

**LOVE AT WORK: WHAT IS MY LIVED EXPERIENCE OF LOVE, AND HOW MAY I  
BECOME AN INSTRUMENT OF LOVE'S PURPOSE?**

**PROLOGUE**

This is a revised PhD submission.

In the original draft I showed how I inquired by holding the memory of divine love in my mind; I was 'in love' as I wrote. I described this process as 'holding the "other" as part of the self'. An action research methodology and a first person inquiry practice, combined with daily spiritual practice, enabled me to bring the qualities of 'being' more fully into my professional practice. As I wrote the thesis I began to appreciate the nature of my scholarship, and to articulate the form of my 'living educational theory' (Whitehead, 1988). Getting to know what I already know, and learning more about how I learn, enabled me to improve what I do.

Writing this second submission I continue to hold the 'other' as part of the self. My decisions about how to re-present the material and my findings, were made whilst holding two embodied memories of the viva in my mind. The first memory is of one examiner's gentle curiosity about the connections between the eight limbs of yoga and action research, and the second memory is of the other examiner's politeness as he said he was trying not to be rude. It is the memory of gentle curiosity that gets me excited about the prospect of turning my thesis upside down and inside out, and it is the latter memory that finally led me to the decision to dismember the earlier thesis.

Some of the original thesis remains. I continue to rely on my experience of love. This is at the heart of my inquiry. In the first draft, when writing about my experience and when reflecting on accounts of my practice I kept to my intention to go deep into the roots of my being, and remained constant in my belief that knowledge would emerge that would alter my professional practice. I did this by writing whilst 'holding the

shape and purpose of my inquiry' in my mind, and asking the question, 'How may I become an instrument of love's purpose?' I wrote and reflected on the gaps between my knowledge of what love is, and my knowledge of my practice, and let this sensed memory of love flow through the feelings of not knowing. By reflecting in this way, I began to understand the quality of the loving knowledge that I wanted to bring into my actions.

At the end of my original inquiry I had set criteria against which others might judge my text and my practice. I anticipate that being judged by these criteria will help me to improve my capacity to live the values of love in all aspects of my life.

The first of these criteria is **my capacity to reframe or recontextualise what I am, or we are doing now**. It is this standard that I have applied as I made decisions about how to rewrite and restructure the thesis.

My claim is that I may become an instrument of love through a pedagogy of presence. My findings are arrived at through a process of clarifying the meaning of the values of love. My findings are deliberately value-laden. My intention is to bring love into practice, for my action in the world to be useful, to become an instrument of love. This is why I combine action research methodologies with my spiritual practice. This thesis shows how I have developed my living educational theory from a combination of theory, established action research methods and spiritual practice.

In action research, spiritual dimensions can be researched and incorporated in many different ways. It is possible to validate individual spiritual experience of the subtle realms through co-operative inquiry (Heron 1998), but I am not seeking to validate my subtle experience. What I want to show is how I bring the spiritual qualities of love into my practice by becoming an instrument of love's purpose.

This is first person inquiry, situated within a clearly specified cultural context, inspired by and reaching out to, a sensed memory of the divine. My learning has developed through a reading of theory, experience and practice which is uniquely mine.

In the first draft I relied on Patti Lather's 'Fertile Obsession' (Lather 1993), substantiating my learning through a proliferation of evidence (my stories, drawings, photographs and video) which showed the emergence of my meaning making processes. Here now, one step away from the messiness, the noumenal, rhizomatic quality of divine love, another step away from the poetic, confessional, voluptuous excess; the power of my personally-held truth is not demonstrated in quite the same way. Now, I am writing more as an observer, a spectator.

In writing the first submission, I paid no attention to academic convention, just took convention for granted. In so doing, I wrote (without realising) a thesis that stretched existing conventions; producing a text that was more 'writerly' than 'readerly'. My examiners told me that the connections between theory, evidence and conclusion were not made sufficiently explicit. So this rewrite has been focussed on making these connections clearer.

### **THE EXAMINERS' JUDGEMENT**

This thesis explores love at work from a phenomenological and hermeneutic perspective, drawing on subjective experience of loving practice. Its disciplined sources include daily practice of meditation, observation and journaling of practice, feedback from others, in the context of an action research process in personal and organisational contexts. The inquiry is embedded in a theoretical discourse which

draws on both Western and Eastern worldviews and philosophies as well as contemporary social psychology theory.

