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‘Becoming knowledgeable’: Ingold’s ‘wayfaring’ and the ‘art of translation’ as a politics of difference

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ABSTRACT
Anthropologist Tim Ingold has developed powerful ideas about ethical ways of being in the world. Centred on ‘becoming knowledgeable’ through the continuous practice of ‘wayfaring’, or ‘lineal movement along paths of travel’ (Ingold, 2011a, p.149), Ingold’s ideas are a call for finding ways to live and act responsibly and ethically with our human and other-than-human environments. This essay argues that these interdisciplinary ideas are also powerful for translation scholars and students, particularly as means of dispelling problematic obsessions with ‘culture’ and ‘difference’. It translates the concepts of ‘wayfaring’, ‘making’, ‘the art of inquiry’ and ‘making present’ into five lines of thought, offered as paths for others to follow. Throughout these strands, as in Ingold’s thinking, run the concepts of ‘emergent difference’ and ‘variation in commoning’. Mindful particularly of students, the essay – itself an aspirational act of ‘commoning’ or an ‘imaginative effort to cast my experience in ways that can join with yours’ (Ingold, 2011a, p.4) – offers ways to conceptualise Ingold’s ‘art of translation’ through ethical practices of attention and correspondence.

KEYWORDS
Commoning; pedagogy; Tim Ingold; wayfaring

Introduction
It was a colleague who first introduced me to the work of Tim Ingold. We were co-authoring an article on bibliographic databases, to which she brought several concepts from Ingold’s Lines: A Brief History (2007). We used his notions of ‘landscape’, ‘wayfaring’ and ‘sketch maps’ to conceptualise the databases as entry points into a disciplinary field. Yet, we proposed, the databases are themselves mapped and shaped by the database editors, who collect and categorise the bibliographic data in different ways. As editors of one such database ourselves, our article offered our self-reflexive account of ways in which we shape the discipline even as we map it; we ‘integrate knowledge about the discipline and into the discipline as we work on the database’ just as ‘[w]ayfarers integrate knowledge along a path of travel’ (Zanettin, Saldanha, and Harding 2015, 166). Traces of the journey are left along paths that others may follow, but that may also ‘facilitate certain travels routes at the expense of others’ (Zanettin, Saldanha, and Harding 2015, 167).
Most intriguing in this first encounter with what were, for me, simple and appealing concepts, was the title of Ingold’s book. How, I wondered, could a book be written about the history of lines? When I landed a copy and discovered in it essays on language, music, notation, genealogies, threads, knots, drawing and calligraphy, with illustrations of manuscripts, maps, star constellations and architectural sketches, I thought, here is a Renaissance man after my own heart. Yet, for a long time, I felt that, as a translation studies scholar trying to forge a career and reputation within a particular field, such eclectic intellectual delights were out of bounds. Interdisciplinarity is forever touted, but Ingold’s ideas about inhabiting and perceiving the world appeared to pay no attention whatsoever to ‘translation’ as such and could, I supposed, only ever be a side attraction. But the lure of maps, lines, walking and wayfaring, all explored through Ingold’s invitingly readable prose, has proved too strong, and I have continued to read. I like his work. His lexical precision and eclectic stories. His insights may seem simple and obvious – plants grow in, not on, the ground, for example – yet they have changed the way I think, see and live in the world. I well remember reading the opening chapter of The Life of Lines (Ingold 2015), and how the revelation of lines and knots instead of blobs and connections made me stop, look up and see for the first time the invisible lines of people (past, present and future) coming and going through my house, of air moving in and out of the open windows, of the insects and arachnids that make their way in and find their way out. This was, like poetry, a transformative moment, in which I suddenly saw the familiar in an unfamiliar and powerfully intriguing way.

Like his lines and their lives and histories, Ingold’s recurring themes – dwelling, walking, making, attending, growing knowledge, corresponding – intertwine. They appear and reappear in different genres and publications, as Ingold, borrowing from and in constant critical dialogue with a company of thinkers and philosophers, continues to revisit and rework them, ever extending and refining his ideas. I think about them often. They resonate with many of the theoretical ideas to which I am drawn – narrative, complexity, emergence, relationality, ecologies, place, landscape – and as these ideas find their way into a translation studies that is deepening and expanding as a discipline, it turns out that Ingold’s ideas are not so out of bounds after all. As James Clifford reminds us, the boundaries between disciplines are neither ‘natural’ nor ‘intrinsic’; ‘All knowledge is interdisciplinary’ (1997, 59). Or as Ingold reflects, on a process familiar to my own,

I have never set out deliberately to ‘do’ interdisciplinarity. I have merely followed my nose, sniffing out whatever lines of inquiry look promising, and as one thing leads to another—be it by way of personal contacts, bibliographic references or meetings attended—I have found myself drawn into conversations and literatures I might never otherwise have known about. (Spencer and Ingold 2020, 209)

An intellectual journey he describes as ‘exhilarating’, ‘daunting’ and largely accidental, (Spencer and Ingold 2020, 209), Ingold’s forty-year endeavour might be said to be about dissolving, even refusing, boundaries. Meshwork, knots of entanglement, interwoven lines of movement and paths of becoming that are braiding, unfolding and carrying on, and along which all life and matter in, and of, a continuous and unbounded weather-world emerge, proceed and dissolve, are at the heart of this endeavour, offering a profound shift in perspective that can be brought to bear on every part of ourselves and the lives we lead (Ingold 2016a).1
The meshwork is very different from many of the ideas in translation studies about the discrete existence and differences between texts, cultures and languages. The enduring dichotomous concepts and concomitant vocabulary of source text, target text, source culture, target culture, source language, target language, original and translation are convenient, well-worn templates which, in spite of efforts to dislodge them, persist in both the literature and the expectations of many of our students as they arrive in the classroom, eager to translate texts from one language into another.

