

PART FOUR: FINDINGS

CHAPTER TWELVE

RELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE AUDIENCE

In this chapter I argue the relevance of this thesis as I respond to and make connections with other first person inquiries, and academic perspectives on love and spirituality in organisational settings.

Relational epistemology is knowledge that is derived through connection, response and resolution of difference¹. My knowledge derives from learning through relationship, and holding the 'other' as part of the self. Engagement with the other permeates my method and my practice. Following Marshall (2005) I identified the multi-layered relational aspects of my inquiry process in Chapter Three, where I describe ten dimensions encompassing my inner (o)ntological relations and my verbal outer relations. Following Anderson (2000) 'I work in collaboration even when I am working alone' (ibid. p.11).

The purpose of my inquiry was to make connections between my spiritual practice and my professional practice. Although I knew that these were interrelated, I could not describe these connections to others. There was an absence of relatedness, a gap, between these two forms of practice.

Through meditation, yoga *asanas*, reading, writing and inquiring with others I now understand how this absence can be mediated by the presence of love. I can now see how love stretches the boundaries between some-thing and another thing, a thing that may be a person, an entity or an idea. I now understand that when love fills these relational gaps, knowledge is created.

Starting from an ontological perspective, I have described how my practice includes the rational, the emotional and the sensuous. Providing examples of reflective writing, accounts of practice, CD-ROM, feedback from students and

¹ '(e)pistemology views knowing as something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other' Thayer-Bacon (2003, p.10)

peer review I have shown the relation of being to action, and how my interactions and relationships with others mediate this. I have immersed myself in my ontological perspective, which has resulted in a unique reading of how love works.

Thayer-Bacon (2003) says that, 'ontology and epistemology cannot be separated; they are connected and support each other. They are the warp and the woof that form the netting we use to catch up our experiences and describe them and give them meaning' (ibid. p. 256). My purpose was to honour the connection between my (o)ntology and my practice. In the process of learning about the nature of this relation I have developed my own living theory that describes the 'mode of belonging' of my 'being' and 'doing', a living theory that relies on love generating knowledge across the boundaries between the known and the not-yet-known. In Chapter Seven, writing erotically, I realised that the action of eros must be contained, and in Chapter Eight, that the dissolution of agape must also be contained, that both have boundaries across which the divine mediates.

As I watched myself in conversation with Paul in the video, I realised the importance of 'presence' as a tacit component of relationship. I could see that if I truly live my practice then I would be enabled to bring the experience of the divine into shared relational spaces, and that in this way it is possible to become an instrument of love's purpose.

My ontological inquiry starts with silent spiritual practice, the place where I get an embodied sense of the presence of the divine. In asking how I might become an instrument of love's purpose, I am seeking to know how to move in unison with that sense of the divine. In developing my (e)pistemology I make connections between silence, which is stillness, and the inner movements of emotion and thought as they resonate outwards and are manifested in speech and action. I judge my actions and my practice by the harmonic resonances felt in the spaces between the personal and the social.

I have made it clear that I learn through the skin, rather than through the brain, that my learning is an absorptive bodily process, rather than a brainy intellectual process. This does not mean that my (e)pistemology is thoughtless, but that the route that my thinking takes is not adequately represented in analytic categories.

It means that in seeking to show the relevance of this thesis to academia, I look for connections with other papers and articles that put relational epistemology at the heart of their account. To be relevant means that there must a relation that arouses harmonic echoes in me.

As I write I try to imagine my audience, and create a sense of what it might feel like to perform my text. The movement feels incongruous as I reach outwards to the unknown, imagining how my contribution might support, or add depth, or give a different perspective to that which is already known.

THE ACTION RESEARCH AUDIENCE

My inquiry is an example of how first person inquiry can be saturated in subjectivity, make a contribution to knowledge and at the same time have social and practical relevance.

Donna Ladkin says in a recent article, ‘One of the difficulties I notice students can have...is in determining how to place themselves in relation to their inquiries in a way that takes into account the fullness of their subjective experience without being “self indulgent”’ (Ladkin, 2005 p. 109). Ladkin (following Bortroft) suggests that one of the ways to avoid solipsism and create a more balanced perspective is to encounter the ‘other’ in direct experience, giving primacy to experiencing the other in a non-verbal sensuous merging². In this thesis I have shown how solipsism can be avoided by extending this sensuous merging into social action, which in turn creates inner dissonance and / or harmony which then alters inner meanings, which results in different action... and so on.

