

Parker J. Palmer & Arthur Zajonc
with Megan Scribner



THE
HEART OF
HIGHER
EDUCATION



A CALL TO RENEWAL



Transforming the Academy through
Collegial Conversations

The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal

TRANSFORMING THE ACADEMY
THROUGH COLLEGIAL
CONVERSATIONS



Parker J. Palmer and Arthur Zajonc,
with Megan Scribner

Foreword by
Mark Nepo

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Foreword



The issues facing the next generation globally demand that we educate our students worldwide to use all of their resources, not just their mind or their heart. The hour is late, the work is hard, and the stakes are high, but few institutions are better positioned to take up this work than our nation's colleges and universities.¹

— DIANA CHAPMAN WALSH,
PRESIDENT EMERITA, WELLESLEY COLLEGE

What you have before you is a thoughtful and grounded invitation to live into the heart of higher education and to deepen our understanding and practice of transformative learning. The magnitude of the issues confronting the world requires whole people with whole minds and hearts to lead us into tomorrow. And that, in turn, requires us to renew the human purpose and meaning at the heart of higher education.

Parker Palmer and Arthur Zajonc have devoted their lives to creating forms of education that serve the human cause. Their book arrives at a critical and creative juncture in the evolution of higher education in the emerging global community. In particular, this book is an affirming response to an unprecedented international higher education conference held in 2007 and funded by the Fetzer Institute. Rather than a compendium of the worthwhile papers,

presentations, and dialogues offered at the conference, this book is a call to the growing interest and commitment to integrative education that the conference signified.

After two years of planning, the conference, “Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education: Integrative Learning for Compassionate Action in an Interconnected World,” was held in San Francisco, February 22–25, 2007. The conference drew over six hundred educators, administrators, student life professionals, chaplains, and students, representing 260 institutions from North America and around the world—from Schenectady High School in upstate New York to the University of Cape Town in South Africa, and from the University of British Columbia in Canada to Richland Community College in Dallas, Texas.

Partnering organizations who helped convene this unique gathering included the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the Associated New American Colleges, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the Center for Courage & Renewal, the Contemplative Mind in Society, the Council of Independent Colleges, the League for Innovation in the Community Colleges, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and Naropa University.

Our primary partner and host institution for this conference was the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). A special gratitude goes out to our warm colleagues at CIIS, to the president of CIIS, Joseph Subbiondo, for his vision and leadership, and to my Fetzer colleague Deborah Higgins for her devotion and excellence. Without their effort and care, this remarkable conference would never have happened. And deep gratitude to Megan Scribner, whose gift as a thinking partner and editor helped knit the compelling questions of the conference and the rich voices of the authors into the book you have before you.

I must confess that standing in the midst of such a remarkable community of educators for that one week in San Francisco triggered an awareness that a healthy conversation is alive and well among educators around the world. The fundamental questions at the center of this growing conversation and at the center of the conference

can be offered as: Do current education efforts address the whole human being—mind, heart, and spirit—in ways that best contribute to our future on this fragile planet? What steps can we take to make our colleges and universities places that awaken the deepest potential in students, faculty, and staff? How can integrative learning be effectively woven into the culture, curriculum, and co-curriculum of our colleges and universities? These questions remain active guideposts for ongoing work in higher education.

The Fetzer Institute has had a long-term commitment to holistic education. Over the last fifteen years, the Institute has actively encouraged the development of a vital conversation between education and spirituality that is prompted by the recognition that education, especially higher education, serves as an incubator of intellectual and professional life that cannot rightly be sheared from the formation of the whole person and his or her interdependence with the wider world. Fetzer has both responded to and encouraged the art and practice of transformational education as integral to the central and best purposes of higher education.

Transformational education—understood as educating the whole person by integrating the inner life and the outer life, by actualizing individual and global awakening, and by participating in compassionate communities—has become a quiet but sturdy movement that encourages the recovery and development of the academy as a liberating and capacity-building environment. Much work, however, remains as higher education is in great flux; outcomes aligned with the aspirations of transformative education are by no means clear or guaranteed, thus the need for this book and the threshold it represents for this much-needed conversation to continue.