‘The concept of culture is something of an obsession with anthropologists’, writes Ingold (1993, 210); the same could be said of translation studies scholars, who, like anthropologists, have repeatedly attempted (and largely failed) ‘to pin down the concept, and to give it some definite meaning, which would henceforth authorise its use as a technical term of the discipline’ (Ingold 1993, 210; see, for example, Harding and Carbonell Cortés 2018; Forsdick and Spadaro 2019). Translating between cultures, between ‘others’ and ‘Others’, is an obsession of our discipline. Our translation theories rely on constructions of difference, contrast, alterity, boundaries, hybridity, in-between-ness and discontinuities that depend upon vague senses of artificial uniformity: ‘We are all the same, by virtue of our contrast with them’ (Ingold 1993, 228 original emphasis). Even when such constructions are problematised – another obsession of translation studies – the dichotomies of difference prevail as implicit, working assumptions, acknowledged as flawed, but seemingly unavoidable, a necessary shorthand.

The need for translation as ‘some thing’ that can carry ‘something’ from one ‘culture’ to ‘another culture’ across some kind of boundary arises when cultures, or any number of entities, such as texts, languages, people, readers, organisms, nations, communities, disciplines and so on, are perceived as (somewhat) homogenous within themselves and (somewhat) different from each other. Yet, for all our efforts to define not only ‘culture’ but all of these terms – think about that for a moment –, we might also refer to these entities as ‘blobs’. ‘Blob’ is the word used by anthropologist Maurice Bloch to refer to the profusion of terms for ‘self’ found in the social sciences. ‘This seems particularly justified’, Bloch writes in explanation of his seemingly irreverent word choice, ‘since, in spite of this multiplicity of would-be distinct labels, much the same claims have been made, whichever word is used’ (Bloch 2012, 120). Visually, we might imagine blobs thus, a schemata familiar to any student of translation:

![blob diagram]

Unlike most translation scholars, myself included, Ingold takes a little time to think about the nature of these blobs: ‘They can expand and contract’, he observes, ‘encroach and retrench’.
They take up space or [. . .] enact a principle of territorialisation. They may bump into one another, aggregate together, even meld into larger blobs rather like drops of oil spilled on the surface of water. What blobs cannot do, however, is cling to one another, not at least without losing their particularity in the intimacy of their embrace. For when they meld internally, their surfaces always dissolve in the formation of a new exterior. (Ingold 2015, 3)

It is an accurate description, in my view, of our unwieldy concepts of source and target languages and cultures. Connection and communication – clingingness – between these blobs in a world ‘parcelled up into discrete cultures’ (Ingold 1993, 229) is the problem of translation. It is the separation of these blobs, their boundaries, their distance and all manner of ‘inter-ing’ activities between them (poorly suggested by the lines in my diagram, which may be straight or otherwise, any variation on an equals sign, or even a series of other blobs) that is the preoccupation of translation studies. Yet it is a problem and a preoccupation that is created by the concept of ‘culture’ (or any of our other blob terms), which, as Ingold argues,

fragments the experiential continuity of being-in-the-world, isolating people both from the non-human environment (now conceived as ‘nature’) and from one another. It is this fragmentation, then, that sets the state for the artificial reconstitution of the continuity in the world in the act of translation. [. . .] Having divided the world [. . .] we are now left with pieces that have to be connected again through translation’. (Ingold 1993, 230 original emphasis)

A blob view of the world, in which isolated fragments must be connected through translation, is familiar to translation scholars and students and inherent in so many of the metaphors we use for translation (Cheetham 2016). Ingold considers this blob view an ‘alienating discourse’ and seeks to challenge the hegemony of this discourse in anthropology (as I argue it is hegemonic in translation studies) by cultivating discourses and practices of continuity (lines, meshworks, knots, etc.). ‘The concept of culture, as a key term of that discourse’, Ingold concludes, ‘will have to go’ (Ingold 1993, 230 emphases added). Consequently, I argue, the ‘act of translation’ will also have to go.

As Phipps acknowledges, ‘Such a move is not an easy one to make [. . .]. Representation has been our bread and butter[,] without the politics of identity we are left with few familiar cousins, without radical cultural difference anthropology [and translation studies] could be in some trouble’ (2011, 368). Students, especially, are vulnerable as they try to grasp our slippery definitions of the blobs, try to understand what is accepted or discredited, in or out of intellectual fashion, true or false, and worry about what they must do to write the essay and/or the thesis that will get them through the programme (Kaartinen and Ingold 2018, 53).

With what then, do we replace the ‘act of translation’? Ingold suggests that the ‘act of translation’ might be replaced by the ‘art of translation in a continuous world’ (Ingold 1993). Yet, while he has much to say about this continuous world, he says almost nothing about this ‘art of translation’. As Ingold offers lines instead of blobs, this essay also offers lines. It is structured around five lines of inquiry or, rather, five ‘loose ends’, offered as ‘the possibility of new beginnings for those who follow on’ (Ingold 2018, 33, 2007, 174). The essay’s five loose ends entwine with strands of Ingold’s thinking to forge paths into how we might enfold ‘the art of translation’ into Ingold’s conceptions of our continuous world. I am particularly mindful of students, in the hope that Ingold’s ideas, which have long
appealed to me, might also appeal to students and provide useful, inspirational paths to follow as they make their own ways through their studies. Ingold himself is finding ever stronger resonances of generosity, open-endedness, comparison and criticality between anthropology and education, qualities which I also see in translation, and which, as Ingold boldly claims, ‘have the potential to transform the world’ (Ingold 2018, 59).