In seeking to evaluate the truth of my findings, I have shown how it is possible to apply the criteria of love at work to evaluate my ontological, subjective experience; and my propositional knowledge; and my professional practice. The capacity of these standards of judgement to be applied across the experiential, the propositional and the practical support the ‘truth’ of my findings.

This inquiry explores the intrinsic relation between embodied knowledge and the mind. Whilst there are many references to embodied knowledge in the action research literature, there are few explications of what this means and I have not come across any other action research account that deals with this in the same detail.

By describing the practice of learning and teaching yoga I show how tacit knowledge can be passed to others through touch, language and demonstration. By reflecting on this embodied pedagogic transmission, the presence of absence - the gap between knowing and not-yet-knowing - was disclosed.

² This fullness of experience and its capacity to colour reasoning is akin to Ruddick’s (1989) Maternal Thinking

Yogic practices teach techniques of body and mind control. Learning to control the body, instructions are given on how to 'do' the *asana* correctly. However, the aim of the practise is to let the *asana* 'do' itself. The learning is not about copying the visual model, but learning by inference what the *asana* requires through the direction of the movement. Paradoxically 'controlling' in this context means working directly with what is experienced, not seeking for some-thing. It is an organic, developing awareness, which finds wholeness in direct experience.

In the same way that the yoga *asanas* can be practised to achieve the required shape of the *asana*, action research methods can be adapted to improve action research practice. The action researcher has choices about how to use the models of action research. One choice would be to decide beforehand which action research model should be used achieve the outcome, and to demonstrate understanding by justifying the choice of method (Reason, 2003). Another choice would be to see how action research models are adapted as the inquiry emerges. It is the latter option that I have chosen. I have let the models of first person inquiry show me how these methods can improve my practice.

The importance of action research is that it offers the researcher these flexible and adaptable ways of learning that stretch from the experiential to the practical³. Because this thesis is situated at the experiential and visioning ends of the action research spectrum, it provides a detailed analysis of how 'upstream' first person inquiry comes 'downstream' using Heron's model of Bi-Polar Congruence in the extended epistemology of Reason (Reason and Bradbury 2001). And I am also able to show how Torbert's 'moment-to-moment'⁴ experience (in the Four Territories of Experience) influences the quality of my practice. I have come across few accounts that address these issues in depth.

My methodology relies on surfacing a range of different meanings arising from the 'ordering principles' of language and silence. These ordering principles pattern, organise, select and focus my meaning, they underlay my choice of words and the grammar of my language and also lie within silence. The language developed through inquiring alters my practice, which alters my language. Taking a similar form, the qualities of silence bring me into closer

³ See Reason and Bradbury (2001) and Torbert's Four Territories of Experience from visioning to assessing in Fisher, Rooke and Torbert (2000).

⁴ Torbert, 2001 p. 251 and Marshall, 2005 p. 307.

relation with the ineffable. Silence then changes my 'being' and the mode of my seeing, which in turn alters my 'being'.

I evaluate the worth of my practice by the modality of the 'opening' to the not-yet-known. This modality may, or may not, be loving. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way, no convention, but there is discipline of noticing the modality, the quality of awareness, the discipline of continuing to look when I do not want to 'see' that which appears.

I had already used co-operative inquiry as a methodology for my Master's degree (Lohr 1993) and I took the research method as a 'given' in the way that I stretch into an already practised *asana*. This does not mean that I have nothing to learn about action research models, but that learning by applying a model became more important than choosing the 'correct' model. So for this inquiry, I chose to develop a mode of inquiring, rather than a model of inquiry, and let the modality of love determine the method and direction of my inquiry. My inquiry is about⁵ a mode of consciousness through which I learn how my practice might be improved. So far as I am aware, there is no other published action research account that sets out to address issues of value and consciousness in quite the same way.

In the participative world of action researchers, the mode of consciousness will affect both the quality of our collaboration and the quality of our shared knowledge.

Action Research and Spiritual Practice (Reason, 2000)

Peter Reason's paper on Action Research and Spiritual Practice (Reason, 2000) suggests that the generation of practical knowledge through action research is a multidimensional process that brings different forms of knowing into new relation with each other. He suggests that because action research brings about a dissolution of the traditional conceptual splits of the western world, it becomes a form of everyday spirituality. Referring to Thomas Aquinas, Reason says that

⁵ This statement depends on seeing the self as the Complex Self of inclusionality. Being able to choose modality implies that the practitioner can discriminate between the fluctuations of consciousness and choosing the mode of consciousness.

