

PART FOUR: FINDINGS

CHAPTER ELEVEN

EVALUATING PRACTICE

In this chapter I summarise my findings. In a further account of current practice I provide evidence to support my claim that love is brought into my professional practice through a pedagogy of presence.

I show how the quality of my practice has improved as I continue to ask the question, 'How may I become an instrument of love's purpose?'

SUMMARISING MY FINDINGS:

I have combined journalling and spiritual practice to bring an intimate and non-verbal experience of love into professional practice. I have brought this inner felt experience into language taking a phenomenological approach and I have immersed myself in the relation between physical, emotional and spiritual knowledge. I have analysed the movement of knowledge between the personal and the social in the language of inclusionality, and shown how social relations mediate my inner non-verbal experience.

I situate my method within the action research paradigm and my philosophy within a holistic and subjectivist frame. As I write I realise my knowledge in the relation between thinking and the act of writing.

My knowledge and its production are deliberately value-laden. I cultivate reasoned emotion in order to influence my thought process.

I judge the worth of my action and its loving dimension in silent reflective spiritual practice. I judge the worth of my action and its loving dimension in the feedback I

get from others and its relation to my standards of judgement. These standards are:

- to recontextualise (reframe) what I am and we are doing now; so that our joint work can become easier and more pleasurable.
- to inspire and support relational based strategies and inclusive decision-making within organisations
- to bring a resonance, a flavour of harmony linking the practical and invisible spaces in which we participate.

These criteria are focussed on seeking harmony and wholeness, but they do not ignore challenge and difference.

I have reviewed issues of contradiction and synthesis in western philosophy and argue that the creative dynamism arising from difference is an important component of love at work.

I conclude that love is the medium in which personal growth and social change takes place, and that it is possible to transmit an embodied understanding of love through a pedagogy of presence. This pedagogy may be explicit, but is often implicit and on occasion, tacit.

Following Bernstein, I argue that the resonances of love are transmitted across the boundaries between people as well as the boundaries between individuals and organisational structures. I maintain that it is the thickness of the insulation of these boundaries that determines how much of love's resonance flows into my practice.

EXAMPLE OF CURRENT PRACTICE

In this example I apply my first person inquiry methodology and show how I bring the ordering principle of silence and the ordering principles of language into action, as I seek to bring a pedagogy of loving presence into my practice as a non-Executive Director and Chair of the Board of a housing association.

CASE EXAMPLE SIX

Chairing the Board at NHH

The first action and reflection cycle concerns my preparations for meeting with the CE (Chief Executive) prior to the Board meeting at which I was elected Chair. The second cycle gives an account of the Board meeting and subsequent meeting with the CE.

1. The first cycle

Preparing for election as Chair

REFLECTION

Using Whitehead's (1989) form, I seek to identify my concerns. I am excited by the prospect of getting involved in a new area of housing, and I ask myself, 'What does NHH want from its Chair?'

Eros

NHH wants to develop a reputation in the region for excellence, either in selling neighbourhoods services and /or by building new homes and communities. I imagine what this might mean, holding the vision of 'carving' a place for NHH in the East of England region firmly, erotically, in my mind ...

- I need to know more about the organisation's potential for collaboration – what is it good at - and what the competition is like.
- I need to understand the context, the environment, the players operating in the region.
- I also need to know more about the current thinking on procurement partnerships and the Housing Corporation's current recommendations on the legal frameworks for mergers and developing 'Umbrella Organisations'.

I reflect on my list, then I gather together specific areas that will underpin my thinking as I carry out my tasks as Chair.

I act in the direction of this solution by making another list:

- Governance, we need to streamline decision-making. What is the best way of doing this? We are becoming an Industrial and Provident Society, does this mean that we have to change our Constitution?

- Who has contact, and at what level, with other housing associations?
- What conferences and forums does NHH attend? Do we offer speakers at conferences?
- Do we have an appropriate staff structure in the Development Department? How can we continue our ambitious development programme and begin to develop new housing and / or sell maintenance services?

