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Editorial

Being and Becoming Change: Thinking and Acting Praxisly

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Abstract

This editorial raises the question of what it means to study, manage, or advocate change, as well as to be and become change. Drawing on process philosophy, the Advaitin practice of *neti-neti*, the *Madhyamaka* logic of co-dependent arising, and negative dialectics, we argue that change is better understood as an ontological, epistemological, and ethical process of becoming than as an object to be acquired or an outcome to be measured. We revisit transformative praxis through six interrelated images, namely praxis as epistemology, theory, methodology, professional development, genres and logics, and empowerment and ethics, and use them to elaborate what it means to think and act praxisly. Thinking praxisly involves critical reflexivity, a decolonial critique of Western-induced epistemologies, and relational knowing of the kind exemplified by Swa-Twam-Tat inquiry; acting praxisly involves reflexive action, collaborative autoethnography, an ethic of responsibility, and collective solidarity. We then draw out implications for pedagogy, curriculum, and research, arguing that rigor be redefined in terms of reflexivity, responsibility, and relevance. The editorial closes by introducing the seven contributions in Volume 7, Issue 1 (four original articles, two reflective papers, and a book review), which enact being-and-becoming change across autoethnography, critical and integrated STEAM pedagogy, health sciences education, gender and identity, decolonial poetics, and the emotional life of learning.

Keywords: *Becoming. Transformative praxis. Reflexivity. Decolonization. Swa-Twam-Tat. Autoethnography.*

Introduction: Change as an Unfinished Question

In this issue of the *Journal of Transformative Praxis*, we take up a question that has animated our work individually and collectively for more than a decade: What does it mean not merely to study change, manage change, or advocate change, but to be and become change? We ask this question because we have become increasingly uneasy with the way change is often imagined in educational research and professional practice. Change is frequently treated as an

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object to be acquired, a destination to be reached, a reform to be implemented, or an outcome to be measured. We are told that institutions, curricula, teachers, and learners must change. Yet the deeper question—who are we becoming in and through these processes, and what kinds of worlds are we bringing into being through our thinking and acting?—is often left unasked.

We argue in this editorial that change is better understood as an ontological, epistemological, and ethical process of becoming rather than as a thing to be possessed. This means that change is not simply something we do; it is something we participate in, something that shapes us even as we seek to shape it. To think and act *praxisly* is to engage this process reflexively, critically, and relationally. It is to refuse the separation of thought from action, theory from practice, self from world, and knowing from becoming (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Freire, 1970/2000; Kemmis, 2022; Kemmis & Smith, 2008; Luitel & Dahal, 2020). Praxis, in this sense, is not the mere application of theory to practice. It is the ongoing, embodied, and contested labor through which we constitute ourselves and our worlds.

We develop this argument in three movements. First, we interrogate the ontology of change, exploring the tension between being and becoming as it appears in "Western" philosophy and in our own engagements with Eastern wisdom traditions. Second, we elaborate transformative praxis as a multi-dimensional framework—epistemological, theoretical, methodological, professional, aesthetic, and political—that allows us to navigate this tension without collapsing it. Third, we consider what it means to think and act praxisly in the contemporary context, particularly in light of critiques of Western-induced epistemologies and the imperative to decolonize our ways of knowing and doing (Dahal et al., 2024; Mignolo, 2011; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Santos, 2014, 2018; Smith, 2012). Throughout, we situate our reflections in our own experiences as scholars and educators in Nepal, while remaining accountable to a global conversation about the purpose and practice of transformative research.

We write this editorial not as a programmatic manifesto but as an invitation. We invite readers of the *Journal of Transformative Praxis* to join us in asking how our research, pedagogy, and professional lives might become sites of praxis, sites where thinking and acting are held together in the service of more just, more humane, and more ecologically responsible ways of being and becoming.

The Ontology of Change: Between Being and Becoming

Western philosophy has long been preoccupied with the question of being. From Parmenides' assertion that being is and non-being is not, to Heidegger's (1927, 1962) fundamental ontology, the Western tradition has tended to privilege permanence, stability, and presence over flux, process, and absence. This ontological bias has profound implications for how we think about change. If being is primary, then change is secondary—a deviation from the norm, a problem to be explained, a transition between states of being. Change becomes something that happens *to* things, rather than the very medium through which things exist.