ENTER WITH YOUR OWN GIFT

Vocation is the place
where the heart's deep gladness
meets the world's deep hunger.

— ADAPTED FROM FREDERICK BUECHNER

What does it mean to balance educating the mind with educating the heart? In terms of action in the world, it suggests that a tool is only as good as the hand that guides it, and the guiding hand is only as wise and compassionate as the mind and heart that direct it. The heart of higher education has something to do with connecting all the meaningful parts of being human and the increasingly important challenge of how we live together in our time on earth.

Blair Ruble, director of the Comparative Urban Studies Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, tells us:

We live in a world that is different from that inhabited by our ancestors in many profound ways. According to the United Nations, the global urban population in 2008 has reached 3.3 billion people, more than half of all humans living on the planet. This reality stands in contrast to 13 percent a century ago; and 3 percent a century before that.²

Implicit in this shift in the human landscape is the increasing importance of compassion and community, as the future will demand even more skill and grace in the art of living together. And so, the urban press of the future is one more reason that the heart of higher education needs to liberate individuals' capacity for compassion and community and provide them with the skillful means to inhabit these capacities.

Certainly everyone doesn't have the opportunity to experience higher education, but a significant and growing percentage of young people around the world make their way to college: at least twenty million annually in the United States, which contributes to the forty million globally each year. This means that higher education is the developmental home for enough young lives to fully populate the cities of New York, Shanghai, and Los Angeles combined, *every year*.

Consider then that for each generation there is a developmental window from approximately the ages of eighteen to thirty-five in which these capacities for compassion and community can be

awakened. These ages happen to correspond to the span of undergraduate education, graduate education, and professional schools such as medicine or law. Within this context, the individual's journey through higher education, if made meaningful, holds a crucial turning point which Harvard researcher Robert Kegan describes as the movement from the individual, personal mind to the social, relational mind. He suggests, in fact, that higher education's chief responsibility is to foster this transformation from independence to interdependence.

The depth and clarity of this book helps us begin the search for how our gifts as educators can help foster this transformation and meet the world's deep hunger that keeps calling for our own compassion and community. The fertile ground opened here helps us to realize a deep and timeless call inherent to all education—to enliven and affirm fully compassionate and skilled people who can take their place in the global human family.

The French writer Alexis de Tocqueville came to the United States during the 1830s to chronicle the character of a new nation. In *Democracy in America*, he defined and described the “habits of the heart” that vitalized the experiment called America. Today, we are learning that the habits of the heart are not just American but at the deepest level human. Therefore, it is the responsibility of humanity as a whole to incubate and cultivate this vitality of heart. As the Dalai Lama has said, “There is a need to develop a secular ethics of the heart. This is a question with important implications for fostering the ideals of community, compassion, and cooperation in our homes, public institutions, and society.”³

To develop a secular ethics of the heart, a reclamation of educational purpose is necessary. With this in mind, consider the interesting conundrum that the legendary researchers Sandy and Helen Astin of UCLA observed through six years of survey research regarding spirituality and higher education. After they surveyed over 1,200 undergraduates and over 800 faculty from over eighty different institutions, a startling insight surfaced. When asked, almost 80 percent of both undergraduates and faculty said that they considered

themselves spiritual and that they were committed to a search for purpose and meaning. When asked how often they experienced such a search in the classroom, almost 60 percent of both undergraduates and faculty reported never. Since the overwhelming majority of faculty and students have the interpersonal and collective power to shape their classroom experiences, this alarming discrepancy raises the disturbing and yet hopeful question: Who's stopping us? What imagined, habitual, or real barriers are preventing our educational communities from actualizing meaningful dialogues around spirit, purpose, and transformation?

Regardless of what role you may play in the world of education—as a teacher, an administrator, a student-life professional, a chaplain, or a student—we invite you into greater reflection, dialogue, and commitment to uncover and inhabit this vital and renewable heart of higher education.

Both of these authors invite us with honest and gentle rigor into deeper realms of what this heart of higher education might contain. Parker opens the door of integrative learning when he says:

We are being called into a more paradoxical wholeness of knowing by many voices. There is a new community of scholars in a variety of fields now who understand that genuine knowing comes out of a healthy dance between the objective and the subjective, between the analytic and the integrative, between the experimental and what I would call the receptive. So, I am not trying to split these paradoxes apart; I am trying to put them back together.