Agape

What does this mean for relationship? I write another list.

- developing a relationship with the Chief Executive that enables me to understand how he works.
- getting to know more about what the industry is saying to itself about building strategic alliances
- developing a resonant 'feel' for what other organisations are doing.

I put these 'to do' lists on one side. I evaluate my ideas, sitting in silence and meditating.

I write a further list:

- Decision making on the Board must be improved, we must become, 'an effective decision-making force!' We need to enjoy our meetings, bond a little more, make a few jokes, and allow ourselves to ask possibly stupid questions.
- I will get involved in Board recruitment and induction.
- I want to improve the status of tenant members in Board discussions.
- Must find some way of encouraging two of the senior management team to improve their performance at Board meetings. They need to enjoy the challenge of our questions and not be paranoid.
- Find a way of including the tenant voice in reports to the Board. We must be more open and more inclusive.
- Make sure we have high quality recruits to the Board – I am already thinking about the Chair's succession already! We do not have enough suitable candidates. I do not want to do this job for more than two years.

ACTION

I act in the direction of the 'to do' lists when I meet the Chief Executive a few days later.

I make the following notes:

His key issues for the next 12 months were:

- He wants the Board to be more focussed
- To build strategic alliances with other HA's in the following ways...

Development alliances with O.... and / or A....

Interconnection of services – depot / maintenance, RtB and leasing.

Attend all the Good Practice forums

K and V are going to the NHF conference

K to the CIH / or NHF CE's conference

K to EoE CIH conference

B to LSVT finance conference

2-5 year strategy

- Review of sheltered housing – 20 schemes including 4 extra care schemes that need to be improved. Board will be making decisions in the next 12-18 months.
- Staff satisfaction – K justifies PRP on the basis that it enables staff to see how what they do is dependant on others performing.

Criteria for measuring the success of PRP are:

Staff morale

Staff and customer satisfaction surveys

Performance against operational plan

REFLECTION

I evaluate our meeting and reflect on my notes. As part of my everyday practice, I sit in silence and meditation. My thoughts emerge.

- How am I going to lead the association into the next phase of the cultural shift from a local authority housing department to a market driven housing association?

Again, I hold a sense of what agape means in relationship, its flexibility, and its willingness to go where linear logic might not.

2. The second cycle: Chairing the Board at NHH

REFLECTION

Eros

I sit in silence. I meditate. I see myself acting in the role of Chair. I am afraid, my chairing skills are not especially good, and I worry about getting the papers muddled up. I am afraid of being challenged.

I know I need to focus on eros. At the previous Board meeting people were referring to me as ‘the Boss’! I try to imagine what ‘being the boss might feel like’. Agendas and reports begin arrive in the post. I read them. I make careful notes. I know that I need to be efficient.

I sit in meditation. I imagine a solution and I realise that

- I should acknowledge the enormous achievements that the staff have achieved in the 2 years since the transfer of stock. I need to refer (lightly) to developing strategic alliances to indicate my vision for NHH’s future.
- I must take the reins and establish myself in the leadership role by developing a clear framework within which business is conducted.
- Later, I will indicate more clearly future direction, because I will feel the resonance of flow and its direction better. But as yet there is only a subtle movement in that direction. A direction of thought, an undercurrent not yet fully articulated or crystallised in action.

I begin to sense the energy of eros in my mind and body

Agape

I sit in silence. I meditate. I imagine the emotional landscape of interaction.

I think about the individual Board members. Perhaps I need to start challenging them, encouraging them to be freer with their opinions. I reflect on the possibility

of saying things like, ‘SY, you’re our legal expert – what do you think?’ But it might be a bit risky.

Again, I have an embodied sense of what an opening up of existing relationships on the Board might mean, not just in Board meetings but in the longer term for the organisation’s culture. This feels like a big cultural change. It will take time. This is the relational presence of agape.

ACTION

I act in the direction of my solution. There is a jokey, jolly mood around the table. I am firm and relaxed. I get the papers muddled! I close the meeting at 9.00pm, which is good!

