

Ambiguity/Language/Learning

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One of the fundamental assumptions about learning and education in general is that “schooling transmits knowledge or that education reproduces culture.” (Grunet, [Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching](#) Amherst, Mass: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988 .)

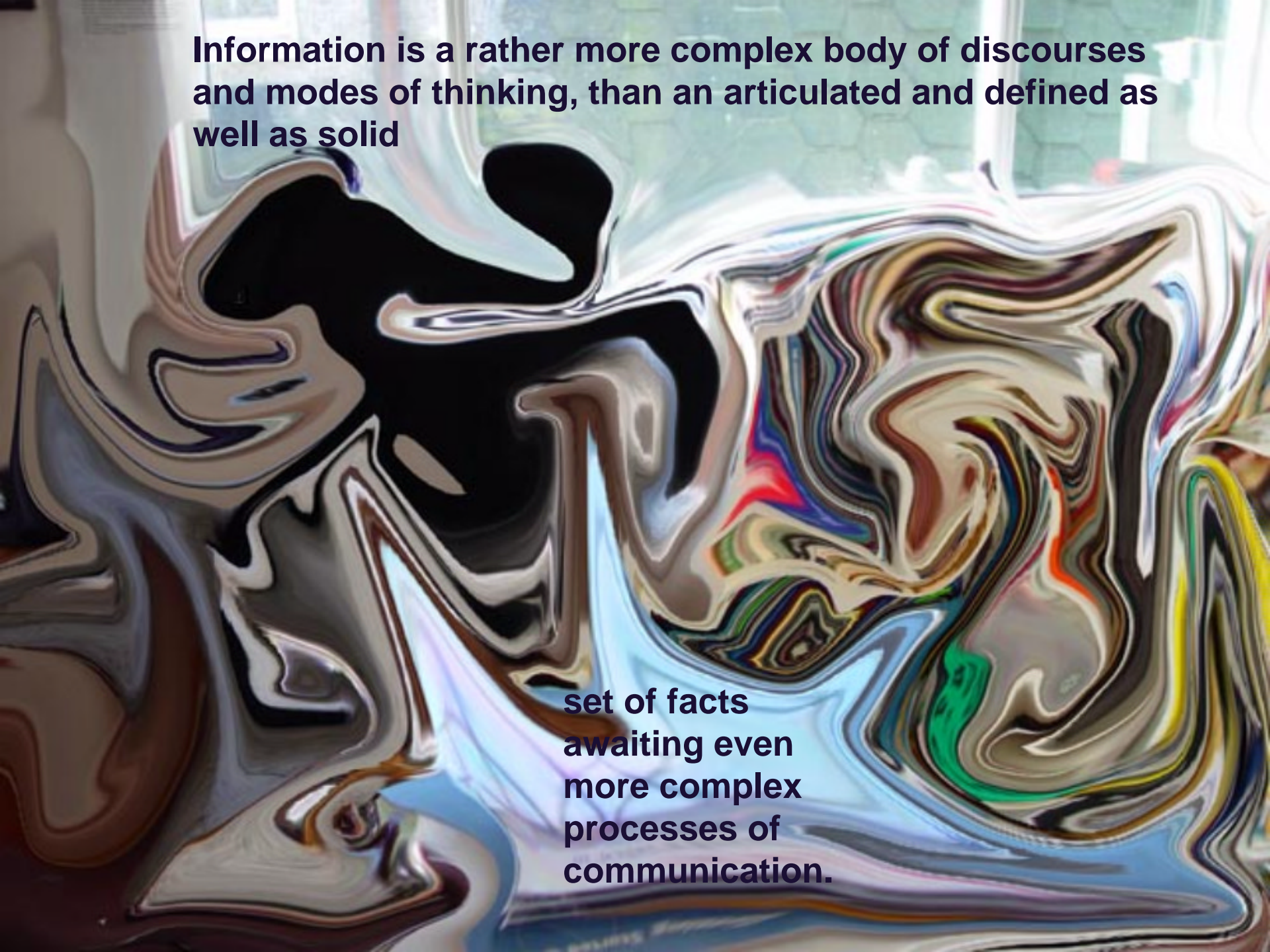


Underlying assumptions governing transmission are linear as well as literal.