After a necessarily brief introduction to Ingold’s foundational idea of wayfaring, my five loose ends offer ways to conceptualise and practice translation by 1) wayfaring through the weather-world of the text, 2) making translation, 3) identifying resonances between the art of translation and ‘the art of inquiry’, 4) thinking of translation as ‘making present’ and 5) recognising that translation is our mode of being in the world. Throughout these strands, as in Ingold’s thinking, run the concepts of ‘emergent difference’ and ‘variation in commoning’ (Ingold 2016b). Doing away with ‘blobs’, ‘culture’ and the ‘act of translation’ is not to erase, ignore or belittle difference, but is, on the contrary, to practice and attend to what Ingold calls ‘commoning’ – ‘in which everyone has something to give precisely because they have nothing in common’ (2018, 6). Continuity means neither ‘bridges’ between multiple words nor homogeneity, uniformity or conformity, but a commitment and aspiration to ‘one becoming world of nevertheless infinite multiplicity’ (2018, 67). It is this task of ‘commoning’ as we wayfare through the infinite variations of the world that ‘points the way to a politics of difference rather than identity, in which the political community is founded not in the defence of common interests, set in advance, but in the commitment to getting along together (Ingold 2016b, 23). As a model of ethics, this task of commoning is, I suggest, the art of translation.

Principles of wayfaring

Ingold’s concept of wayfaring underpins his work. It is, he argues ‘our most fundamental mode of being in the world’ (2011a, 152, 2007, 83). ‘[L]ives are lived not inside places’, he contends, inside the blobs of my crude diagram above, the house I thought I was in when I first read that opening chapter, ‘but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere’ (Ingold 2011a, 148). Making our way not from blob to blob but along lines through places in a continuous world, wayfaring is Ingold’s term ‘to describe the embodied experience of this perambulatory movement’ (ibid., 148). Thus, learning is processual and, rather than knowledge being transmitted from one blob (teacher) to another (learner), we become knowledgeable: ‘knowledge is grown along the myriad paths we take as we make our ways through the world in the course of everyday activities, rather than assembled from information obtained from numerous fixed locations’ (Ingold 2010, 121). We are terrestrial creatures and it is on the ground that we, in ‘improvisatory movement’ (ibid., 122), make our paths in the all-supporting, all-life-giving medium of the air, the very ‘condition of interaction’ (ibid., 132). Moreover, we do none of this alone; ‘not only does the extended mind of the wayfarer infiltrate the ground along myriad pathways, but also, and inevitably, it tangles with the minds of fellow inhabitants’ (ibid., 135). Becoming knowledgeable is social.

Ingold is not speaking metaphorically. He is grounded in anthropology – his early work was with nomadic peoples and reindeer economies – and he is very much concerned with the physical environment. He is also concerned with the materials of this environment and our multi-sensory perceptions of, and enabled by, them. Thus, the ground is not
a landscape pinned into place by the colonising gaze of the viewer but ‘is perceived kinaesthetically, in movement’. The ground is not a flat surface, a stage upon which the furniture of the earth is set, but ‘appears infinitely variegated’ and is composite, made of many things, as a ‘textile, whose surface is not the same as those of all the strands of which it is woven, but is nevertheless constituted by them’ (Ingold 2010, 125 original emphases). Nor is the ground inert, but undergoes continuous regeneration as the plants (that grow in it, not on it) molecularly combine with soil, air, water and light in a cycle of composition and decomposition.2 This is why archaeologists need to dig.

It is along this variegated, composite, dynamic ground that wayfarers walk and make their way, improvising a path, a ‘cumulative trace’ (ibid., 127) made by the act of walking. Paths are made collectively, following and followed as we impress our footprints into the ground and ‘weave another strand of movement into it’ (ibid., 128, original emphasis). The paths are ‘nearly always winding and hardly ever straight’ (ibid., 129).

To the ground and the paths along it made by wayfarers, Ingold adds the ‘medium of the air’, in which we are constantly immersed and yet towards which we so often pay little regard. The continuous shifts in temperature, precipitation, currents and pressure are the media, in which we perceive the world; our movement, our senses, our very breath itself are all made possible by light, vibration and particles. As Ingold argues (2010), the centrality of weather to all life makes it extraordinary that it is so often disregarded in our accounts of life. Much attention is paid to place, to the materials of things and (human) interaction with the materials of (networked) things in places, yet without the air, none of these interactions could occur.

**Loose end 1: wayfaring through the weather-world of the text**

Consider the text. I start here, one of many possible blobs, because this is where so many of our students start. They have a source text; they must produce a target text, and, because they are students, they must attend lectures, seminars and workshops and complete a certain amount of required and recommended reading so that they will be able to explain both the differences between source and target texts and their (or another’s) act of interlingual translation through which they (or another) have endeavoured to connect the two.

