Foreword

This book represents the culmination of ten years reflection and practice. It also represents a journey that began with the intellect, was nourished by the spiritual, and finally emerges as the first tentative steps into an embodied form. It represents my unfolding as an embodied woman. An unfolding that is learning to integrate theory and practice, the mind and the body, the group with the individual. An unfolding that at least hints at these possibilities.

The book itself is set out as a linear process, shaped and formed by the academic frameworks that have helped construct and delineate the society in which we live. It is also formed by the collective fiction necessary to bind the frameworks together: a collective fiction that necessarily depicts this book and its thinking as linear. It is useful at least to bring to consciousness the fact that it is a fiction – a myth that sustains and informs, and at the same time constrains the way in which we lead our lives. It is at once a freedom and an imprisonment.

Practically, the book offers up some alternative ways of enquiring into the world, of integrating rather than separating the mutual need for both autonomy and for interdependence. This need is a psychological and emotional manifestation of being human – and a fundamental question of how we develop as human beings. It is this need that underpins the way in which we relate to our bodies, and to each other as boys and girls, men and women. These are questions of separation and connection. They are moral and indeed emotional questions, and questions that can only begin with individual enquiry. Failing to examine these questions in the light of compassion can lead to disharmony, or the predominance of one way of being over the other. This can cause suffering to both men and women, as valuable and valid parts of their experience become ‘written out’ of the texts of our collective action.

This is an attempt to examine how this experience becomes ‘written out’ of our experience in the workplace. It shows how the tension between autonomy and interdependence is hidden in the technical language and practices of modern managerial strategies. Being hidden, it can cause severe discomfort and malfunction. My offering here is to attempt to uncover some of the many layers at which this tension is hidden, and to suggest possibilities for integrating, balancing, or even transcending this tension.

I have been helped by many people throughout that journey. First, by my parents, neither of them now alive to see this task come to fruition, but who
have provided the set of conditions more than ‘good enough’, to enable me to want to, and to have the opportunity to examine ‘how things are’.

On the academic side I owe a great debt to Elizabeth Garnsey who encouraged me in the possibilities for ‘thinking outside the box’ – but also taught me ways in which this could be incorporated into academic frameworks. Also for her friendship and continuing encouragement. To Chris Brewster for his unfailing support all the way through the journey, even in territories in which he was unfamiliar. To Hugh Willmott whose writings have informed much of the work here, and for the 5-hour grilling at an uncomfortable but extremely fruitful viva, which led me to change tack with some of the theoretical ideas. Also to Graeme Salaman and Paul du Gay, who provided me with some new ways of looking at the world.

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Finally, to my children, Elinor and Henry without whom none of this would have been possible. The book is completed because of them, and not (though it seemed so at times) despite them. I have been able to take these first steps into embodiment as a result of the insight that the most fruitful thing I could ever do was to bring two beings into a set of conditions in which they can learn to be both separate and connected.

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