Movement of information from a source to a subject.

The old sender-receiver model of communications.

Expression, meaning and speech produce direct results in listeners and learners.



Information is a rather more complex body of discourses and modes of thinking, than an articulated and defined as well as solid

**set of facts
awaiting even
more complex
processes of
communication.**

At a metaphorical level, transmission is often confused with communications. The latter is a far more multifaceted activity requiring more than a listener to explain processes of interaction.

Grunet's (4) second assertion is that our society thinks about education as a way of ensuring the reproduction of knowledge from one generation to the next. Reproduction, is of course, a very loaded term.



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May 24-M

Meeting to commemorate murdered Malcolm X's birthday was marred by gun shots.



Actor Ossie Davis (above, left) and the Performing Arts Society of Los Angeles were among those who paid birthday tribute to the memory of Malcolm X last Sunday night at the PASLA auditorium. Malcolm X, murdered in 1965 while giving a speech in New York, would have been 43 years old.

The program included writer James Baldwin, Hakim Jamal of the Malcolm X Foundation and Betty Shabazz, widow of Malcolm X.

Armed security guards provided by the Foundation and the Black Panthers were present at the meeting to guard Betty Shabazz. During one of the speeches, however, several shots

caused the 400 people present to dive to the floor as the meeting was brought under control by the security forces. The shooting came to an orderly end.

It is not known whether the shots were accidental or intentional. One of the guards (at another point in the program) standing off stage accidentally discharged his weapon; he was quickly relieved of his weapon and the program continued. The episode in the feud now going on between militant groups. All of the observers who might have been on the shooting were face down on the floor and could not see anything; those who observed the incident and tried to bring the meeting back to normal were not tal

ooking barricades , overturned cars everywhere

to the Free Press
a strike participant)

The U.F.C. (Communist Student
Union) cut itself off from the
rest of the community.


The Pro-Chinese; their paper
SERVIR LE PEUPLE. Few mili-
tants, said.

single alienating institution (from
State to University) and perma-

wanted to, the
and shut the



Interpersonal relationships are inherently, I would argue, ambiguous not because that is necessarily the desire of participants,

The image shows a view through horizontal window blinds. The blinds are in the foreground, creating a series of parallel lines. In the background, a bright sun is visible, partially obscured by the blinds, creating a lens flare effect. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall scene is slightly blurred, emphasizing the texture of the blinds and the light from the sun.

but because communications processes are about striving to understand the many inherent distortions and weaknesses of all forms of human discourse and language.

I would suggest that most forms of learning are steeped in creative processes of mixing and matching and by creative, I mean that the imagination plays a far more important role than is often accounted for or accepted by educators.

Notwithstanding the many distortions that imaginative reconstruction can introduce into every communicative effort, it is, I think essential to incorporate these many levels into our understanding of the learning process.