'spirituality is about all our relations ... the capacity to relate to all things' (ibid. p. 3). Reason demonstrates what he means by making connections between the Four Paths of Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality (Fox, 1994) and the social changes achieved through various action research projects. The paper is a celebration of the action research process, and makes the practice of action research comparable to spiritual practice because it is concerned with worthwhile purposes and human flourishing. Reason shows how action research can be viewed as a spiritual practice by giving examples of how the intrinsic values of action researchers can be viewed through the lens of the Via Positiva, Negativa, Creativa and Transformativa.

My thesis is concerned with the same territory as Reason's. He recognises the wider religious and social derivation of Fox's spiritual values and brings them onto the action research landscape. I am moving outwards, applying ontologically developed values by deliberately writing (as Reason also does) through a particular value-laden lens. In so doing, I show how my values influence my practice using first person research methodologies. What this thesis brings to the conversation about action research as spiritual practice, is the influence that everyday spiritual practice has on developing a particular learning style and the direct effect that spiritual values have on action research practice.

Buddhism and Action Research: Toward an Appropriate Model of Inquiry for the Caring Profession (Winter, 2003)

In relation to models of inquiry for the caring professions, Richard Winter (Winter, 2003) traces the parallels between action research and Buddhist doctrine. He shows how the qualities of awareness described in Buddhist texts can improve and support action research method and practice. He asks, 'how can we inquire in such a way that it actually, directly, immediately *enhances* nursing practice?' (ibid. p. 1 [*author's italics*]). He answers this by giving examples of how western conceptual thinking and constructions of the self are extended by Buddhist theory to incorporate a reflexive analysis of changing phenomena, analogous to and illuminating action research principles. He argues that Buddhism 're-defines the scope of social practices and offers practical guidance for redefining the processes and relationships of inquiry' (ibid. p. 9). This is an approach, which epitomises the western analytical model. Winter, is taking one theory and making

connections with another theory. The connections are well made, they make sense, but they remain reasoned connections and not lived connections. A lived, heuristic connection approach would pay more attention to the possibilities that an enhanced caring brings to action, would see care in action and watch 'caring' being enhanced through developing awareness demonstrated in action. This is what Buddhist theory is about, being the doing, not thinking about new ways of doing.

Winter's article is written in traditional academic mode. His focus is on the nursing profession. He says in a note at the end of the article that there would be a different emphasis if he was making links between Buddhism and action research in educational settings. This shows how his traditional analysis focuses on the particular rather than on a holistic opening up of the potential of the idea. From my inclusional perspective, I would look for a fuller lived experiential enactment of the potential meanings that Winter has generated in the relational space between Buddhism and action research.

Sacred Science: Person-centred Inquiry into the Spiritual and the Subtle (Heron 1998)

In his book 'Sacred Science' Heron (Heron, 1998) writes about his lived experience of spiritual inquiry and co-operative inquiry. He makes a case for subtle experience arising from sustained individual inquiry to be validated and sustained through collaboration with others in second person inquiry.

His book is concerned with avoiding the gender bias and the abuse of power and imperialism of established religions, including Christianity, Buddhism and eastern philosophies. His answer to these problems is to propose that self-managed techniques be devised jointly in co-operative inquiry. In this way he suggests that individual spiritual authority can be developed without a reliance on a powerful teacher who may not be trustworthy.

Heron takes great care to explain the dangers of reliance on spiritual authority figures. The foundation of the book is based on his distrust of religion and religious leaders. His alternative relies on the development of co-operative inquiry techniques; 'knacks' for entering altered states of consciousness through which

he maps his own theory of di-polar consciousness. He validates his findings in accounts of second person co-operative inquiries, and maintains, 'Their limited claim to validity does not warrant any wholesale prescription to others. ... They are promising approaches to transformations of being and practice, which others will reconstrue and apply in their own way' (ibid. p. 19).

Heron blurs the distinctions between propositional knowledge and religious doctrine, suggesting that individuals cannot make these distinctions for themselves, and he rejects spiritual practice based in particular religious beliefs. He addresses what he sees as the inadequacies of religion by developing new spiritual techniques to replace time honoured religious practices.

In this thesis I have provided an alternative relation between spiritual practice and propositional knowledge. By discriminating between knowledge developed through spiritual practice and knowledge that is derived from professional practice, and then by considering the gap between this spiritual and the professional knowing, I have developed a living educational theory that connects being with doing. In this way I have shown how living spiritual values can be validated and judged through practice, and that co-operative inquiry is not the only way to validate individual subtle experience.