Process philosophies have challenged this bias. Whitehead (1929/1978) insisted that reality is composed not of static substances but of events, occasions, and processes. Deleuze (1968/1994) argued that difference and repetition, rather than identity and representation, are the fundamental categories of thought. On this view, becoming is prior to being; stability is an achievement, not a given; and change is not an exception but the rule. This shift from being to becoming has radical implications for how we understand transformation. If reality is processual, then transformation is not something we do to the world from the outside. It is the very texture of our participation in the world.

A similar tension has shaped our own work, although it arises from a different intellectual lineage. In our engagements with Eastern wisdom traditions—particularly the Advaitin dialectic of *neti-neti* (not this, not this), whose classical locus is the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*

Upaniṣad (2.3.6; Olivelle, 1996), and the Madhyamaka logic of co-dependent arising (Nāgārjuna, ca. 150–250 CE/1995)—we have found resources for thinking change beyond the binary of being and non-being. *Neti-neti* does not posit an alternative being; it systematically negates every attempt to capture reality in conceptual categories. What remains is not a void but a radical openness—a space of possibility that is neither being nor non-being, but becoming. Similarly, co-dependent arising suggests that all phenomena arise in dependence on conditions, without any fixed essence. Change is thus not the property of substances but the dynamic interplay of relations.

This has led us to articulate what we call, following Adorno (1973), a negative dialectics of transformation. Rather than seeking a synthesis that resolves contradictions into a higher unity, negative dialectics holds contradictions open, allowing them to generate new possibilities without foreclosing them. In educational terms, this means refusing the temptation to reduce transformation to a set of predetermined outcomes or competencies. It means attending to the messy, emergent, and often unpredictable processes through which learners and educators become otherwise. Change, on this view, is not a linear trajectory from A to B but a spiral of reflexive engagement in which each moment of understanding is simultaneously a moment of unlearning.

The implications for research are profound. If change is processual and relational, then our methodologies must be adequate to its complexity. This is why we have turned to autoethnography as a mode of transformative research—a method that connects the personal to the cultural, the biographical to the historical, and the emotional to the political (Adams et al., 2022; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011; Holman Jones, 2005; Luitel & Dahal, 2021; Spry, 2001). Autoethnography does not pretend to stand outside the phenomenon it studies; it acknowledges the researcher's implication in the very processes of knowing and being that are under investigation. In this sense, autoethnography is not merely a technique for gathering data about change; it is itself a practice of becoming change.

Transformative Praxis: A Multi-Dimensional Framework

If change is a process of becoming, then the question becomes: How do we participate in this process in ways that are critical, ethical, and transformative? Our answer is transformative praxis. We have conceptualized transformative praxis not as a single concept but as a constellation of images, each illuminating a different dimension of praxis (Luitel & Dahal, 2020). These images are not mutually exclusive; they are lenses through which to view the same underlying commitment to reflexive, socially engaged practice.

Praxis as Epistemology

Transformative praxis begins with a critique of the ways in which knowledge is produced and legitimized. Western-induced epistemologies, rooted in individualism, rationalism, and empiricism, have often marginalized non-Western knowledge systems and relational ontologies (Dahal et al., 2024; Mignolo, 2011; Santos, 2014; Smith, 2012). Praxis as epistemology involves embracing multiple ways of knowing—not merely as a concession to diversity, but as a rigorous engagement with the limits of any single epistemological framework. This means critiquing the assumptions embedded in our own ways of knowing, reconceptualizing the self as a knower, and envisioning alternative possibilities. It means asking not only *what* we know, but *how* we came to know it, *who* benefits from this knowledge, and *what* it silences (Habermas, 1972).

Praxis as Theory

Theory is often seen as the opposite of practice—abstract, general, and detached. But praxis as theory refuses this dichotomy. It engages critically with the strengths and limitations of theories, philosophies, and perspectives, treating them not as dogmas to be applied but as resources for social change. This requires a certain intellectual humility: an openness to revising our theoretical commitments in light of practice, and a willingness to let practice challenge and reshape theory. In our own work, this has meant drawing on critical theory, postcolonial thought, Eastern philosophy, and autoethnographic inquiry without treating any of these as a master key (Adorno, 1973; Freire, 1970/2000; Said, 1978). Theory, in this sense, is not a system to be mastered but a practice of thinking otherwise.