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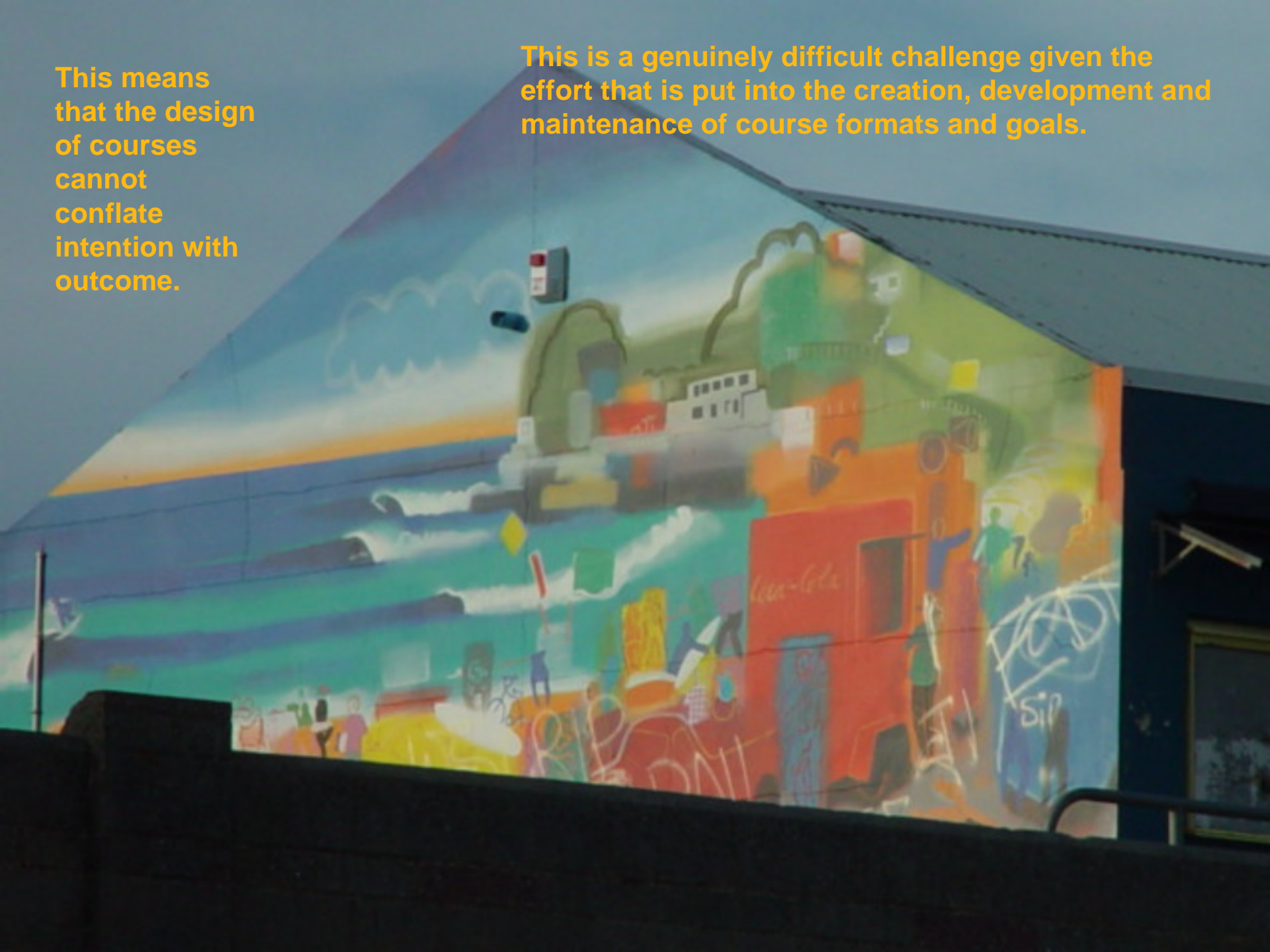
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This means that the design of courses cannot conflate intention with outcome.

This is a genuinely difficult challenge given the effort that is put into the creation, development and maintenance of course formats and goals.