I don't think that the problems caused by religious fundamentalism can be addressed by complaining that religions persecute and are not politically correct. My alternative view is that action research, combined with religious practice, increases discriminative awareness and provides the energy and commitment towards developing worthwhile social action. I have shown how, by seeking to see the 'truth in the action' and to 'consummate being values' as Heron also suggests, spiritual practice can be validated.

I address the issue of self-identity and submission to the other in several places in this thesis. I would suggest that psychological strength is just as important for those deciding to undertake co-operative inquiry, as it is for those that decide to trust spiritual teachers. If a person is psychologically weak, there is danger and a responsibility in any learning or collaborative relationship, and the more a person invests in learning from others, the more trust needs to be present.

If I critique these questions of power through the lens of Bernstein's theories, I consider the thickness of the insulation of the boundaries between individuals and the effect of love in that relation. I think that our experience of the subtle inevitably influences what we do together. In other words, what is important in action research is to understand how the influence of the subtle relates to the material being of practice. Or to put it another way, action researchers do not need to reinvent the spiritual wheel by discovering new techniques. Instead we need to focus on testing the individual experiences of the subtle, by reflecting on whether this awareness is manifested as we work together and seek worthy practical outcomes in the social world.

My critique of Heron arises from following the direction of the dissonance that I feel as I read this book (Heron, 1998) and is followed by an analysis of his propositions. I look for the cause, for what might be the seat of my distaste. I judge whether I have articulated my disagreement by whether or not I get a sense of satisfaction from reading what I have written.

I think that this is the way many people make judgements:

'in asking questions about the meaning and purpose of your lives you are aware of the flows of energy in making judgements of value in what you do, about what you have done, and about what you intend to do' (Whitehead, 2005).

'Pursuing outer arcs of attention involves reaching outside of myself in some way. (The inner attentions are operating simultaneously). This means actively questioning, raising issues with others, or seeking ways of developing my ideas. Or it might mean finding ways to turn issues, dilemmas or potential worries into cycles of (explicit – to me) inquiry in action, perhaps seeking to change something and learning about situation, self, issues and others in the process' (Marshall, 2001, p. 434).

What I have done in this thesis is develop my perspective on how these flows of energy help to improve my professional practice, and this has led me to develop standards against which the social value of those energy flows can be judged.

The Practice of Action Inquiry (Torbert, 2001)

Here, Bill Torbert is concerned to bring ‘intentional self-observation’ (Torbert, 2001, p. 251) into all aspects of daily life categorised within the Four Territories of Experience. He suggests a form of first person research practice that incorporates accounts of bodily experience with accounts of action to illustrate his point that noticing the moment-to-moment experience will enhance the effectiveness of action (ibid. p. 250). In Chapter Seven, I critique Torbert’s model of leadership development and his example of *coitus interruptus* as a second person research practice by discriminating between cognitive models of adult development and Hindu religious theory. Here, however, I make a connection with his explicit intention to bring embodied awareness into social action. The contrast between our accounts is in the route that he takes. Torbert begins with desire to improve action by developing greater levels of awareness, whereas I start with a first order desire to bring love into action and then to assess the worth of that action against my standards of judgement.

THE WIDER ACADEMIC AUDIENCE

In the following paragraphs I demonstrate how my thesis relates to academic writing on love, in relation to four publications: Cho (Cho, 2005), Griffin (Griffin, 2002), Fraser (Fraser, 2003) and Biberman and Whitty's reader on Work and Spirit (Biberman and Whitty, 2000).

Lessons of love: Psychoanalysis and the Teacher-Student Relationship (Cho, 2005)

Cho's (2005) paper on the teacher – student relationship addresses the issue of love in a pedagogical relationship through a Lacanian psychoanalytic frame. He concludes that:

'In the love encounter, the teacher and student do not seek knowledge from or of each other, but rather they seek knowledge from the world *with* each other. ... the incomplete status of knowledge is no longer a condition of its content but of its very frame, love means the pursuit of real knowledge. ... with love education becomes an open space for thought from which emerges knowledge' (Cho, 2005 p. 94).

Cho says, 'love is the pursuit of real knowledge' (Cho, 2005 p. 94). I share this understanding of what love is, and I think I understand how love creates the conditions in which worthwhile knowledge can be developed. I want to support Cho's interpretation, by showing how love can be brought into relationship through pedagogy of presence. I find educational similarities between the teach-student relation and the leader-staff member relation.