Praxis as Methodology

Methodology is not simply a matter of choosing the right methods. It is a commitment to engage in the process of holistic meaning-making—to attend to the connections between self and other, part and whole, knower and known. This is why we have adopted and extended autoethnography as a methodological praxis, one that integrates narrative, poetic, visual, and dialectical logics and genres (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Luitel & Dahal, 2021). Holistic meaning-making does not aim at a totalizing explanation; it instead seeks to illuminate the dynamics of educational issues in their full complexity, acknowledging the partiality and situatedness of all knowing.

Praxis as Professional Development

For educators and researchers, transformative praxis is not a one-off intervention but an ongoing process of professional becoming. Reflexive engagement in the lifeworld—the world of lived experience, relationships, and institutions—is the crucible in which professional development occurs (Kemmis & Smith, 2008). This is not the kind of development that can be delivered through workshops or measured by credentials. It is the development that happens when practitioners critically examine their own assumptions, experiment with new practices, and reflect on the consequences of their actions. It is development as becoming, not development as acquisition.

Praxis as Genres and Logics

Transformative praxis also has an aesthetic and rhetorical dimension. The genres and logics through which we represent our experiences and our research are not neutral containers of meaning; they shape what can be said and what can be heard (Britzman, 2003; Lather, 1991). Our work has experimented with a range of genres—narrative, poetic, visual, performative—to do justice to the complexity of lived experience and disrupt conventional academic modes of representation. This is not a matter of stylistic preference; it is a matter of epistemological and political commitment. How we write the world is part of how we change it.

Praxis as Empowerment and Ethics

Finally, transformative praxis is oriented towards emancipation. It draws upon an emancipatory interest that emphasizes autonomy, responsibility, and criticality (Freire, 1970/2000; Habermas, 1972; Luitel et al., 2022). Empowerment, in this sense, is not the granting of power by those who have it to those who do not. It is the cultivation of the capacity to critique, to

imagine, and to act—in oneself and in others. It is the recognition that transformation is not something that can be done *to* people, but only *with* them, in relations of reciprocity and solidarity. This is why we insist that ethics is not an add-on to praxis; it is, in Levinas's (1961/1969) sense, first philosophy, and it grounds all meaningful educational change (Dahal & Luitel, 2022, 2025).

Thinking *Praxisly*: Critique, Reflexivity, and the Decolonization of Knowledge

To think praxisly is to think critically about the conditions under which knowledge is produced. This means confronting the legacies of colonialism and the ways in which Western epistemologies continue to structure what counts as legitimate knowledge, who is recognized as a knower, and what kinds of inquiries are deemed worthy of attention (Mignolo, 2011; Said, 1978; Santos, 2014; Smith, 2012). As others have argued, the "Western" is not a geographical territory but a mode of imperialism that promotes certain epistemologies while marginalizing others (Hall, 1992; Mignolo, 2011). This is not to dismiss Western thought wholesale, but to refuse its claim to universality and to open ourselves to the epistemic pluralism that a genuinely global conversation requires. Autoethnographic and narrative methodologies are increasingly taken up as decolonizing practices in precisely this spirit (Powell, 2025).

One of the resources we have found for this task is the Swa-Twam-Tat inquiry, an epistemological framework that integrates self (*Swa*), you (*Twam*), and that (*Tat*) in a relational ontology of knowing (Dahal, 2025; Dahal et al., 2024). Swa-Twam-Tat challenges the subject-object dichotomy that underpins much Western epistemology, proposing instead that knowledge arises in and through relationship. The self is not an isolated cognizer but a node in a network of relations; the other is not an object of study but a co-inquirer; the world is not a passive backdrop but an active participant in the production of meaning. This framework has profound implications for research. It means the researcher cannot stand outside the phenomenon and observe it from a distance. The researcher is always already inside the phenomenon, shaped by it even as they shape it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Thinking praxisly also requires a critical stance toward text, discourse, and the lifeworld. Texts are not transparent windows onto reality; they are sites of power that encode assumptions about gender, race, class, and culture (Bhabha, 1994; hooks, 1994). Discourses are not neutral vehicles of communication; they constitute the very objects of which they speak. And the lifeworld—the world of everyday experience—is not a given but a historically sedimented achievement, shaped by institutions and practices that often escape our notice (Habermas, 1972; Heidegger, 1927, 1962). To think praxisly is to develop what Ricoeur (1970) called a hermeneutics of suspicion, to ask what is being taken for granted, what is being excluded, and who benefits from these exclusions.