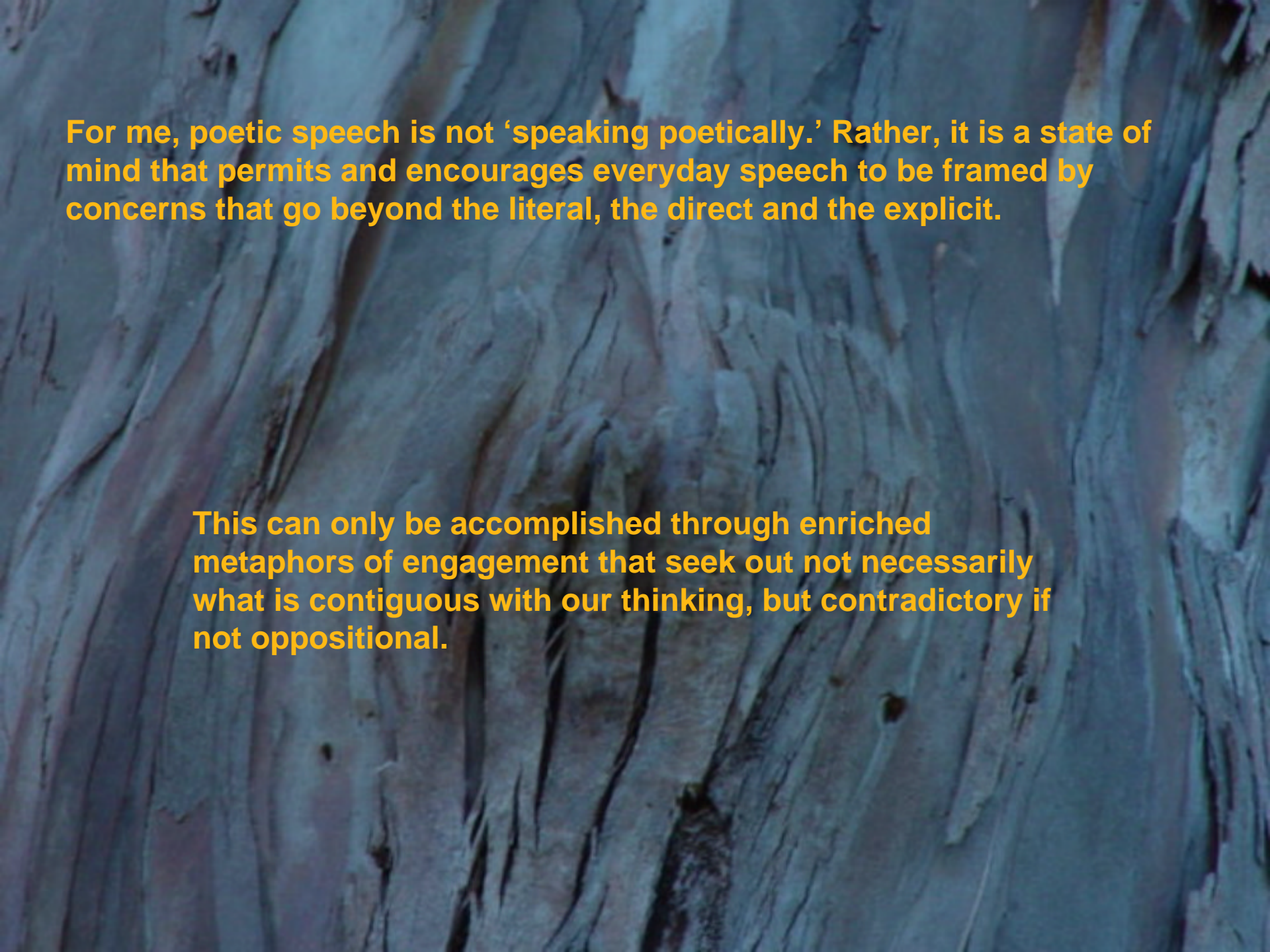


Poetic Speech

The Fragment

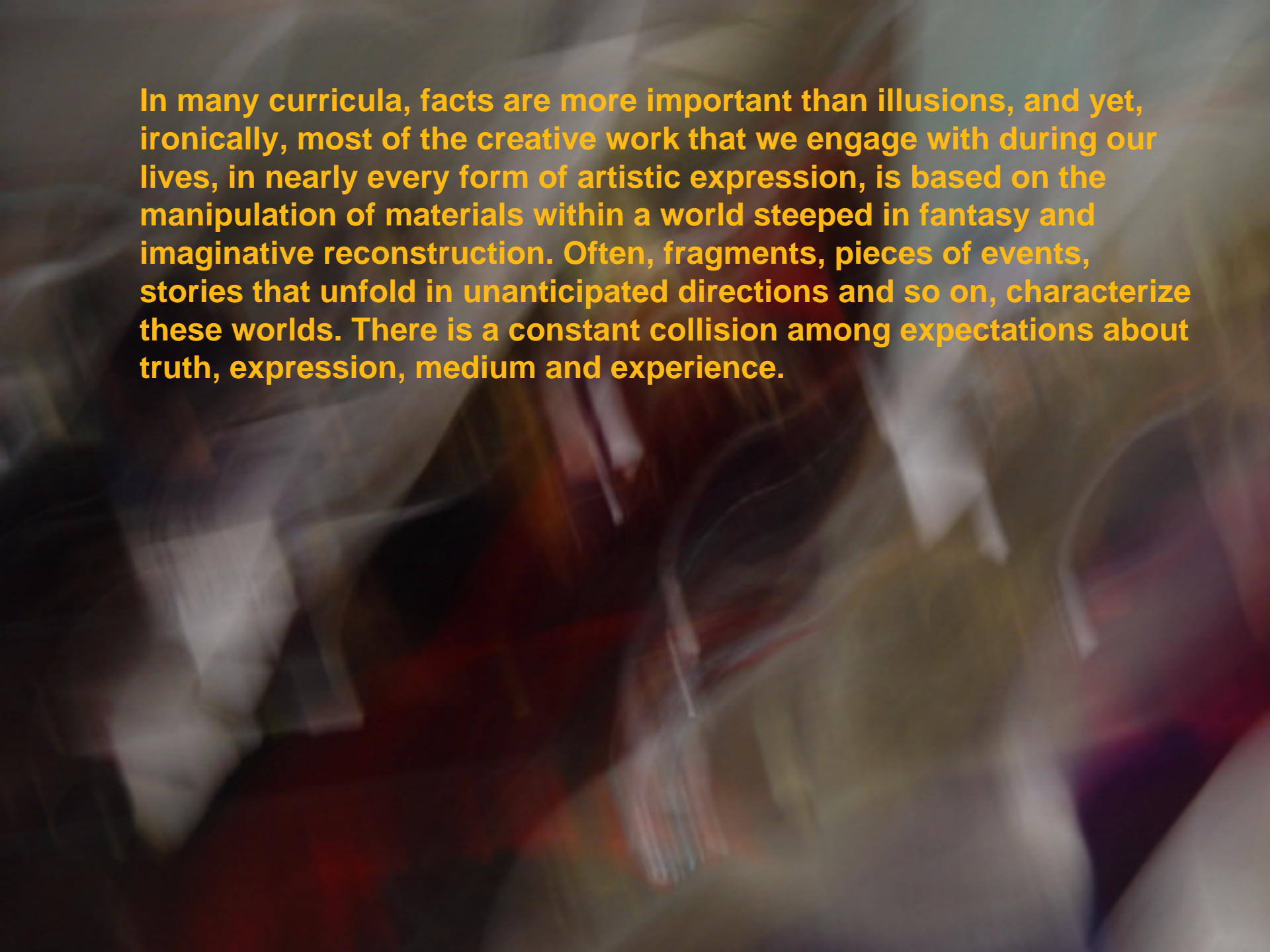
The Ungrammatical