In my years of teaching experience, this apparently straightforward task is rarely that. Instead, it is often fraught with doubt, anxiety, indecision and even bafflement. Which text shall I choose? What is the right way to translate it? What is the correct target text? Which theory should I apply? Where can I find that theory? How many references must I have? I’m only a student, how can I possibly argue with Venuti? In their attempt to successfully complete the task by connecting the blobs and communicating across/ between languages and cultures, students attempt to ‘assemble’ their knowledge ‘from information obtained from numerous fixed locations’ (Ingold 2010, 121). Often assumed to be lodged in the head of the instructor or hidden in what appears to them an impenetrable scholarly text, students are often frustrated when neither the lecturer nor the academic literature yields the sought-after answers in ways that are comprehensible or useful to them (especially when, as consumers in a neo-liberal model of higher education, they have paid dearly for such answers). My oversimplified diagram of two blobs side by side serves not only as an illustration of source and target (texts, cultures
and languages, etc.) but also an illustration of what Ingold calls the genealogical model of transmission, whereby knowledge is transferred from teacher to student, who then reproduces it in order to provide evidence of the success of that transmission (Ingold 2011a).

Consider instead lines, and how we/students might use the principles of wayfaring to approach the text. As is the ground, texts, then, are perceived kinaesthetically, in movement. We come, physically and literally, to the text; it comes to us. As readers, we make our way, spatially and temporally, through the text. The text is not homogenous, but appears infinitely variegated, in ‘contour […] substance, colouration, and texture’ (Ingold 2010, 125). It is composite, ‘matted from the interweaving of a miscellany of different materials, each with its own peculiar properties’ (ibid., 125). It undergoes continuous generation. As the ground is not inert, but formed through growth and decomposition, so is every text emergent of processes, a momentary stability in a continuous process of generation and regeneration. This is why historians need to dig. ‘[T]he text is remembered by reading it’, writes Ingold, ‘the story by telling it, the journey by making it. Every text, story or trip is a journey made rather than an object found. And although with each journey one may cover the same ground, each is nevertheless an original movement’ (Ingold 2007, 17, 2011a, 196–209). As the wayfarer follows the ‘myriad pathways’ of the text, forging their own path, their own interpretation, their own thesis, their own translation, so does their ‘extended mind’ inevitably tangle with the minds of fellow inhabitants (Ingold 2010, 135). Knowledge grown as we wayfare through the text is social, and everything and everyone is all the time immersed in the wind, ‘the flows, forces, and pressure gradients of the surrounding media’ – be they, I would say, economic, political, social, physical, geographical, discursive, electronic, etc. – without which we could not see, hear, touch or read the text at all; it is ‘the very condition of interaction’ (ibid., 132).

Texts as landscapes through which we move, reading and writing, remembering and narrating (and landscapes as texts, which we read and write, remember and story, in the course of our movements) are ancient and indigenous ideas (Ingold 2007, 16, 2011b) that continue to resonate (De Certeau 1984; Duncan 1990; Solnit 2000; Wylie 2007; Wright 2017). They are compelling ideas that can be used in the classroom to empower our students to approach texts not as coded blobs, but as materials in the weather-world, ‘a continuous and unbounded landscape, endlessly varied in its features and contours, yet without seams or breaks’ (Ingold 1993, 226), through which our students make their way – with us and others, following us and others. How the diverse paths of our wayfaring through the weather-world of the text (in the weather-world) are brought into accord and concordance with each other (and with institutional contexts, assessment tools and criteria) is at the heart of Ingold’s philosophy of education (2018), a strand I pick up in Loose End 3 (the art of inquiry and the art of translation) below. For now, I simply want to say that the idea of wayfaring through the weather-world of texts is an imaginative move that has the power to make tangible theories of ‘open-ended text’ and ‘active reader’ (Barthes 1975) and hence the potential to reduce, even eliminate, the feelings of disempowerment I have witnessed as students struggle to ‘find’ the ‘meaning’ of the text, upon which they must impose some pre-decided strategy in order to ‘transmit’ that meaning in the ‘right way’, through the act of translation.
Loose end 2: making translation

‘Making’ is another rich concept at the heart of Ingold’s anthropology and pedagogy. It is the title of one of his books, in which he tells the story of a university course he developed on what he calls the ‘4 As’—anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture.3 This trans-disciplinary course is where Ingold, who long grappled with the disparities between classrooms and how knowledge is actually grown in the social world, tries to apply to education his principles of wayfaring. If we learn by doing, if knowledge is grown—‘both generated and carried on’ (Ingold 2018, 2)—as we make our way together through the weather world, then it is necessary for students (and teachers; we are all students) to do things, and to do things together. The course combined lectures with practical sessions that included ‘collecting objects, messing with material, flying kits, string-making and knotting’ (Ingold 2013, 12). In contradistinction to making as a ‘project’, an imposition of an internally conceived form and intention upon the external material world, Ingold wants to think of making ‘as a process of growth’. Rather than the maker ‘imposing his designs on a world that is ready and waiting to receive them, the most he can do is to intervene in worldly processes that are already going on [. . .] even if the maker has a form in mind, it is not the form that creates the work. It is the engagement with materials’ (Ingold 2013, 21–22 original emphasis). To put theory into practice, Ingold and his students weave willow baskets on the beach. It is a cold February day on the Scottish coast. They physically labour and struggle with the resistant materials, weaving until the failing light and the approaching rain draw the work to a close. ‘Later they would tell me’, Ingold reports of his students, ‘that they had learned more from that one afternoon than from any number of lectures and readings’ (Ingold 2013, 24).