As examiners we found the thesis difficult to comprehend, partly because it attempts to offer a non-linear form of exploration, and partly because links between theory, evidence, and conclusion were not clearly drawn. We addressed four major questions in the viva:

- 1) How this is work inquiry, and in particular how is it action research? We had a strong sense of the candidate's own questions, but were unclear as to how she saw herself as engaging with others in this, and speaking to a wider audience in academia and beyond.
- 2) Related to this we were concerned about the absence of a strong methodological discussion. There was little of the articulation of models of action research which we might expect, and consideration of how the work develops through these.
- 3) The two primarily theoretical chapters covered a very wide range of ideas and literature, but the flow of argument was often unclear.
- 4) The primary chapter containing evidence of inquiry practice was disjointed and disconnected from theoretical themes

In the viva the candidate gave a strong defence of both form and content of the thesis, arguing for the rationale of the approach and form of the thesis. As a result of the viva discussions, we were convinced that many of the problems of the thesis are

presentational, and that there is a strong and original underlying line of inquiry which if better articulated would be of value to other scholars and practitioners.

We have therefore asked the candidate to undertake major revisions, and as part of the viva had an extended discussion of what these would involve. They include

- 1) Clarifying the structure of the thesis, how the different chapters and sections are inter-related. This does not mean that the candidate has to adopt a completely linear form, but that the patterns of the thesis must be made clear to the reader.
- 2) That the process of inquiry must be made explicit, such that cycles of action and reflection are articulated and that strong links be made between experience, practice, and theory.
- 3) That the candidate ensure that the evidence provided supports the conclusions reached.

Given the seriousness of the revisions required, a further viva examination is required.

I have approached the task set by my examiners by following the form of the question, 'How do I improve my thesis?' (Whitehead 2004b) and taking careful note of their requirements.

**i) I experience concerns arising from the viva:**

The examiners say:

- How is this work inquiry, and in particular how is it action research?
- the absence of a strong methodological discussion
- the flow of argument was often unclear
- the primary chapter ...was disjointed and disconnected from theoretical themes
- the patterns of the thesis must be made clear to the reader.
- the process of inquiry must be made explicit, such that cycles of action and reflection are articulated and that strong links be made between experience, practice, and theory.
- the evidence provided supports the conclusions reached.

I ask myself, 'How am I going to rewrite this thesis, does it have to be in a report format to satisfy them?'

**ii) I imagine the solution:**

I reread the notes that I made to respond to the questions posed in the viva and begin to imagine how I might work this into the re-presentation of my writing. I want to add more explanation to the original. I imagine putting the original into an appendix, and doing the rewrite as Volume One.

I look at the examiner's report; I am resistant to a full revision but nevertheless realise that I cannot do a rewrite with the original intact.

I decide to frame the 'experiential' writing with chapters explicitly focussed on theory, action research methods and models, and place the hermeneutical writing later.

**(iii) I act in the direction of this solution:**

I plan a linear structure. I am thinking in report-writing mode. To ensure that the focus of the writing is clear to the reader, I decide to write about what I am going to write, write it, and write it again. This should address issues concerned not only with structure but also with the flow of 'argument'.

**(iv) I evaluate the outcome of my actions:**

As I write I create firmer boundaries between lived experience and lived practice, and decide to restructure the thesis again, differentiating between 'Lived Experience' and 'Professional Practice'.

Then I structure the 'lived experience' and 'practice' chapters, highlighting the iterative processes of action and reflection, but retaining the chapter that I originally wrote first (referred to by my examiners as 'the primary chapter') because it is the ground of my knowing from which my inquiry emerged.

As I write I present the evidence to support my claims. I decide to introduce feedback from my yoga students, and to explore other ways in which my developing understanding of 'love at work' in organisations might be presented.

**(v) I modify my actions in the light of evaluations:**

As I rewrite, I am evaluating the meaning that this re-vision has had for my understanding of love at work. I decide to not to refer to this evaluation process in the body of the thesis, and decide to evaluate my learning and its relevance to my ongoing inquiry in the Epilogue.

I formulate the structure of the resubmission and begin the rewrite.