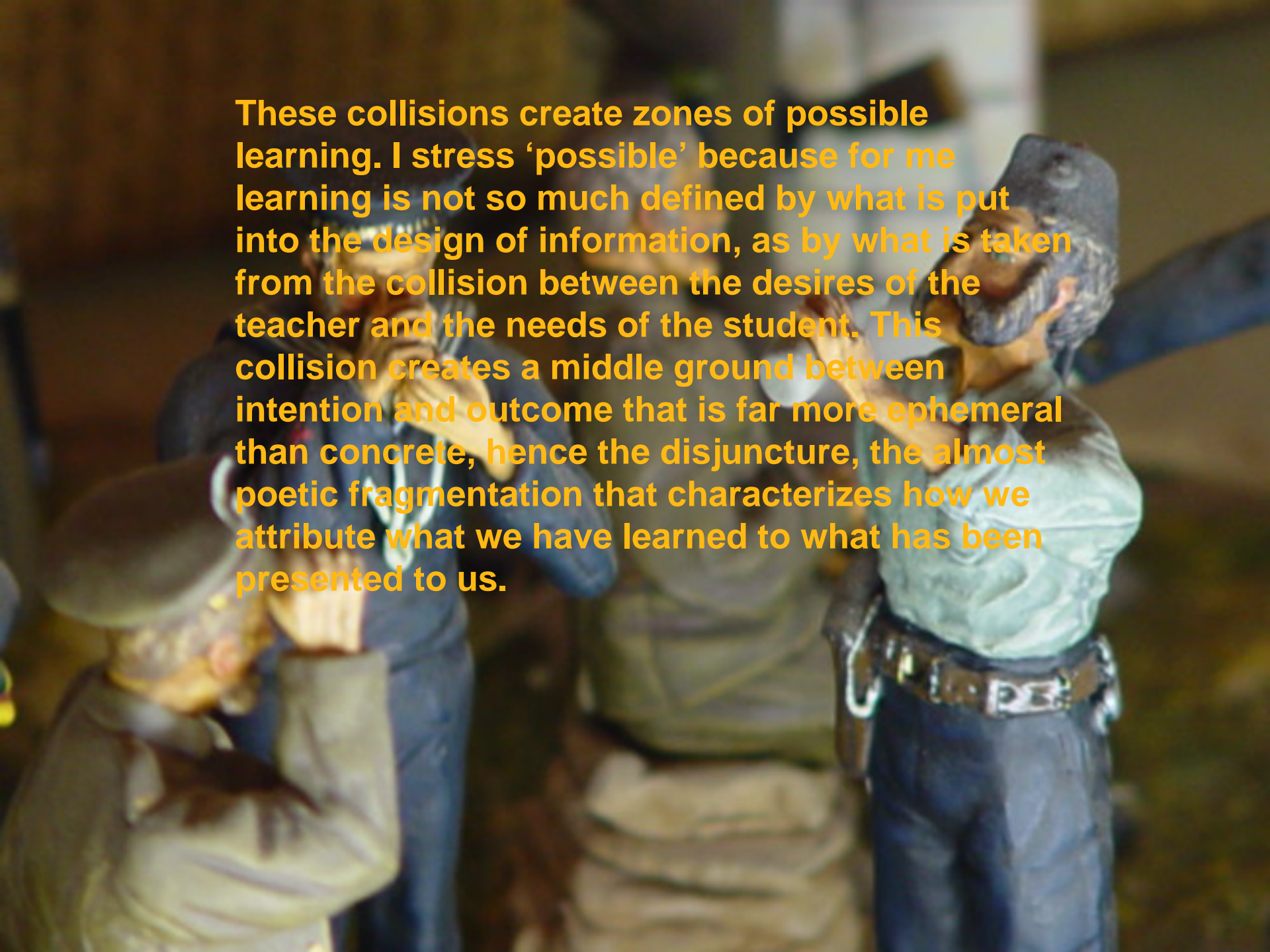
For me, poetic speech is not 'speaking poetically.' Rather, it is a state of mind that permits and encourages everyday speech to be framed by concerns that go beyond the literal, the direct and the explicit.