And Arthur challenges us to walk through that door when he says:

If I were to ask, What should be at the center of our teaching and our student's learning, what would you respond? Of the many tasks that we as educators take up, what, in your view, is the most important task of all? What is our greatest hope for

the young people we teach? In his letters to the young poet Franz Kappus, Rainer Maria Rilke answered unequivocally: “To take love seriously and to bear and to learn it like a task, this is what [young] people need . . . For one human being to love another, that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but a preparation. For this reason young people, who are beginners in everything, cannot yet know love; they have to learn it. With their whole being, with all their forces, gathered close about their lonely, timid, upward-beating heart, they must learn to love.”

Need I say it? The curricula offered by our institutions of higher education have largely neglected this central, if profoundly difficult task of learning to love, which is also the task of learning to live in true peace and harmony with others and with nature.

As a lifelong teacher, I find these questions and invitations life-sustaining. In a meaningful way, this book asks, again, Just what is the realm of the responsible teacher? However you are drawn to hold this question, the question alone presumes a devoted engagement which is necessary because true education is messy, never clear, and the lessons shift and the boundaries change.

Let me share a recent teachable moment. I was in Prague. There, in our last workshop, we invited people to tell the story of a small kindness that helped them know their true self. We asked people to be quiet and still for thirty seconds in order to let that act of kindness find them. Later, a researcher from Holland spoke tenderly of a moment five years earlier. She was reading alone in her home and night fell and the room grew very dark. She just kept reading and, suddenly and quietly, her husband appeared with a lamp to help her see. Her small moment touched me at the core. For isn't this a metaphor for the promise of all education, how the smallest light will fill every corner of a dark room? Isn't the lamp we carry from darkness to darkness our very heart?

In conclusion, I believe in this book, I believe in these authors, I believe in the promise that higher education holds. I believe in the lamp of the heart. This book, and all it comes from and all it points to, is such a lamp.

—Mark Nepo
Program Officer
Fetzer Institute

Gratitudes



We are grateful to all the people without whom this book would never have seen the light of day. We must begin by acknowledging that our collaboration has deepened the friendship that began years back, and that each of us has treasured the insights and teachings the other has brought to the book and to the subject of integrative education. We also thank our editor, colleague, and friend, Megan Scribner, who is thoughtful and thorough in her work and laughs a lot as she does it; our friends at the Fetzer Institute, especially Mark Nepo, who launched this project and helped set its trajectory; the 600-plus people who came to San Francisco in February of 2007 and generated the creative force field that emerged from the conference “Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education”; Joe Subbiondo, president of the California Institute of Integral Studies, who, along with his dedicated staff, helped make that conference a success; and David Brightman, our supportive editor at Jossey-Bass.

The question “Who and what are you grateful for as this book goes to press?” takes us down memory lane—which, at our stage of life, is more like hiking the Appalachian Trail end to end than taking an afternoon ramble. The best we can do here is to thank the many people in many places who enlivened and encouraged our vision of integrative education over the years as students, teachers, and writers, roles we are grateful to be playing to this day.

—Parker J. Palmer and Arthur Zajonc

The Authors



Parker J. Palmer is a highly respected writer, teacher, and activist who focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality, and social change. His work speaks deeply to people in many walks of life, including public schools, colleges and universities, religious institutions, corporations, foundations, and grassroots organizations.

Palmer served for fifteen years as senior associate of the American Association of Higher Education. He now serves as senior adviser to the Fetzer Institute. He founded the Center for Courage & Renewal (www.couragerenewal.org), which oversees the Courage to Teach program for K–12 educators across the country and parallel programs for people in other professions, including medicine, law, ministry, and philanthropy.

He has published a dozen poems, more than one hundred essays, and seven books, including several best-selling and award-winning titles: *A Hidden Wholeness*, *Let Your Life Speak*, *The Courage to Teach*, *The Active Life*, *To Know as We Are Known*, *The Company of Strangers*, and *The Promise of Paradox*.