There are two agenda items I deliberately show particular interest in, Board recruitment and Customer Care. Both reports are focussed in the direction of my aim to improve the status and involvement of tenant Board members. There is an active, involved Board discussion on both.

- I am careful to watch and encourage remarks from tenant Board members. They all sign up for involvement in the Board recruitment process and suggest more informal ways of informing prospective candidates of their responsibilities.
- There is a long and rather aimless discussion about the Customer Care Strategy that I think demonstrated that the Board was getting tired. I wanted to call a comfort break, but lacked the courage!

REFLECTION

I evaluate my actions by sitting in silence, and meditating..

ACTION

I meet the chief executive two days later. We arrange dates for Board recruitment, and I take his advice on timing, how the selection process will be handled and agree target dates for new members to join the Board.

At the end of the meeting he emphasises the good work that the association is doing on Customer Care. He expresses this differently to the way it was reported at the Board meeting.

I make a note to reread the report and to consider why I did not pick up on the new organisational structures that had been put in place to support the strategy. Perhaps I missed it, perhaps the report needed to highlight staffing structures.

I remember that there was an issue about not including staffing or structural implications in a previous strategy document.

I need to check things out and reflect on the possible implications.

I make a note to make sure that the Customer Care strategy is highlighted in other contexts, especially when talking to staff.

I ask him how his meeting went with the CE of another large association. 'Better than expected' he said. This triggers his views on the future potential for partnership working, summarised as:

- **Selling services:**

We have offered IT, HR and Finance services to another new stock transfer association with 4000 homes. We do not plan to make a surplus, we will be satisfied with the resulting reduction in our overheads.

- **Development of new homes:**

We are developing 700 new homes over the next three years with two other associations as our agents. We have the financial capacity to increase our borrowing capacity to £200million in three years time, that will enable us to develop over 1000 new homes without government grant.

This level of financial security is remarkable. It means that we do not need to join a group structure. I had thought that we had to choose between selling services

and becoming a key development player but the Chief Executive was clear that we actually must use the financial capacity that we already have.

I say that I want to go to a regional event advertised for Board members and senior staff. He says he is busy, but then decides he might be able to alter his diary. Either he thinks that he needs to be around, or I am influencing him in to go in a direction that he might not have chosen. I hope it is the latter!

REFLECTION

I sit in silence. I meditate.

I realise that I am getting closer to defining the direction of my leadership activity. The CE is beginning to fill in some of the gaps in my knowledge that I posed in my original lists.

I will learn more at the Regional Conference and we will have an opportunity to develop our relationship.

My next steps will be return to my original questions and prepare for the next cycle of Board meetings.

EVALUATING PRACTICE AGAINST MY OWN STANDARDS OF JUDGEMENT

In this example I follow the form of Whitehead's questions, writing notes about issues I imagine I need to learn about, writing up the results of actions and conversations. Then reflecting on these in my daily spiritual practice, and using the transformational resonances of eros and agape as part of my strategic thinking, I reconsider and evaluate my accounts. In this way I bring the ordering principle of silence and the ordering principles of language into my practice.

Colouring my thinking with eros, I consider implementation of the organisational vision. Bringing agape alongside my thinking, I consider how to build an effective relationship with the Chief Executive and how relations between Board members might be improved. In this way I plan to create new vision and purpose, to emphasise the value of relationship building through the way that I Chair meetings. I consider how I might influence others by using the power of my

position in the organisational structure to focus on the preparation of particular reports and joint tasks.

I am deliberately seeking to re-frame and recontextualise the work of the Board by focussing my attention in particular directions, and embodying an enquiring and relational approach. I hold the idea of 'increasing tenant involvement in NHH' as a part of myself, waiting for opportunities to enact these ideas. This is how I apply my embodied knowledge, and embody a pedagogy of presence.

For example, at the end of one of our meetings I am given an opportunity to go to a regional event and decide to go. As a consequence of this decision, the Chief Executive also decides to attend. I prepare for this event, and use it as an opportunity for learning about the regional context and the direction that NHH's might move into. I hope that there will be potential for strengthening the relationship between the CE and myself and an opportunity to see how he networks with other key players in the region.

