

**Experiential Transmission:
an auto-ethnographical study of coaching in
educational contexts**

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Professional Studies

Module 5360

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Well, almost anything.

Abstract

My research uses an auto-ethnographic narrative to discuss a phenomenon called experiential transmission which I use in my coaching practice in an educational context. My primary aim is to explore experiential transmission for its potential to improve coaching outcomes in such a context. I have chosen an auto-ethnographic methodology in order to tell the story of how I started to explore experiential transmission and how I further developed my understanding of the phenomenon. I pose the question: How is the process of experiential transmission felt by my clients and by me when I am coaching in schools? To answer my question I examine in detail the personal transition experience between coach and coachee and I analyse the stages of personal expansion for the coachee directly after experiential transmission has taken place. With my project I seek to add to the slowly growing movement of coaching practitioners who are looking to reveal possibilities that are divorced from the technically led, compartmentalized and linear approaches. My findings have suggested that experiential transmission may be a plausible and exciting area for future study.

Keywords

Coaching, Educational Context, Auto-ethnography, Experiential Transmission, Experiential Learning, Taoism.

Statement of authorship

John Rowe is responsible for the composition of this work. It is presented as partial fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Professional Studies (Coaching) in order to meet the requirements of the Professional Development Foundation in conjunction with Middlesex University. Full ethical clearance has been granted. The views expressed in this research project are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supervisory team, Middlesex University, or the examiners of this work.

Anonymisation and transcript convention

The coaching recordings used in this project have been transcribed and edited by me, the author. No external parties have been involved in this process. Editing has been required to ensure confidentiality, and all names and places have been altered. Participants have read the work and agreed to its submission.

Transcript notations

- ... text omitted. For example ‘... and then it happened’.
- non-conventional sentence structure in speech. For example ‘I said that – well what I mean to say is – I – well – what I mean is that I told him that everything was okay.’
- () other helpful indications. For example, ‘On the way here I realised something important. (Long pause.) I think that I want to stay at school. (Pause. A grin begins to appear. She raises her arms and looks upwards.)

Please note that I use the feminine singular pronouns ‘she’ and ‘her’ in this project first of all to avoid the awkwardness of the third person pronoun ‘they’ or ‘them’ when I am addressing a singular reader or referring to a singular coachee or respondent. Second, the pronoun also reflects the fact that my coachees in this account are all female. This was not a deliberate choice but a reflection on the current state of the UK teaching profession as I have experienced it. There are a greater number of female teachers in the secondary school culture where I coach, so proportionally I will come across more female coachees.

Please further note that I use the terms ‘client’ and ‘coachee’ interchangeably.

Glossary of terms

Acquired Learning. A Taoist term for any learning that encourages us to act in a superficial way.

Acquired Action. A Taoist term to describe the manufactured action we take as result of our acquired learning.

False Heart. A Taoist term to describe the quality of the person we have become because of our acquired learning. Our acquired learning leads to us developing a false heart.

Hyperordinate Position. A term I have developed to describe the position of a client who has achieved sudden growth, such as after an 'ahha' moment.

Inner Door. A term representing the more hidden and mysterious aspects of Taoism.

Lineage. For this project 'lineage' represents a tradition passed down from student to master via an Inner Door transmission process.

Outer Door. A term representing the more everyday aspects of Taoism.

Te. The natural personality that emerges after our acquired learning has been dropped.

Transdimensional Awareness. A term to describe the client's feeling of expanded consciousness when in the 'hyperordinate' position.

Transmission. The word 'transmission' for this project means the same as 'experiential transmission'.

True Heart. A Taoist term to describe the person we have become once freed of our acquired learning. Such a person is said to have a true heart.

Wu. A term that means emptiness. The state of non-being.

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Chapter one: introduction

At the forefront of my learning, for quite some time, has been a more or less continuous drive to explore the more esoteric side of the Taoist culture. I have found that this area of Taoism, especially when related to the nature of teaching and learning, contains some mysterious and enigmatic ideas that once unravelled can be of enormous value to my coaching practice in schools. One of these ideas is experiential transmission.

In this chapter I will be reflecting upon the personal learning journey that has led me to attempt to explain the phenomenon of experiential transmission for this project. I will be taking time to define experiential transmission as a phenomenon in its own right. It is relatively unknown and I want to explain it as thoroughly as I can in order to establish its centrality to my project.