Palmer's work has been recognized with ten honorary doctorates, two Distinguished Achievement Awards from the National Educational Press Association, an Award of Excellence from the Associated Church Press, and major grants from the Danforth Foundation, the Lilly Endowment, and the Fetzer Institute.

In 1993, Palmer won the national award of the Council of Independent Colleges for Outstanding Contributions to Higher Education. In 1998, the Leadership Project, a national survey of ten thousand administrators and faculty, named Palmer one of the thirty “most influential senior leaders” in higher education and one of the ten key “agenda setters” of the 1990s: “He has inspired a generation of teachers and reformers with evocative visions of community, knowing, and spiritual wholeness.”

In 2001, Carleton College gave Palmer the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award. The following year, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education created the Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award, given annually to the directors of ten medical residency programs that exemplify patient-centered professionalism in medical education. A year later, the American College Personnel Association named Palmer its Diamond Honoree for outstanding contributions to the field of student affairs.

In 2005, Jossey-Bass published *Living the Questions: Essays Inspired by the Work and Life of Parker J. Palmer*, written by notable practitioners in a variety of fields including medicine, law, philanthropy, politics, economic development, K–12, and higher education.

Parker J. Palmer received his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley. A member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker), he lives with his wife, Sharon Palmer, in Madison, Wisconsin.

Arthur Zajonc is professor of physics at Amherst College, where he has taught since 1978. He received his B.S. and Ph.D. in physics from the University of Michigan. He has been visiting professor and research scientist at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, the Max Planck Institute for Quantum Optics, and the universities of Rochester and Hanover. He has been a Fulbright professor at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. His research has included studies in electron-atom physics, parity violation in atoms, quantum optics, the experimental foundations of quantum physics, and the relationship between science, the humanities, and the contemplative

traditions. He has written extensively on Goethe's science work. He is author of *Catching the Light* (Bantam & Oxford University Press), co-author of *The Quantum Challenge* (Jones & Bartlett), and co-editor of *Goethe's Way of Science* (SUNY Press).

In 1997 he served as scientific coordinator for the Mind and Life dialogue published as *The New Physics and Cosmology: Dialogues with the Dalai Lama* (Oxford University Press). He again organized the 2002 dialogue with the Dalai Lama, "The Nature of Matter, the Nature of Life," and acted as moderator at MIT for the "Investigating the Mind" Mind and Life dialogue in 2003. The proceedings of the Mind and Life-MIT meeting were published under the title *The Dalai Lama at MIT* (Harvard University Press), which he co-edited.

Most recently he is author of *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love* (Lindisfarne Press) on contemplative pedagogy and a volume on the youth program PeaceJam, *We Speak as One: Twelve Nobel Laureates Share Their Vision for Peace*. He currently is an advisor to the World Future Council and directs the Academic Program of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, which supports appropriate inclusion of contemplative methods in higher education. He was also a cofounder of the Kira Institute, general secretary of the Anthroposophical Society, president/chair of the Lindisfarne Association, and a senior program director at the Fetzer Institute.

Megan Scribner is an editor, writer, and researcher who has documented and evaluated projects for nonprofits for almost thirty years. She is coeditor of *Leading from Within: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Lead* and *Teaching with Fire: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Teach* and editor of *Navigating the Terrain of Childhood: A Guide for Meaningful Parenting and Heartfelt Discipline*. She also coauthored with Parker J. Palmer *The Courage to Teach Guide for Reflection and Renewal, Tenth Anniversary Edition*. She has edited discussion guides, such as the one published by the World Resource Institute to accompany the *Bill Moyers Reports: Earth on Edge* video. She also coedited *Transformations of Myth Through Time: An*

Anthology of Readings and the *Joseph Campbell Transformations of Myth Through Time Study Guide*, as well as coauthored the project's *Faculty and Administrator's Manual*.

In addition to her writing and editing, Scribner is an advisor with the Fetzer Institute and has evaluated a number of renewal and leadership programs with Smith College Professor Sam Intrator. Scribner received her master's degree in American Studies from George Washington University. She lives with her husband, Bruce Kozarsky, and their two daughters, Anya and Maya Kozarsky, in Takoma Park, Maryland.