I evaluate my practice by reflecting on my two main aims: (1) to develop NHH's reputation and (2) to develop relationships with the Chief Executive and between Board members.

I judge the value of my inquiry by (a) the inner resonance between my intention and action, and (b) by my stated intention that may be negotiated and revised, and (c) the practical outcome. I judge the worth of my claim to practise pedagogy of presence using the three criteria, which are:

- to reframe we are doing now; so that our joint work can become easier and more pleasurable.
- to inspire and support relational based strategies and inclusive decision-making within organisations
- to bring a resonance, a flavour of harmony linking the practical and invisible spaces in which we participate.

At the end of these two cycles, I conclude

- i) That the process of 'reframing' has been started by involving tenants in the recruitment and induction process for Board members, and by my further reconsideration of the format of the Customer Care strategy.
- ii) That my aim to create the conditions for organisational growth by supporting relational based strategies is evidenced by my actions at the Board meeting.
- iii) The opportunity to attend the Regional event might enable the CE and myself to create a shared landscape of possibility. This will contribute to creating a relation between us and defining the practical and invisible space that we share.

In this case example I have shown how the methodology of my first person inquiry is applied to my organisational practice. I focus my attention on the possibilities afforded by silence as I prepare for meetings. I read and make notes in relation to the agendas and reports; I encourage and make time for the multiple meanings of the reports to resonate with my embodied sense of what feels right and what feels dissonant. I absorb the meaning as well as analyse the meaning of what I read and allow silence to reorder my thoughts.

EVALUATING 'A PEDAGOGY OF PRESENCE'

I use Bernstein's model of pedagogic communication to argue that love can be transmitted in pedagogic relations. I have clarified the difference between explicit, implicit and tacit pedagogy in my practice as a yoga teacher and as a leader.

In my practice as a Board member, and now as Chair of the Board, I will alter the nature of the pedagogic transmission by focussing my gaze in certain directions I hope I will tacitly transmit my recontextualising principles. I use explicit pedagogy

in highlighting Board recruitment and the Customer Care strategy for full discussion. I use implicit pedagogy by watching and encouraging tenants views as a part of a process rather than as an item on the agenda or a report. I use tacit pedagogy through my embodied intention to open up relational spaces and improve communication.

Although the pedagogy of presence may involve all three forms of pedagogic communication, it is tacit pedagogy that links (o)ntology with (e)pistemology. The example above is a demonstration of the practical relevance of a pedagogy of presence, which seeks to legitimise certain aspects of organisational life.

My findings, that embodied knowledge is transmitted through the pedagogy of presence, is also demonstrated in the video on the CD-ROM and in the evidence provided in the feedback of my yoga students.

EVALUATING THE NOUMENAL QUALITIES OF LOVE AT WORK

Patti Lather's (Lather, 1995) concept of **ironic validity** is based on the premise that validity can never be captured, only displaced by other meanings, and that we can only grasp at meanings through a series of narratives or representations that can never show the real meaning.

'Using simulacra to resist the hold of the real and to foreground radical unknowability, the invisible can be made intelligible via objects that are about nonobjecthood. Contrary to dominant validity practices where the rhetorical nature of scientific claims is masked with methodological assurances, a strategy of ironic validity proliferates forms, recognising that they are rhetorical and without foundation, post-epistemic, lacking in epistemological support' (Lather 1995 p.677).

It is like this with my experience of divine love. I know that I can never show the real meaning, so I have attempted to show a flavour of it by describing what I see through the lens of love and hope that by doing this, something of love's essence can be shared. It gives a new dimension to the manner in which we inquire because it is through the manner of its many forms of lightness that the

noumenon, the nature, of the values of humanity are enabled to shine through my representations.

This noumenal quality of love is the ineffable, almost grasped and never captured. This disappearing form is represented through subtlety of touch, a fleeting lightness, and is the sacred ground from which the pedagogy of presence arises.