The traditional materials of translation may be printed words and screens, but they are also images, sounds, fonts, archives, even buildings and places (Simon 2019). These multimodal texts are ‘weather-worlds’. Rather than ‘applying a theory’—as students so often feel is required of them—by imposing upon a text a form or theory already made in our minds (Ingold 2011a, 210), we can make our way attentively through the variegated, composite, dynamic ground of the text, learning in practice to respond and co-respond with ‘a greater sensitivity to cues in the environment [text] and a greater capacity to respond to these cues with judgment and precision’ (Ingold 2011a, 161, 2013, 110). As we adjust our responses, weigh our choices, ‘read with’ theory and ‘think through making’ (Ingold 2013, 15, 6 original emphasis), follow the responses and choices of other scholars and translators, as ‘the complex surface of the ground [text] is inextricably caught up in the very process of thinking and knowing’ (Ingold 2010, 135), we can translate in correspondence with texts, another key term running through Ingold’s work that refers to this attentive, attuned, response-able way of being in the world. From an ethical perspective, we are attuned to context and community, acting and deciding in correspondence and responsible for our actions and decisions. Our students may be dubious of basket-weaving, but we can translate in collaboration with each other and with machines. We can translate into and out of language, modal and genre combinations that stretch and challenge our students’ preconceptions of what translations are and what they can do. We can also practise ‘telling’ the stories (Ingold 2013, 210) of our translations and the knowledge we are growing through the making of our translations, how they are coming into being, how each translation is a ‘telling’ of the text. Such are the purposes of students’ commentaries accompanying their translations.
Practitioners’, Ingold contends, ‘are wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world’s becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose’ (Ingold 2011a, 211). The translations we arrive at will be different from what we may have envisaged before setting out. As Cronin points out, translators can be added to Ingold’s list of practitioners (builder, gardener, cook, alchemist and painter), who ‘are not so much imposing form on matter as bringing together diverse materials and combining or directing their flow in the anticipation of what might emerge’ (Ingold 2011a, 213). The translator, Cronin suggests, ‘brings together the materials of language, combines and redirects their flow in the anticipation of what might emerge’ (Cronin 2017, 46). Perhaps handwriting, drawing, basket-weaving, string-making, music-making and walking abreast (Ingold 2013) are not so remote from the collaborative work of translation-making if we want our students to grow knowledge that is haptic and material. Our translations and our translation-making, of all kinds, in all circumstances, for all purposes, do not exist disembodied in the world, external to ourselves and of no consequence to others. ‘[T]he activities of writing, or of artmaking, composition or filming’, says Ingold, ‘are themselves critically attentive, environmentally situated and materially consequential’ (Spencer and Ingold 2020, 213). As is translation-making.

**Loose end 3: the art of inquiry and the art of translation**

Wayfaring through the weather-world, making things and growing knowledge are all practices of what Ingold calls the *art of inquiry*. ‘You try things out and see what happens’, he writes; ‘the art of inquiry moves forward in real time, along with the lives of those who are touched by it, and with the world to which both it and they belong’ (Ingold 2013, 7). Rather than a forced, hylomorphic imposition of a preconceived form (Ingold 2013, 20–21) (research questions, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, data analysis and conclusion), with which so many of our MA and doctoral students unhappily wrestle, the art of inquiry reconfigures for them research as the *correspondence* we encountered in the previous loose end: ‘a way of working, akin to a craft, which opens up the world to our perception, to what is going on there, so that we in turn can answer to it’ (Ingold 2016a, 11). 4 The loose end I am offering here is the idea that an emphasis on the process of research, the necessary sensitivity and flexibility of correspondence and the uncertainty of inquiry – our paths are ‘nearly always winding and hardly ever straight’ (Ingold 2010, 129) – might mitigate the anxiety of graduate, especially doctoral, students, who flounder, and even suffer, in the labyrinth. ‘Even if the maker has a form in mind’, – research questions, literature review, etc. – ‘it is not this form that creates the work. It is the engagement with materials. And it is therefore to this engagement that we must attend if we are to understand how things are made’ (Ingold 2013, 22) and how PhD theses are completed.

The idea that we grow knowledge along the paths we follow and forge is crucial for our graduate students to grasp and practice. Without it, the graduate programme makes no sense; you turn up to lectures, seminars, workshops, discuss a variety of topics and readings and then, at the end of the semester, you (struggle to) choose one topic and submit your essay, which very often counts for 100% of the assessment. Repeat in second semester and again over the summer as you write your MA dissertation. In much of my experience, many students are quick to detach those final assessment tasks from the art of
inquiry process mapped out in the syllabus. They skip classes that are on topics they assume are unrelated to their essay/thesis, read only what they think is relevant to that topic and fail to anticipate the amount of drafting and redrafting required to synthesise thoughts and ideas into a coherent piece of writing. Everything you’ve done over the course of the semester and the programme goes into that piece of writing, and yet students can fail to grasp that *everything you do* over the course of the semester and the programme goes into that piece of writing.

Doctoral students also struggle to find their way through the labyrinth, grasping at the transmission model of education by gathering information from books and seminars and trying to second-guess what they think their supervisor wants. International students, working in a second or third language, schooled in completely different rhetorical discourses and navigating new institutional norms and expectations can find the labyrinth especially daunting. The principles of wayfaring encourage the student to turn the doctoral thesis into the art of inquiry, a process through which you physically make your way (to the library, to class, to the field, to your desk day after day) and through which you physically read and write and think and walk your way to a vantage point of knowledge that is grown and told rather than transmitted and reproduced. ‘We could call it’, Ingold says of the art of inquiry, ‘the method of hope’, a term he takes from anthropologist Hirokazu Miyazaki (2004); ‘the hope that by paying attention to the beings and things with which we deal, they in turn will attend to us, and respond to our overtures (Ingold 2016a, 11 original emphasis, 2018, 70). To our students I offer this: when research is difficult, uncertain, unpredictable, it is not because you are lacking, but because difficulty, uncertainty and unpredictability are the nature of wayfaring and the nature of research as they are the nature of life.

