

EPILOGUE

I hope that you've been able to tease out the different strands or levels in my writing, and how they relate to each other, and so been able to get the most of practical value from reading this thesis. As I said in the Prologue, I see four main narratives that are woven into the work:

1. What the student does to learn, develop and perform on the main 'stage' ...and evidence of influence from the coaching relationship, and outcomes in terms of fleeting moments, development episodes, reflexive biography, and potential criteria of progression
2. The range of invisible and/or tacit processes that are at work 'in the background' and that have a profound effect on how we understand what is going on and our involvement and responsibilities in this
3. How the coaching 'practice' works 'backstage' in terms of the various detailed moves I make e.g. using the responsive repertoire to go 'fishing', to develop a productive learning relationship with students in which I can help them resolve everyday issues as well as develop their capabilities and sense of identity.
4. The final narrative is about how I am able to offer this kind of coaching support through continual improvement/preparation/getting ready work in order to be fluid, able to 'float', and be responsive. That is how *I've* done it through e.g. becoming more of an 'alchemist' in terms of Torbert's leadership development model. But this has very much been a *personal* journey which has enabled me to be able to work in conditions of uncertainty in appreciative and flexible ways. This has included value clarification and personal development work that has allowed me to both use and leave modeling in all its forms e.g. developing models, applying models, and modeling models, to one side, so I can maintain a 'blank mind' in the heat of action.

Because this kind of embodied and responsive coaching is inevitably a very personal thing, you will need to devise and follow your own personal journey to develop the kinds of attitudes and skills that are appropriate to what you want to do. Clearly one of the most critical is the ability to stay open and responsive in conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity, and this is something you might most fruitfully approach through doing work on your own personal dilemmas and doubts, as well as those topics/questions that you find you're most naturally interested in. Here I would recommend exploration not only of the cognitive aspects but also what is involved in engaging in the embodied dance of dialogic communication.

As a possible contributor to such development work of your own, I offer brief working hypotheses of what I believe are original framings and approaches to thinking about the core topics in this thesis viz. leadership, learning, development, coaching, and web-based learning, that I've arrived during my own development journey. I hope you might find some of these interesting and so provide a useful influence on any work you might do in this area of higher education or elsewhere:

- **Leadership** seen as a blurred concept involving a dynamic array of 'language-games' to do with 'knowing how to go on' in situated practices, where 'dividuals' (see explanation of this special term on p 134) act into uncertainty in

order to develop the particular meanings of their contextualising language-games, through dialogic use in that situated practice.

- **Learning** seen as the elaboration of ‘primitive reactions’ through an ‘indwelling’ process that is stimulated by acting into situations in the present moment, in order to actively flesh out the language-game and associated ontological skills required to effectively perform particular roles in a situated practice/form of life.
- **Development** seen as the dialogical creation and embodiment of ‘social artifacts’ which take account of embodied values, responsive relations and context, and which can usefully be seen as being located within practices in social and material environments. In these the nexus of this/these practices, the human agent(s), is the one who through the meta activity of frame making, breaking, and repairing, is able to (re)define social contexts, (re)define actions, and presence appropriate attitudes and skills, to know how to go on with others.
- **Coaching** seen as ‘an invitation to engage in and co-construct the nature, rules, and resourcing of a new language-game’ embodying epistemological and ontological uncertainty, and ‘revealing continuity’ between different forms of knowing, and between opportunities for development and performance. In this the coach uses academic knowledge not as *the* knowledge but as a provocation to improving embodied and responsive practice, and uses ‘presencing empathetic responsiveness’ as a dialogical coaching tool for supporting the development of ontological skills for ‘knowing how to go on’, with others. The dialogical relationship that emerges provides a living example of a mode of coaching where the coach learns from the student what development means for that student and what and how to offer support for this learning work.
- **Web-based learning** seen as a medium for creating ‘dialogically structured’ development relationships in which students can be enabled to use ‘close learning’ practices to develop both scholarly skills and the ontological skills required for contributing effectively to situated practice

Finally I feel that what’s needed above all is a commitment to the belief that *conversation* is the crucial situation in which we become the human beings we are and can be, and that this two-way interactive process is one that we generally don’t understand well. And so we both deny responsibility for, and so cannot easily influence, the effects that are produced. Through adopting a more dialogically structured view of living and working with others, we are presented with the wonderful possibility of being able to continuously live a creative life, able to improvise with others a much broader, enriching and worthwhile way of being in this world. I wish you good fortune in your endeavours.

Final note: as I mentioned at the start of the thesis, the idea of writing a special prologue and epilogue to finally ‘complete’ my thesis, arose during the two-and-a-half hour dialogue I had with my examiners. And as I remarked in the Prologue, this is an example of what in the thesis I’ve called ‘empathetic responsiveness’. If you are interested in exploring how this emerged in response to our dialogue, you can see the first two hours of the viva in a You Tube video very kindly filmed by my supervisor, Jack Whitehead. The url for this video is: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPx1cUNf1B0>