It is the quality of my consciousness¹ that determines what I see, and which determines my imagined symbolic landscape. When I act in accord with a loving landscape the resonance of my action spreads into the shared social space that I am a part of. New and changing meanings are derived from the resonances of others. I have proliferated love's forms in an organisational context, not in order to fix meanings but to bring it into fuller consciousness, to increase the possibilities of love's modality being materialised in practical outcomes.

I maintain that in relational practice it is possible to judge the noumenal quality of love by its reflection in action. And I point to the conjunction of my ongoing interest in tenant involvement and my election as Chair at the point when four new Board members are about to be recruited, as an indication that the direction and modality of my loving inquiry has been validated over time. However social relations do not solely determine the quality of my consciousness or my understanding of the meaning of love at work.

The foundation of my consciousness is derived from the qualities of my being and developed through the ordering principles of silence in spiritual practice. I know that there is nothing new under the sun, that my claims in relation to both my (o)ntology and the divine are 'rhetorical and without foundation, post-epistemic, lacking in epistemological support' (ibid. p. 677). I nevertheless argue that the combination of spiritual practice and action research has been well documented, the coherence of the direction of my intention with the direction of my practice (above), and my many hermeneutical and phenomenological descriptions of love, when knitted together, validate my claim to realise the ineffable qualities of love at work.

¹ See definitions of consciousness on pp. 62-63

Lather goes on to suggest **neo-pragmatic validity** as another form of validity that 'let contradictions remain in tension' which welcomes 'openness and counter-interpretations' (Lather, 1995 p.679). Because love's socially constructed meanings are always disappearing and reappearing, I have used this sense of fluidity as a way of discovering the power relations inherent in hegemonic constructions of love.

My knowledge is constructed from messing about whilst holding the shape and focus of my purpose in mind. I feel this way, what does this mean; I think this, they think that, does this mean that I will change my mind? Mine is, and always was, a world of relative meanings in which I respond or invite response to get clarification, contradiction, balance, equanimity. It gets complicated, shifting this way and that way, falling into holes, climbing out again, keeping the balls in the air.

In bringing my (o)ntology and Rayner's concept of the Complex Self together, I show how the 'I' is also fluid, and I have extended Lather's concept of neo-pragmatic validity to include the knower as well as the known.

The changing nature of individual consciousness and the fluidity of new meanings defies both fundamentalism and hegemony. In this way neo-pragmatic validity becomes an important source for legitimising my inquiry and my spiritual values without any requirement to explain my position in relation to the dangerous realms of religion or religious belief systems.

In her concept of **rhizomatic validity** Lather says 'Rhizomes produce paradoxical objects', '[t]hey enable us to follow an anarchistic growth, not to survey the smooth unfolding of an orderly structure' (Lather, 1995 p.680) and her ideas were lying rhizomatically beneath my mind as I wrote Chapter Seven. It resonates with Bordieu's reading of how habitus is learned through mnemonic forms, and with my sense of the mandalic field and inclusivity. Embodied memories enable me to discover the phenomenological themes, to reconceptualise, to get at the deeper meanings behind the experience of love and organisation.

From experience I know that something worthwhile will arise provided I keep the focus of sensed memory in my mind. My direction changes as I respond to this idea or this person, as I feel 'called' or 'hailed' by events, and as the focus of my attention arouses feelings and changes my actions. Nothing is an accident, it might all be important. This responsiveness to events or people is how I develop knowledge that contributes to the fulfilment of purpose. Rhizomatic validity is a way of describing the direction of my inner and outer orientation, the checking and rechecking of the direction of the flow of thinking and being in the process of doing.

And I also offer this writing as a pale example of Lather's fourth concept of validity, that of **voluptuous or situated validity**, 'a disruptive excess' that is:

[a] self conscious partiality, an embodied positionality and a tentativeness which leaves space for others to enter, for the joining of partial voices. Authority comes from engagement and reflexivity in a way that exceeds Lyotardian paralogy via practices of textual representation that, by hegemonic standards, "go too far" with the politics of uncertainty. The effect is achieved by blurring the lines between the genres of poetry and social science reporting' (Lather, 1995 p.683).