‘Were we but passive in the midst of experience’, writes Ingold, ‘we would be overwhelmed by it and incapable of answering to it’ (2018, 22). My encouragement to my students is to simply turn up (to class, to the desk, to the work), because the act of turning up can be a powerful way to resist the passivity that can be overwhelming and render us incapable of answering to the experience. Turn up and attend class, I say to my students, even if you haven’t done the reading, and when we attend we can also *attend*, even as we are attended to – ‘hello, I’m glad to see you here’ – with all the meanings that word has to offer. To attend means:

- **caring** for people or for things, in a way that is both practical and dutiful; **waiting**, in the expectation of a call or summons; **being present**, or coming into presence, as on an occasion; and **going along** with others, as in joining or accompanying. (Ingold 2018, 21 original emphases)

These are things we can do – on our own and with others – when we don’t know what to do next. We become graduate students by behaving like one, caring, waiting, being present and going along; ‘a self that dwells in its own practices is recursively generated by them’ (Ingold 2018, 22). When I go for a walk, I set out with intent (principle of volition) but then I become the walking and ‘I am indeed a different person when I arrive’. I set out to do a postgraduate degree (act of volition) and in doing the degree, in doing the work, the reading, the thinking, the writing, the talking, the listening, the observing, the daydreaming, the searching and re-searching, I become the master, the doctor, and ‘I am indeed a different person when I arrive’ (Ingold 2018, 23).
When Ingold ditched the ‘blob’ concept of ‘culture’ as no longer useful because it unnecessarily fragments and isolates what is a continuous world, he did not ditch the idea of translation. On the contrary, translation becomes not an act of connection or transmission between blobs (‘the artificial reconstitution of the continuity of the world’), but ‘the art of translation in a continuous world’ (Ingold 1993, 230 original emphasis). Although he says nothing about what that ‘art of translation’ might be like, we can surmise from his passionate discussions on the art of inquiry, summarised briefly in this Loose End, that the art of translation is, like the art of inquiry, responsive, attentive, communal, iterative and a process of making that is, through doing, increasingly skilful in our correspondence with texts, fellow translators and the processes and paths that have, in our wayfaring, brought them to us and us to them. This, in my view, is a humble approach to translation – I will make my way through this text and become knowledgeable, rather than impose my intention upon it. It is also empowering, as we encourage students to trust the process – I can make my way through the text and, by doing so, I will become a translator. It is also an empowering way for our students to embark upon postgraduate education – I can make my way through this class, this reading, this conversation, this discussion, this course, this programme, these essays, these translations and, by doing so, I will become knowledgeable.

Moreover, the way is made with, and alongside, others – classmates, teachers, friends, family, other scholars, institutional guidelines and assessment criteria – not because ‘they’ have ‘the answers’, but because all of us are walking, sometimes abreast, sometimes in single file, sometimes long after others have traced this path we follow. In words that echo and simultaneously dispel long-held debates about fidelity in translation, Ingold says of academic study that ‘It does not commit us to fidelity in rendering the master’s voice’. It is not a homogeneous body of knowledge transmitted from one blob to another. Rather, ‘To receive the gift of teaching is to enter imaginatively into the world our teachers open for us, and join with them in its exploration’ (Ingold 2018, 63). It is these acts of generosity, of being present (to enter imaginatively) and coming into presence (the world our translations open for us) that are practiced in both the art of inquiry and the art of translation in a continuous world.

**Loose end 4: translation as making present**

For Ingold, anthropology is not about describing the world, or wrapping it up. It is, in the first place, *about attending to presence*, about noticing, and responding in kind. It means acknowledging that persons and other things are there, that they have their own being and their own lives to lead, and that it behoves us, for our own good, to pay attention to their existence and to what they are telling us. Only then can we learn. (2016a, 12 emphasis added)

The same, Ingold continues, can be said for art; ‘It too is an opening on the world rather than an attempt at closure – an opening that exposes the practitioner to its trials and to its gifts’ (2016a, 12). In fact, it is the core qualities of generosity, open-endedness, comparison and criticality that Ingold sees as common to anthropology, art and education and why he is drawn to all three.

I propose that the same can be said for translation. Like anthropology, translation is ‘generous because it pays attention, and responds, to what other people do and say’. Like anthropology, translation ‘is open-ended because its aim is not to arrive at final
solutions that would bring social life to a close but rather to reveal the paths along which it can keep going’. Like anthropology, translation is ‘comparative because it acknowledges that no way of being [and translating] is the only possible one, and that for every way we find, or resolve to take, alternative ways could be taken that would lead in different directions’. Like anthropology, translation is ‘critical because we cannot be content with things as they are. […] We have to make the future [the translation] together, for ourselves’, which ‘can only be achieved through dialogues’. Like anthropology, translation ‘exists to expand the scope of this dialogue’ (Ingold 2018, 58 original emphases)