It is perfectly plausible that experiential transmission can be explored in many ways divorced from the Taoist culture in the context of educational coaching. Yet from an auto-ethnographic angle, the Taoist idea of experiential transmission in coaching within the context of education reflects my life experience and therefore it is a valid choice: '[auto-ethnographic research is] an autobiographical genre... connecting the personal to the cultural' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.739).

It is important to note that I am neither advocating the practice of Taoism in my coaching nor do I consider myself a practising Taoist. I have been influenced by Taoist principles, particularly that of experiential transmission, and this project aims to demonstrate the value of experiential transmission in an educational context. The vignettes I relate to my reader throughout the project are designed to highlight my auto-ethnographic recall of events that have culminated in my coaching practice that is underpinned by the Taoist idea of experiential transmission.

Experiential transmission

Many of Taoism's more esoteric ideas are multi-layered (Cleary, 1994) and multi-dimensional (Nakagawa, 2000). Therefore an explanation of experiential transmission needs to include these multi-perspective viewpoints if it is to be accurate. A singular dimensional perspective, such as one that might explain the phenomenon only in a technical sense, is unlikely to paint a full enough picture of experiential transmission to cover the depth and breadth to its qualities. There is also the possibility that such a description may narrow the interpretation to the point of distorting it.

To my mind, one of the most effective ways of exploring something is through story, and I intend to provide stories throughout this project that I hope will illuminate the concepts I describe, concepts which are at times slippery and elusive. Some of the stories I will relate are from my experiences of travelling and of studying Taoist meditation in China, others are from my experiences as a coach, teacher and researcher, and the remaining ones are from my personal learning journal.

Consider this story that I believe elucidates the dangers of the type of narrowing I refer to:

While I was studying meditation in China my teacher spoke to me of a group of young monks who had taken themselves off to live high in the Wudang Mountains.

One day, while wandering alone close to a summit, a single member of the group stumbled across a scroll near to the entrance of a small cave. Excited he sat on a rock to read, enthralled, hours past, reading the best he could. Eventually, as the sun went down, he wandered back to the group, parchment in hand, to share what he had found. The group were delighted to see him back as they thought he might have been lost – he was gone for so long. Then the monk produced the scroll. The group celebrated with rice and vegetables, followed by a cup of green tea. Then a second cup of tea helped to quell their excitement. They wanted to think clearly. After the formalities were over they sat down together in the light of the fire to study the rare document. The cleverest of the group was pleased to point out that part of the text contained a short story about meditation – a practice the monks employed every day. The text revealed that during meditation the primary intent was to ‘gaze inward’. The monks were very impressed and, before settling down for the night, vowed to follow this precious information to the letter.

During their meditations in the days and months that followed the young monks proceeded to train themselves to turn their eyes a hundred and eighty degrees in their sockets so that they could look entirely the other way – look inwards towards the backs of their heads. It turned out to be harder than they imagined. But they persisted until the skill was mastered. They did their best to ignore the excruciating headaches that prevented them from sleep. Then, one of their group, the youngest monk, went blind – suddenly.

Fortunately a Master came by. (The term ‘Master’ denotes someone who has mastered a craft and can be male or female.) She saw the plight of the youngsters, sat them down and carefully, over many hours, explained to them the nature of storytelling. She explained to them the value of metaphor and imagery – and the dangers of taking words, words designed to inspire individual interpretation, too literally. She said that during meditation

'looking inwards' for her was a beautiful, indescribable feeling of oneness that came about from using her senses in an altogether different way – it was different for everybody – something it had taken her many years to understand and to perfect.

But sadly, for these young monks, the damage was done. They could no longer read the stories that would benefit them; such stories that would enable them to grow rather than to be in pain. The Master decided to stay with the young monks and to become the boys' eyes. She read to them every night. In this way they became enlightened, despite their tragic error of judgement. And the passing monk found a second vocation as a teacher.

This story was related to me as factual: the monks paid for their mistake of interpreting a text too literally with a life of blindness. From the story I want my reader to understand the possible pitfalls of exploring experiential transmission only in a technical or literal way. Technical and literal explanations certainly have a valid place in my explanation but phenomena such as experiential transmission cannot be sufficiently understood from this literal point of view alone. My aim is therefore to describe the theoretical notions of experiential transmission, bring to my story how I use it in my coaching practice and demonstrate how other coaches might draw on my ideas and experiences to create a rich and valuable dialogue that supports coachees to perceive their situation with more clarity than before.