This critical reflexivity is not merely an intellectual exercise. It is an embodied and emotional practice. Autoethnography, as we have practiced it, requires the researcher to expose their own vulnerabilities, to write the self into the text, and to acknowledge how their own becoming is entangled with the becomings of others (Ellis et al., 2011; Holman Jones, 2005; Spry, 2001). This is risky work. It can provoke anxiety, resistance, and even hostility. But it is also generative work, opening up possibilities for connection, empathy, and solidarity that more conventional forms of research foreclose (Luckett & Hlengwa, 2025).

Acting *Praxisly*: From Reflection to Transformation

Thinking praxisly is necessary but not sufficient. The point, as Marx (1845/1978) famously remarked, is not merely to interpret the world but to change it. Yet the relationship between thought and action is not straightforward. Action without reflection is blind; reflection without

action is sterile. Praxis is the name we give to the unity of the two—the ongoing, dialectical interplay between understanding and transforming.

Acting praxisly means engaging in what we have called reflexive action. This is not the same as reflective practice, at least as it is often understood in professional education. Reflective practice tends to focus on the individual practitioner's learning from experience (Schön, 1983), bracketing the wider social and political context. Reflexive action, by contrast, situates the practitioner within a field of power relations, asking how their actions are shaped by and in turn shape those relations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Carr & Kemmis, 1986). It is action that is conscious of its own conditions of possibility.

In our own pedagogical practice, acting praxisly has meant creating spaces for students and colleagues to engage in collaborative autoethnography—a practice in which participants inquire together into their shared and divergent experiences of learning and becoming (Chang, 2008; Chang et al., 2013; Dahal & Luitel, 2023; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This is not a technique for extracting data from participants; it is a relational practice of co-inquiry in which all involved are transformed. It requires trust, vulnerability, and a willingness to be changed by the encounter.

Acting praxisly also means attending to the ethics of transformation. Too often, change is imposed from above, in the name of efficiency, accountability, or improvement. Such change may produce compliance, but it does not produce transformation. Transformative praxis, by contrast, is grounded in an ethic of responsibility—responsibility to the other, to the world, and to the future (Dahal & Luitel, 2025; Freire, 1970, 2000; Levinas, 1961, 1969). This means asking, at every turn: What kind of world are we bringing into being through our actions? Whose interests are being served? Who is being silenced or excluded? What are the unintended consequences of our interventions?

Finally, acting praxisly is a collective endeavor. The myth of the heroic individual change-maker is just that—a myth. Transformation happens in and through relationships, networks, and movements (Gramsci, 1971; hooks, 1994). It requires solidarity, patience, and a willingness to work with others who may not share our assumptions or our visions. This is perhaps the hardest lesson of praxis: that change is not something we can control, but something we can participate in, with humility and with hope.

Education as Praxis

The implications of this perspective for education are far-reaching. If change is a process of becoming, then education cannot be reduced to the transmission of content or the development of skills. Education is itself a practice of becoming—a space in which learners and educators alike are invited to question their assumptions, to experiment with new ways of being, and to imagine otherwise (Britzman, 2003; Freire, 1970, 2000; Kincheloe, 2008).

This has consequences for pedagogy. A praxis-oriented pedagogy is not a method to be applied but a disposition to be cultivated. It involves creating conditions in which learners can engage in critical reflection on their own experiences, connect those experiences to broader social and cultural dynamics, and act in ways that are informed by that reflection. It involves valuing questions over answers, process over product, and becoming over being. It involves recognizing that the educator, too, is a learner—that teaching is itself a practice of becoming (hooks, 1994; Kemmis & Smith, 2008). A recent systematic review of transformative STEAM teacher education likewise reports a persistent gap between advocacy for transformative pedagogy and teachers' everyday practice, a gap that praxis-oriented teacher education is well placed to address (Mutseekwa & Chikuvadze, 2025).