By developing my living theory, I have demonstrated how non-verbal embodied knowledge influences my work as a leader on the Housing Association Board. My experience is that every leader experiences a sense of reaching into the not-yet-known, of working with others to concretise organisational visions and expectations. I have demonstrated how tacitly held knowledge seeds creative joint endeavours, and how love can seed practical organisational knowledge as well as educational knowledge.

I find connections between Cho's Lacanian analysis and my felt experience of the resonance's of love in the inclusional space of relationship, where the educational relationship and the leader's organisational relations are both concerned with bringing the transformational energy of love into the dynamic of change.

The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self Organisation and Ethics (Griffin, 2002)

Griffin (2002) and Shaw (2002) writing about relationship in organisations assume that 'There is a dominantly held belief that in our everyday exchanges with others we are autonomous individuals ... capable of making rational decisions...that we first reflect and then we act (Griffin, 2002 p. 176). Griffin and Shaw maintain that as a consequence of a Kantian split between the individual and the collective this reflection before action leads to an avoidance of the paradoxes that naturally occur in practice, and a promulgation of existing and unacknowledged power relations. They suggest that we should change the way we think about conversation and relationship in organisation to 'functionalising intentions' (Ibid. p.194) so that the future can be constructed in the moment, rather than planned beforehand.

I have already considered Complexity Theory in relation to my reading of love in organisation and concluded that these theories are over reliant on, and over emphasise, the cognitive component of relational practice to the detriment of the emotional and affective base of behaviour.

Immersing myself in the relation of feeling to thinking to speech⁶, and reflecting on their relevance, has enabled me to argue that the pedagogy of presence is an intrinsic part of the process of constructing the future in the present moment. This is a form of reflection that develops consciousness, and hopes to develop joint strategies but is not focused on strategy.

⁶ In Case Example Four, I illustrate what I mean.

I have shown in Case Examples that we / I may not always notice them but the tacit feelings lying behind speech are just as important in creative collaboration as the language that is used. And the explicit or implicit acknowledgement of that tacit component is an integral aspect of showing respect and valuing the other, which in turn creates a truly collaborative space.

Narrating Love and Abuse in Intimate Relationships (Fraser, 2003)

In her paper Fraser (Fraser 2003) examines the interface between love and abuse in a social work context. She considers that social work theory has not critically engaged with love, and goes on to suggest that this may lead social workers to apply habitual and unexamined values in their practice. Referring to mainstream psychology, she highlights the ungendered bias of most psychological theory, which ignores the gendered power relations of love and abuse within families, and dichotomises the way that victims and perpetrators are classified and treated. She concludes that it is important for social workers to deconstruct new discourses on love and abuse, and to contribute to opening up this debate by 'shift(ing) their gaze back and forth between the micro-politics of love relationships and the structural politics that constrain them' (ibid. 286).

I argue that this thesis contributes to our knowledge of love by showing how it is possible to clarify the meanings of love by an immersion in the paradoxical relation between emotion and practice in the inner arc of attention, which is mirrored in the outer arc of attention in relational practice in organisation. Whilst Fraser is concerned with popular narratives of love in the media and fiction, I have shown how understandings of love can arise as a consequence of individual first person inquiry. I make a case for the 'study of love' to become more experiential, more embodied, which when given permission to be understood in this way can, in combination with conceptual analysis, can open up more interpretation and greater possibilities for human flourishing. Integrated into practice in this way, love will not only be transmitted more easily across the client / social worker relation, but will also provide more opportunities for the creation of new discourses that move away from an over-reliance on a generalised and reasoned analysis. And in this more inclusional debate, the transmission of knowledge will inevitably create new and deeper understandings of the meaning of love.

Fraser is writing about an area of social work that is fraught with moral and ethical dilemmas, many of which are faced by workers on the ground on a daily basis. I maintain that studying love will not guide action-in-the-moment as effectively as an embodied knowing of love. In this thesis I have shown how the spiritual qualities of being can be brought into practice in a way that enables a person to be guided by his/her living knowledge of love within conventional organisational and legal frameworks. I am suggesting here that in Fraser's call for case study material to develop a new social work discourse on love and abuse, the ontological creative qualities of love experienced by social workers must be included.