Dimensionality

One way of explaining experiential transmission in sufficient depth and breadth is to consider the multi-dimensional perspective. Throughout my project I refer to the five dimensional theory developed by Nakagawa (2000, p.31). From this multi-dimensional platform I explain the many different aspects of experiential transmission as fully as possible.

Nakagawa's dimensions

Nakagawa (2000) identifies five dimensions. Dimension I is 'the objective reality'. Nakagawa (2000, p.31) describes it as the realm of 'naïve realism' where subject-object dualism is prevalent, and where the individual inhabits a world of objective reality. Dimension II the 'social reality' is the 'social world underlying the phenomenal objective world' (Nakagawa, 2000, p.31). It is a world of meaning structured and articulated by language. The collective is respected, as are intersubjectivity and social performance. Dimension III is 'the cosmic reality'. It is 'the deeper dimension of nature, life and the universe that embraces the preceding dimensions' (Nakagawa, 2000, p.32). This is not a

world of structure or of linear causal relations, rather it is a fluid world of feeling and 'becoming'. Dimension IV is 'the infinite reality' which is the ontological foundation of the cosmos. In Taoism, this is Wu, or emptiness, non-being. It is the representation of the ultimate that is beyond any kind of qualification (Nakagawa, 2000, p.32). Dimension V is 'the universal reality' (Nakagawa, 2000, p.33). This is Tao, or enlightenment, and is reality transformed. It is a reality where there is not even a separation of the dimensions. Duality does not exist in any form. The movement here is a 'seeking and returning in contemplation' (Nakagawa, 2000, p.33).

When we consider our reaction to the story about the young monks our appreciation might be both factual (the facts of the story arc, and the various technical aspects) and felt (being emotionally affected by the story). It is what Nakagawa (2000, p.31) might describe as a Dimension I appreciation (the technical): '*The objective reality*', and a Dimension III appreciation (the felt): '*The cosmic reality*'.

Another example might be the consideration of a well-known Taoist phrase, 'A journey of a thousand li [miles] begins with a single step' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.182). The meaning of this phrase might be determined only by the facts: the physical journey of a thousand miles does indeed begin with a single step. This interpretation can be described as a Dimension I interpretation (Nakagawa, 2000, p.31) because it reflects the world of realism. The same phrase might also be perceived metaphorically (Dimension III). It might, for example, relate to the individual reader's personal and emotional journey towards recovery, or to a coaching client trying to find the courage to head towards her personal goals. It centres on the individual's felt sense – her felt response.

Nakagawa (2000) does not imply that any dimension is better than another. Instead he is clear that, vital to understanding, there is a need for a constant and continuous movement among all of the dimensions, and it is this shift that creates our multi-dimensional understanding. Each dimension plays an essential role in informing and educating the other.

In light of the above, my description of experiential transmission will begin with a Dimension I (Nakagawa, 2000) definition – the facts. I will then explore a deeper interpretation of the phenomenon by encouraging Dimension II and Dimension III responses in the reader herself. In this way the reader will have the opportunity to develop a personal multi-layered and multi-dimensional appreciation of what experiential transmission means for her on at least three dimensional levels: technically/objectively

(Dimension I), within the context of her social reality (Dimension II), and emotionally (Dimension III).

Damo Mitchell

For my project I have been fortunate enough to be able to conduct a one-to-one interview with a Taoist Master, Damo Mitchell. From my perspective such an interview is a privilege and an exciting opportunity.

Mitchell is a Taoist Master. He is a published author on the Taoist arts and runs a hugely respected martial arts school. I met him many years ago when we were studying Internal Alchemy Meditation together in the Wudang Mountains in China. He was already being held in very high esteem. Since then he has mainly stayed in China seeking out the experiential secrets of Taoism. With Mitchell's interview (Appendix 1) we have access to an extremely important resource – that of the Taoist oral tradition. I have deliberately eschewed drawing on any of Damo Mitchell's written works. A reader wanting to read more about his ideas can access such published works. Instead I want to concentrate on his oral transmission simply because I experienced his words that way and trust that my account of our interview and my other references to him will explain his role in my coaching. I do not refer to his techniques and methods but rather view him as a guiding light in my account of how I use experiential transmission.