This also has consequences for curriculum. A curriculum oriented towards transformative praxis cannot be a fixed body of knowledge to be delivered. It must be a living,

negotiated, and contested space in which multiple ways of knowing are brought into conversation (Lather, 1991; Smith, 2012). It must make room for the marginalized, the excluded, and the silenced. It must engage with the ethical and political dimensions of knowledge, not pretend that they do not exist. And it must be oriented towards cosmologically responsible educational processes—processes that recognize the interdependence of all beings and the responsibility that this entails.

For research, the implications are equally significant. A praxis-oriented research is not research *on* people but research *with* and *for* people. It is research that is accountable to the communities it engages, transparent about its own assumptions and limitations, and oriented towards action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Ellis et al., 2011; Luitel et al., 2022). This does not mean abandoning rigor; it means redefining rigor in terms of reflexivity, responsibility, and relevance. It means recognizing that research is itself a form of praxis—a way of being and becoming in the world.

The Courage to Become

We began this editorial by asking what it means to be and become change. Part of the answer, we have suggested, is that change is elusive. It resists our attempts to capture it, to measure it, to manage it. But perhaps this is not a problem to be solved; perhaps it is the very condition of possibility for transformation. If change were a thing to be possessed, it would be finite, bounded, and ultimately dead. Because change is a process of becoming, it is open, unbounded, and alive (Deleuze, 1968,1994; Whitehead, 1929,1978).

To be and become change is to embrace this openness. It is to refuse the comfort of fixed identities and settled certainties. It is to cultivate the courage to think and act praxisly—to hold together critique and possibility, reflection and action, self and world. It is to recognize that we are not separate from the changes we seek to bring about; we are the changes we seek to bring about, in our thinking, our acting, and our being.

This is demanding work. It requires patience, humility, and a willingness to fail. It requires the courage to ask uncomfortable questions and to live with the uncertainty they generate. But it is also hopeful work. For in the process of becoming, we discover that we are not alone. We are surrounded by others who are also becoming—who are also struggling, imagining, and acting. Together, we can create spaces of possibility that none of us could create alone.

The task of transformative praxis is not to arrive at a final destination. It is to keep moving—to keep thinking, keep acting, keep becoming. In this sense, the journey is the destination. And the destination is always already here, in the next step, in the next question, in the next act of courage. We offer this editorial to the readers of the *Journal of Transformative Praxis* as an invitation to that journey.

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This issue brings together seven contributions, namely four original articles, two reflective papers, and a book review, that in different registers enact the being and becoming of change discussed above. *Neupane* uses autoethnography to trace his journey from a pastoral boy in the Nepali hinterland, through family loss and economic hardship, to a university professor, showing how imagined futures, investment, and spiritual seeking shape identity transformation. *Uddin* argues that critical pedagogy can turn teacher-centered STEM classrooms into spaces of dialogue, belonging, and shared learning, with implications for pre-service and in-service teacher preparation. *Rijal*'s autoethnographic inquiry critiques the disciplinary egocentrism of subject-centric mathematics education and envisions integrated STEAM approaches to

curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. *Rusandu*'s conceptual review revisits the contested question of transfer of learning and offers design recommendations for professional degree programs, particularly dosage-calculation instruction in health sciences education.

The two reflective papers extend praxis to identity and epistemology. *Faust*'s autoethnography of studying abroad in Hokkaido examines how encountering Japanese gender norms reshaped her sense of femininity and identity, concluding that gender is something one does rather than something one is. *Tamang* explores Laxmi Prasad Devkota's poem *Pagal* as a decolonial pedagogical provocation, drawing from it alternative ways of knowing, dialogic learning, and a praxis orientation for STEAM education in Nepal. Finally, *GC* reviews Thomas Newkirk's *Embarrassment and the Emotional Underlife of Learning*, foregrounding the affective and socio-cultural dimensions of learning. On the whole, these contributions show that becoming change is at once personal, pedagogical, and political: an unfinished question that each author answers from a particular place and practice.

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Data sharing is not applicable to this editorial, as no new data were created or analyzed.

Conflict of Interest

The editors declare that the editorial was written in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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