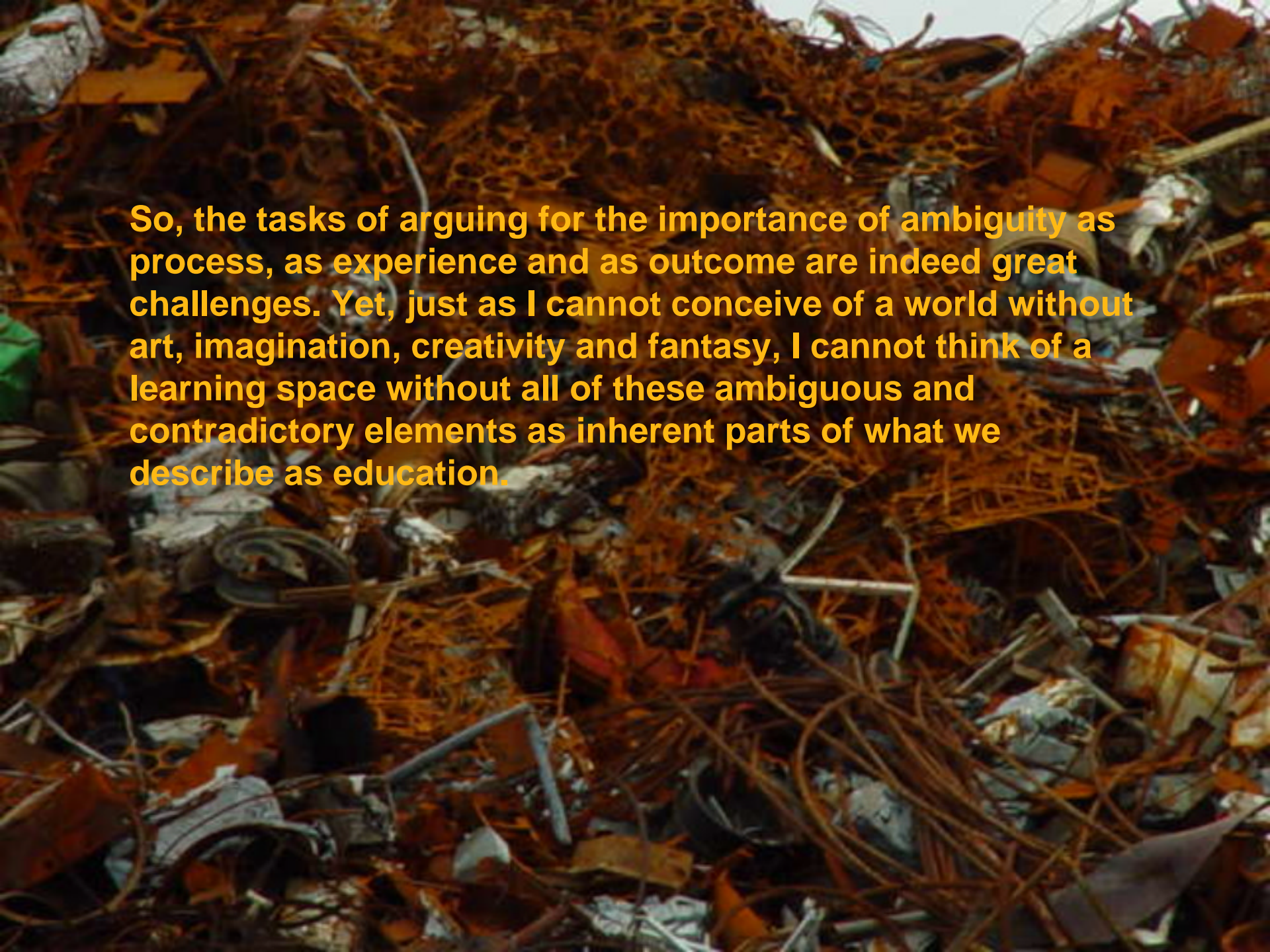
This can only be accomplished through enriched metaphors of engagement that seek out not necessarily what is contiguous with our thinking, but contradictory if not oppositional.



In many curricula, facts are more important than illusions, and yet, ironically, most of the creative work that we engage with during our lives, in nearly every form of artistic expression, is based on the manipulation of materials within a world steeped in fantasy and imaginative reconstruction. Often, fragments, pieces of events, stories that unfold in unanticipated directions and so on, characterize these worlds. There is a constant collision among expectations about truth, expression, medium and experience.

These collisions create zones of possible learning. I stress 'possible' because for me learning is not so much defined by what is put into the design of information, as by what is taken from the collision between the desires of the teacher and the needs of the student. This collision creates a middle ground between intention and outcome that is far more ephemeral than concrete, hence the disjuncture, the almost poetic fragmentation that characterizes how we attribute what we have learned to what has been presented to us.





So, the tasks of arguing for the importance of ambiguity as process, as experience and as outcome are indeed great challenges. Yet, just as I cannot conceive of a world without art, imagination, creativity and fantasy, I cannot think of a learning space without all of these ambiguous and contradictory elements as inherent parts of what we describe as education.