I am not making naive, romantic claims about translation as an inherent force for good in the world. All tools – anthropology, art, education and translation alike – can be, and are, distorted and abused in order to abuse and oppress. This is why we are critical and vigilant. This is why we, as teachers and scholars, must attend to the continuous task of commoning in a pluralistic world, in what philosopher William James, as Ingold reminds us, calls the ‘multiverse’ (James 1909; Ingold 2018, 80). For our students, making their way along the paths of an education in translation, the simple premises of being present, coming into presence and making present, together with wayfaring, making translation and the art of inquiry, allow a way to begin and enable a way to continue. ‘What to do? Why and how do I translate?’ Venuti asks in the face of the potential violence of translation (Venuti 1993, 209), to which we can reply, attend: be present, come into presence, make present. Like anthropology, like art, like education, ‘the promise’ of translation ‘is to bring others to life, to draw them into the field of our attention so that we, in turn, can correspond with them’ (Ingold 2018, 67–68).

The ways in which translation, along with anthropology, art and education, fulfils this promise are limited only by our imaginations, resources, freedoms, and capacities for remembering, which ‘presences the past’ (Ingold 2018, 28). Translation makes present the artists, thinkers, poets, poetry, writers and literature never before encountered; the powerful small stories that undermine the danger of a single story; the unread archives; the ossified classics; the omitted voices; silenced voices; the unfamiliar histories; the endless multiplicity of perspectives. For every example I can think of, you can think of more. Indigenous knowledges; the lives and interspecies communications of plants and creatures; the earth’s climactic changes and planetary weather patterns. Audio-description makes present the unseen painting on the gallery wall, 3-D replicas the untouchable artefact behind museum glass. Enriched subtitles make present the unheard film. Like anthropology, translation ‘opens us up to the possibilities of life – to possibilities other than what we might have ever imagined had we stuck to what we thought we knew already’ (Ergül 2017, 8).

Making present is to make accessible. Making accessible is to translate. Making translation is to make present. Education is found, Ingold writes, ‘not in pedagogy but in participatory practices: not in the ways persons and things are symbolically represented in their absence, but in the ways they are made present, and above all answerable to one another, in the correspondences of social life’ (2018, 17). Our students – you dissimilar and distinct, creative and courageous students – have a place here; you are ‘fellow travellers with us in the same world’ (Ingold 2018, 67 original emphasis). We are many and we are together, making translation, bringing into presence rather than representing others in their absence, and coming into presence as we wayfare through the weather-world (of
texts) in our hopeful practice of the art of translation. ‘Knowledge grows along lines of correspondence’, Ingold writes: ‘in commoning, wherein they join; and in variation, wherein each comes into its own’ (Ingold 2018, 17).

**Loose end 5: being in the world is the art of translation**

Finally, contrary to my initial doubts that Ingold’s work was not concerned with translation (and thereby off-limits for me), I offer the idea that Ingold is, in fact, absolutely talking about translation. I’m not referring here to his chapter on the art of translation (1993), the only place where he deals with the concept in more than a passing manner. Ingold never says so, but it seems to me that this attentive way of being, of making, of making our way through the world in correspondence with all the dynamic variations of that weather world, generating and carrying on knowledge is translation.

This is not exactly my idea. Building on a close, critical reading of Peirce, whereby meaning-making is phenomenological, and translation ‘refers to semiotic process in *all its guises*’ (Marais 2019, 107 emphasis added), Marais argues that translation is ‘the very process that drives meaning, the process through which meaning emerges’ (Marais 2019, 122). This process is biosemiotic (meaning emerges from the physical-chemical-biological), not limited to humans, relational, and takes work or energy (in order to counter the general tendency towards entropy). Thus, for Marais, translation is ‘negen-tropic semiotic work, which has as its aim the imposition of constraints on semiotic possibilities in order to create meaning responses to an environment’ (Marais 2019, 158).

This theoretical language is some distance from Ingold’s lucid descriptions of weather, ground and basket-weaving. Marais’ Peircean foundation and subsequent reliance on the triadic relations between representamen, object and interpretant to account for the semiotic process that is translation also mean that Marais’ theory appears committed to boundaries, membranes and Othering in ways that differ from Ingold’s continuous world. Yet, although Ingold and Marais draw from different scholarly traditions, write from very different physical and conceptual places, and neither references the other, in my mind, both Ingold and Marais are essentially talking about the same thing. Translation is the human and other-than-human biosemiotic work of corresponding, making and wayfaring.

For Marais, the crucial move for the concept of translation is the outward move from linguistic bias to include all forms of human and more-than-human meaning-making, to ‘expand the notion of translation to include the semiotic processes through which living organisms relate to their environment through their species-specific senses and by which this sensorial information is translated into knowledge and memory’ (Marais 2019, 71). Be it ‘the translation of a piece of music into a painting, or the translation of religious views into agricultural practices’ (Marais 2019, 50), the navigation and magnetoreception skills of creatures, the mycorrhizal networks of trees and fungi, the attentive correspondence as we *make* our way through the weather-world, Marais’ conceptualisation of translation ‘allows translation studies to study *all forms* of semiotic work’ (Marais 2019, 158 emphasis added). Here is the permission I was missing when I first encountered Ingold’s ideas. Cronin calls Marais’ work ‘discipline changing’ (Cronin 2020, 371), and it will be if we are able to follow our paths of inquiry, wherever they may lead. ‘Translation’, Blumczynski
writes, ‘being such a broad, under-defined, and ever-growing concept offers a remarkable amount of conceptual freedom, methodological diversity, and practically limitless opportunities for research’ (2016, 138).

