooms at all (during the coronavirus pandemic, many classrooms already look very different from the way they looked even a few months ago)? Will there be equal opportunity for future learners, and will our current choices expand or diminish their opportunities? Will education continue to be mainly aimed at the “good” for humankind, or will the aims be extended to better address the non-human world? Reading the predictions made by futurists years later shows the futility of trying to predict the future. Although we may not be able to answer these questions, we seem to be at the crossroads, metaphorically speaking, in terms of the direction that contemporary societies are taking. We believe and hope that a hundred
years from now, education will still aim for “good” for the individual as well as for the world (human and non-human) at large, and that the next generations keep questioning the meaning of “good” and “good for humankind”.

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