Introduction

Parker J. Palmer and Arthur Zajonc

The thing being made in a university is humanity. . . . [W]hat universities . . . are *mandated* to make or to help to make is human beings in the fullest sense of those words—not just trained workers or knowledgeable citizens but responsible heirs and members of human culture. . . . Underlying the idea of a university—the bringing together, the combining into one, of all the disciplines—is the idea that good work and good citizenship are the inevitable by-products of the making of a good—that is, a fully developed—human being.¹

— WENDELL BERRY

This book emerged from a long series of conversations between its co-authors, their close colleagues, and many others—the kind of conversations that bring people closer to the heart of a shared concern, give them new eyes to see both the problems and possibilities, and set the stage for taking creative action.

Like many educators we know, we went to college seeking not only knowledge but a sense of meaning and purpose for our lives. Both of us had good teachers who helped along those lines, and we aspired to become teachers of that sort. But early on in our academic careers, we found that the disciplinary silos in which we had been educated—and the fragmentary and fragmenting assumptions about knowledge and humanity that often lay behind them—obscured as much as they revealed about the nature of reality and how to inhabit it as whole human beings. We found it increasingly difficult and frustrating to “color within the lines” as we tried to teach in ways that answer Wendell Berry’s call to help students become more fully developed human beings.

Animated by our vocational passions and frustrations, both of us have felt called to work with others in helping higher education rejoin that which it too often puts asunder—for the sake of students, those who teach them, and a world that stands in need of integrative hearts and minds. We have been drawn to, and invite you to explore with us, the question at the heart of this book and the many conversations that led to it:

How can higher education become a more multidimensional enterprise, one that draws on the full range of human capacities for knowing, teaching, and learning; that bridges the gaps between the disciplines; that forges stronger links between knowing the world and living creatively in it, in solitude and community?

If we cannot find ways to respond to that question—not with a monolithic solution, but by laying down multiple threads of inquiry and experimentation that might come together in a larger and more coherent tapestry of insight and practice—we will continue to make fleeting and fragmentary responses to the hungers and needs of our students, to the abiding questions of the human adventure, and to the social, economic, and political challenges of our time. As large as that agenda obviously is, we believe it describes the high calling

of higher education, a calling embedded in its cultural and institutional DNA.

We are certainly not alone in our concerns. Many prominent commentators have authored important critiques of the way we educate students. In his book *Excellence Without a Soul*, Harry Lewis, the former dean of Harvard College, explains that “Harvard and our other great universities lost sight of the essential purpose of undergraduate education.”² Beyond academic and research excellence, universities have forgotten their main purpose, which is to help students “learn who they are, to search for a larger purpose for their lives, and to leave college as better human beings.”³ Lamenting the shallowness of the university’s response to problems within higher education, Lewis writes, “The students are not soulless, but their university is.”⁴ He contends that reforms, where they do take place, do not go nearly deep enough to re-ensoul the university and reestablish the purpose of higher education, which is the fostering of our full humanity.

Echoing Lewis’s sentiments, former Yale Law School dean Anthony Kronman argues persuasively in *Education’s End* that the true purpose of education has been lost, namely, a deep exploration concerning the meaning of life or “what life is for.”⁵ He goes on to write, “A college or university is not just a place for the transmission of knowledge but a forum for the exploration of life’s mystery and meaning through the careful but critical reading of the great works of literary and philosophical imagination.”⁶ Something essential has gone missing, something that brought coherence and true purpose to our colleges and universities. It is to that absence that we direct our attention in this book.

THE ORIGINS OF THIS BOOK

In structuring this book, we have not tried to reproduce the conversations that led to it. You will not find sections where Arthur says “. . . ,” and then Parker says “. . . .” Nor have we tried to meld our two voices into one by synchronizing our ways of thinking

and writing, preferring to maintain the differences in voices and viewpoints that proved fruitful when we were speaking face-to-face. Instead, chapter by chapter, each of us has addressed certain aspects of the “integrative education question” in his own way. But every part of this book that is in one author’s voice has been challenged, stretched, and refined in conversation with the other—indeed, with many others.