I could have gone even further in blurring the boundaries between poetry and reality, between the confessional and the academic. Perhaps one day I will.

I justify the use of Lather's concepts of situated validity because she highlights the potential afforded in the relation of risk to scholarship, because poetry discloses knowledge rather than analyses the already known, there is an unfolding of knowledge from a different perspective. She encourages a collapse of the boundary between poetry and knowledge, and suggests new ways of validating value-laden knowledge that legitimises felt experience within the academy.

THE TRUTH OF THE METHOD

The truth of my claim, that I can become an instrument of love's purpose through a pedagogy of presence as I act in a leadership role, can also be validated

through the disciplined consistency with which I journal and make sense of my practice accounts.

In Chapter Three I show how my methodology sits within the action research paradigm, and in Chapter Four I show how I have adapted this to incorporate my spiritual discipline.

In making my claim to truth, I follow Heron's model of bi-polar congruence (Heron, 1996 p. 57). Here, Heron says:

'I take the view that validity itself, concern with the justification of truth-values, is interdependent with that which transcends it, the celebration of being-values, of what is intrinsically worthwhile in our experience' (Heron, 1996, p. 58).

Starting my inquiry with my embodied experience of love in Part Two, I develop hermeneutical accounts of practice in Part Three, which leads onto the development of propositional knowledge. I then substantiate my theory of pedagogy of presence in a further hermeneutical reading, where I show how spiritual experience can be brought into my leadership actions. This is a pattern of coherence and consistency which Heron refers to as 'bi-polar congruence as dialectical process', where, firstly, the 'grounding of truth values' moves from embodied and felt knowing, into action and practice, to the propositional (the formulation of living theory), and back into experiential knowing. And secondly, where 'consummation of being' moves from the experiential to the presentational to propositional to practical and back to experiential². I show how I 'ground' my truth values in Chapters One, Five and Six; and 'consummate' my being values in Chapters Seven, Eight, Ten and here in the evaluation of my action account at the beginning of this chapter.

In seeking to verify my findings, I make no universal claim, either in the application of my method or the generalisability of my findings. The relevance of my claim lies in the characteristics of humanity that we all share.

² I have differences with Heron's model where he claims that knowing is valid only if it is free from distortion. I argue the case for immersion in values in Chapter Two.

EVALUATING THIS THESIS AGAINST MY STANDARDS

- i) **to reframe what we are doing now; so that our joint work can become easier and more pleasurable.**

This refers to the relation of the reader to what is written. If my thesis 'makes sense' or if it echoes the experience of the reader, or if it creates more questions and more inquiring with others, then this thesis will be influencing and reframing. I indicate the audience and the arenas in which this account may be relevant in the next Chapter.

I also provide a more personal 'felt' evaluation of this account using this standard in the Epilogue.

- ii) **to inspire and support relational based strategies and inclusive decision-making within organisations**

I was focused on developing the loving skills of collaborative working throughout my inquiry. In this chapter, and in the CD-ROM referred to in Chapter One, and in Chapter Six, I have given examples of how I bring love into practice through the pedagogy of presence

I ask the reader to judge this thesis against this standard. In Part Three, chapters Seven, Eight and Ten, I show how the dynamical boundaries of love can operate in leadership activity and I make a case for allowing the emergence (rather than the imposition) of strategy and organisational structure through relationship.

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iii) **to bring a resonance, a flavour of harmony linking the practical and invisible spaces in which we participate.**

This standard refers to the poetic, noumenal qualities of love and the qualities of 'beingness'. This is the standard that I use when I reflect on my action accounts, and that I seek to bring into my action.

Again, it is up to the reader to judge how far these qualities resonate within him /herself. I have been concerned with my (o)ntology and not ontology-in-general, and so these words will not have a universal appeal. On the other hand I would expect that there will be some parts of the writing, or extracts, that will 'make sense' to most readers, because love, desire and relationship are universal human characteristics.