**Work and Spirit: A Reader of New Spiritual Paradigms for Organizations
(Biberman and Whitty, 2000)**

This Reader is a collection of articles previously published in the Journal of Organisational Management, where the contributors cover a wide spectrum of perspectives. The articles include theoretical perspectives, individual accounts of a search for meaning within organisation, and organisational and societal applications of particular spiritual perspectives. In Boje's preface, which gives an alternative view to those of the editors (Boje, 2000) he draws out six paradigms of work and spirit that are addressed in the book, from which emanate 15 approaches to the study of spirit. He categorises 'love' as an affirmative post-modern approach.

I have written about my experience of divine love and taken this as analogous to writing about spirit, deliberately not defining what I mean by spirit or spirituality. Instead I have written about spiritual practice, my (o)ntological experience of love and where that leads me. I take a relational view of practice and have developed a relational (e)pistemology. But as a senior manager, and as a Board member, I cannot ignore the structural nature of organisational power, and the opportunities and responsibilities that are inherent within hierarchy, and without this experience I would not have inquired in the way that I have, into the relation of love and leadership. It was my discomfort with the paradoxical relation of relational practice and the achievement of organisational outcomes that initiated my inquiry in the first place.

Many of the articles in Biberman and Whitty's book are written by consultants and leaders who theorise about the applications of spiritual practices and the development of spiritual values undertaken in order to deepen an understanding of the core values within organisations⁷.

Whilst I recognise my part in the reproduction of existing power relations, this thesis also provides a logic for a radically different relational approach to spirituality at work. I advocate organisational structures based on relationship rather than on structural hierarchy, values and strategies. This idea may not be practical if it is applied to existing transnational corporations and large companies, but our post-capitalist society has also created a greater potential for smaller, more local organic organising structures to emerge and thrive. The opportunity for relational organisations rather than hierarchical organisations is increasing.

This thesis supports the logic of organic organisational growth that is able to recognise and harness loving energy that is generated when we work well together. It is a loose model of organisation that is both traditional and sustainable. It might be compared to that of the early Buddhist *sangha* (roughly translated as 'meetings'), 'He (the Buddha) did not think of himself as leading the *sangha*. ... He saw consensus as of the utmost importance to the life of the *sangha*. The Buddha also stressed the need for each local *sangha* to remain united. He allowed for individual difference, but he did not wish them to undermine the structural unity of a *sangha* and vitiate experience of everyday life. Controversy, whenever it arose, could be settled by the method of the dissenting individuals removing themselves and forming a new group. This distinguished the *sangha* from democracy, in which majority opinion is binding on everyone, and minority opinions are subordinated to the efficient functioning of the polity. ...the Buddha's emphasis on practice rather than theory kept his teachings relatively free of the taint of dogma and fundamentalism' (Mishra, 2005 pp. 284-285).

⁷ See Hogan, L.S. (2000) 'A Frame work for the Practical Application of Spirituality at work' in Biberman, J and Whitty, M.D (Eds.) *Work and Spirit A Reader of New Spiritual Paradigms for Organizations*. U.S.A: The University of Scranton Press pp.55-76.

THE AUDIENCE BEYOND ACADEMIA

In this thesis I show how it is possible to develop knowledge and improve practice by following the resonances of love. My approach is holistic and disclosing rather than analytic and contained. I deliberately collapsed the traditional boundaries between feeling and cognition. To some readers the messiness and lack of linearity may be distressing, and I regret that. There are two things that I would say in response: firstly, what might first appear as an emotional over indulgence of passion is underpinned by consistent and committed everyday spiritual practice that I have adhered to for over 20 years under the guidance of an enlightened teacher. Secondly, the consequence of this practice means that my embodied knowledge has become less solipsistic and more altruistic, which means that I am more able to make a positive contribution to the audience beyond the academy and to the organisations in which I work.

From the outset, I make distinctions between universalising my experience (which I do not seek) and contributing to a general understanding of what it is to be human. Hindu philosophy maintains that the 'I' is the centre of consciousness and will, that our humanity means that we are conscious and intentional. I would maintain that this is a universal characteristic. However, in this inquiry I have distinguished between categories of mind, body and emotion, and suggested that these categories are culturally constructed. This means that the way that I live my (o)ntological inquiry, and therefore its (e)pistemological applicability, is culturally specific. It may also be gender specific, although I hope not.

I suggested at the beginning of my inquiry that there is a universal human characteristic that seeks unity, but that this is expressed differently across cultures. Taking this into account, I consider that my learning process does have general relevance beyond academia for those who seek to align their (o)ntological experience more closely with their social and professional practice.