We came to this conversation about the heart of higher education from quite different directions. In fact, given the balkanization of much of academic life, we might be regarded as a conversational odd couple! But that is part of what has made the conversation so invigorating for each of us.

Arthur Zajonc studied engineering (BSE) and physics (PhD 1976) at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and has been a physicist, professor, and interdisciplinary scholar at Amherst College for over thirty years. Zajonc’s scientific research has spanned a range of topics in atom-laser physics, but he has been especially engaged with the experimental foundations of quantum mechanics. Parallel with his laboratory research, Zajonc has had a sustained interest in the history and philosophy of science, especially in the relationship between the sciences, arts, and humanities. Since the mid-1990s he has been active in the area of integrative and transformative education for college students, with a special interest in “contemplative pedagogy.”

Parker Palmer studied philosophy and sociology as an undergraduate at Carleton College, spent a year at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and received a PhD in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley in 1970. Deciding to use his sociology “in the streets” rather than in the academy, Palmer spent five years as a community organizer in the Washington, D.C., area and then lived and worked for a decade at a Quaker living-learning community for adult students and seekers. For the past twenty-five years, he has been an independent writer, traveling teacher, and educational activist, interspersing his independent work with professorships at the Union Institute and University, Georgetown University, Berea College, and Carleton College. His

primary interests have been in education (especially pedagogy) at every level, community, spirituality, and social change. He is the founder of the Center for Courage & Renewal.⁷

The two of us—joined by a shared vision of the power and promise of higher education to “think ourselves and the world together” rather than contribute to the fragmentation of self and world—began talking with each other over a decade ago, thanks to the hospitality of the Fetzer Institute.⁸ During these years, others have joined our conversation, or we have joined theirs, seeking the insight and skillful means necessary to encourage forms of teaching and learning that honor the complexities of reality and our multiple ways of knowing, weaving it all together in ways that contribute to personal well-being and to the common good.

Sometimes good conversations are ends in themselves, good simply because they are enjoyable and edifying. At other times, something stirs in the participants, and larger forms of dialogue and action begin to take shape. One outcome of the conversation we have participated in was a national conference funded, organized, and hosted by two of our conversation partners: Mark Nepo, program officer at the Fetzer Institute, and Joseph Subbiondo, president of the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Titled “Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education: Integrative Learning for Compassionate Action in an Interconnected World” and held in San Francisco in February 2007, the conference drew over six hundred highly engaged participants from the United States and abroad. The conference brochure posed its central question: “Do current educational efforts address the whole human being—mind, heart, and spirit—in ways that contribute best to our future on this fragile planet? How can we help our colleges and universities become places that awaken the deepest potential in students, faculty, and staff?”

Some participants came to explore methods of practicing integrative education through interdisciplinary courses, service learning projects, the integration of curricular and extracurricular activities, and so forth. Others, ourselves included, while appreciating the growing number of practical applications in the field, came to

inquire into the philosophical framework of integrative education in hopes of strengthening the infrastructure that can give credibility and coherence to its many pedagogical iterations. We pursued questions such as these:

- What mental images do we carry of ourselves, our students, our colleagues, our academic fields, our world?
- What do we assume about how students learn and what they bring into the classroom? What do we assume about how we teach and what we bring into the classroom?
- What assumptions about knowledge itself undergird the dominant academic culture and our pedagogical practices?
- How might we engage those assumptions creatively toward a philosophy of education that is more supportive of integrative forms of teaching and learning?

As the conference unfolded, we felt that we were witnessing and participating in a fragmented but promising movement-in-the-making that began a long time ago and will, we hope, go on for a long time to come. It is a force field whose premises, means, and ends are not yet well formed or fully articulated, but it contains great energy on behalf of the humanization of the university, as Wendell Berry might call it.

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF INTEGRATIVE EDUCATION

We did not ground this book in a tight definition of “integrative education,” nor is it our goal to end up with one. That concept opens out in so many directions that an overly precise definition might replicate the problem we hope to address, reducing complexity to the kind of simplicity that conceals more than it reveals. One of the virtues of conversation, as opposed to declaration, is that you do not need a precise definition to make headway: the nuances of a good conversation allow you to probe complex problems without