Like all freedoms, this conceptual freedom comes with responsibility; Cronin sees Marais’ work as ‘offering scholars in translation studies an extraordinary opportunity to join the wider debates around posthumanism in a period of ecological crisis’ (Cronin 2020, 373). Marais is also keen for his work ‘to challenge translation studies to an ecological awareness’ (2019, 118); he forages his way towards an ethical, political research agenda for translation studies and the humanities that ‘factor[s] in physics and matter into its equation when thinking about being human’, and that fully recognises how completely ‘organism and environment needed to be woven into a meaningful relationship, so that the organism’s model of the environment holds true sufficiently for survival’ (2019, 168). ‘I wonder whether we do not need to be liberated from being constructors of the universe’, Marais deliberates, ‘to being co-constructed by innumerable other agents such as people, animals, plants, bacteria, energy, matter, and laws of the universe’ (Marais 2019, 185); and, although Ingold would query Marais’ concept of agent, with these statements Marais has, unwittingly, stumbled – made his way – directly into Ingold’s meshwork and continuous weather-world.

**Concluding remarks**

Of course, Ingold is not a lone voice and we are not alone in our wayfaring and meaning-making work of survival. Growing knowledge is social. We make our way through the weather-world (of the text) with others. The conceptual chimes between Marais and Ingold and between Ingold and his meshworked company of thinkers can be heard in the work of many scholars pursuing several transdisciplinary paths through, for example, quantum physics, philosophy, cultural geography, environmental humanities, history, memory, indigenous knowledges and decolonising practices, as they grapple with ‘the inescapable entanglement of matters of being, knowing, and doing, or ontology, epistemology, and ethics’ (Barad 2007, 3). These are complex ideas to which an expanded concept and discipline of translation can contribute – permission is given! – and into which Ingold’s accessible writing can serve as a path, as they have for me. My aim in this essay is to make Ingold’s ideas present in translation studies. Out of my attention to those ideas, I hope to bring them into presence by translating them into a necessary select handful of loose ends that might become paths along which others are invited to follow.

‘[T]here can be no commoning without variation’, writes Ingold, quoting John Dewey, because life is forged through the difference each of us brings to it, and ‘no variation without commoning. For it is in joining with others that each of us comes into our own as a person with a singular and recognizable voice’ (2016b, 15). This essay is also an effort of commoning, a commitment and an aspiration to bring into non-hierarchical, non-hegemonic, mutually respectful conversation the diversity of our (students’) perspectives, experiences, traditions, preoccupations. Ingold’s art of translation encourages us along initially unfamiliar paths as, together with our students, we humbly, yet boldly, grapple with the questions of What to do? Why and How do I translate? Translation scholars can induct our transdisciplinary colleagues into an attentive consideration of frequently unexamined linguistic blind spots and monolingual biases that so unwittingly limit the pool of
perspectives from which differences emerge and curtail the power of variation to contribute to the work of commoning. We can also, with an expanded concept of translation and Marais’ discipline-changing propositions, declare ourselves generously willing and able to contribute towards ‘a unified theory of matter and mind’ that no longer sees as tenable any blob-like separation between languages and cultures, between the blobs of sciences (‘matter without meaning’) and the blobs of humanities (‘meaning without matter’) (Marais 2019, 182). ‘Matter and meaning are not separate elements’, is Barad’s opening premise (2007, 3), a statement we – in all our diversity – can only take seriously as we grow knowledge, wayfare through the weather-world and practice the art of translation.

Notes

1. These concepts are indicative of the scholarly tradition (or meshwork) from which Ingold heavily and critically draws, including work by, for example, Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, John Dewey, James Gibson, Martin Heidegger, Bruno Latour, Henri Lefebvre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jakob von Uexküll and Alfred North Whitehead. There are also strong resonances with Bakhtin, Lotman and Levinas, who also contribute to this intellectual landscape of what Barad calls ‘material-discursive practices’ and, as she urges, it is through a ‘diffractive’ reading of them (Haraway 1997) that we can develop transdisciplinary and ethical, critical practices of engagement, ‘accounting for how practices matter’ (Barad 2007, 90). I would say that Ingold’s critical engagement with these and other scholars is, in many ways, and without him actually saying so, diffractive.

2. Ingold credits his thinking to his father’s influence as a mycologist (Ingold 2016a), ideas making their way into popular science and nature writing (Sheldrake 2020; Simard 2021)


4. Such sentiments might sound as if they are rooted in romantic or nostalgic fondness for an idealised, privileged notion of research, unaffordable for the graduate student (the emerging scholar, the majority of us) who needs to comply with institutional expectations of speed and productivity, and Ingold has been criticised for what some see as idealised attitudes, spoken from a site of white, male, tenured (and now retired) privilege. At the same time, Ingold has also had to contend with the increasing demands of the neoliberal university and the obligations of seniority – almost all of his books begin with a tale of how the book was years in the making because he had not the time to write it. He also considers fair criticism that has rightly pointed out his lack of engagement with the ‘political’, meaning ‘the larger institutional, financial, economic and governmental dimensions of what people do at every moment of their lives’, while also arguing that ‘to write against the grain of mainstream understandings of human cognition and action is itself a political act’ (Kaartinen and Ingold 2018, 59).

5. There are echoes here with Lotman (whom Marais mentions briefly just twice), particularly in terms of Lotman’s ‘semiosphere’ (2005) and the creative work of translation as ‘a primary mechanism of consciousness’ (1990, 127).

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