Trust

Wong (2008) points out that the keys to the teaching of the Taoist arts are jealously guarded. Therefore, I am extremely grateful to Mitchell for sharing some of what he knows. I feel it is a privilege to have been granted access to this information, and with privilege, comes responsibility. Mitchell's personal sharing of his information eventually boils down to a bond of trust between Mitchell and me. (For Mitchell as a Taoist trust is mostly interpreted as trusting yourself, your instincts and your actions (Kochmer, 2018)). Simply put, Mitchell trusts my instincts and my actions. He trusts that the knowledge he imparts will be used honestly and with respect for its sacredness (Appendix 1.1). The Master has given his full permission for the information to be used with knowledge of the context of the study and the range of people who may be reading it. While alternative and more technical approaches to the subject of trust remain of value to my project and are discussed throughout (particularly in Chapter 4), here I am explaining the Taoist viewpoint where ethical protocol is a personal agreement (Kochmer, 2018).

It is also fair to say that what has been imparted by Mitchell is only a fraction of what he knows about experiential transmission. Fittingly, it is just enough to form the basis on which I have envisaged the description of the phenomenon for the introductory part of my study. Above all, the reader must remember that the account provided here is my version of experiential transmission, not Damo Mitchell's. Hence, I have privileged others' written works not his in order to substantiate my ideas.

Secrecy

Taoism is cloaked in mystery and secrecy (Wong, 2008). Sometimes only half the information is stated in a text and, similar to our story about the young monks, it takes a Master (this time in the form of Damo Mitchell) to guide us, as there are pathways that lead to the illusion of 'understanding' everywhere (Appendix 1.1).

By way of example, I am reminded of a game I used to play with my students at school. It was called 'code breaker'. The teacher introduces the game with a verbal code. An example might be 'I am wearing brown shoes' (when the teacher's shoes are actually black). Each student then has to try to mimic the code. One student might say 'my jumper is pink' another 'my trousers are blue' but each time they can't seem to get it right. None can seem to break the code even though they think they are observing the same rules as the teacher. After a while a single student, probably after a very obvious hint from the teacher, finds the key. It is not the phrase that is spoken that represents the code at all; rather it is the fact that the teacher scratches their nose as they say it. The scratching of the nose is the code breaker, and the spoken phrase is designed to put the student's attention onto something of less importance. The phrase is essential to the game, but it is a diversion. Of course, once the student has the key then it is easy for her to break the code time and time again, much to the chagrin of those who are known to be 'cleverer' but cannot for the life of them decipher it.

Definition techniques

From my thirty years of studying Taoism I have learned that three main devices are most often used to explain its more esoteric experiential phenomena. These are: i) describing a phenomenon by the absence of its qualities; ii) describing a phenomenon in relation to the natural world; and, as previously mentioned, iii) describing a phenomenon through metaphor and storytelling. These devices tend to describe *around* the phenomenon rather than address it head on. As Mitchell observes, 'It's different for everybody' (Appendix 1.10). For example, by describing the Taoist viewpoint on experiential transmission as being 'entirely absent of superficiality', I am not stating what the phenomenon *is* – rather I

am stating what it *is not*. I am encouraging something resembling the following question to arise in the reader: If superficiality is entirely absent in experiential transmission what do I personally feel remains? It is a technique developed to allow for an entirely individualistic response. It discourages generalisation.

Initial definition of experiential transmission

I have summarised the definition below from my conversation with Mitchell (Appendix 1):

Experiential transmission is a form of learning through experience. It is the experience gained by the student by being in the vicinity of the Master. It might be described as the coach's influence on the client from behind the coaching mask, how the genuine unfiltered quality of who the coach is as a person affects the individual they are coaching, regardless of the technique the coach may be using. In essence, experiential transmission refers to the learning gained from experiencing the personal quality of the Master, the teacher, the coach, rather than being affected only by the techniques she may be using. A coach using the ideas underpinning experiential transmission values being truly present for her coachee: she is present in front of the coachee without any artifice.

Further definitions of experiential transmission

To amplify my definition of experiential transmission I continue by stating clear facts about the phenomenon supported by direct quotations from Mitchell's interview (Appendix 1). The transcription of the full interview is available at Appendix 1 and I advise the reader to consult the transcript now. The initial interpretation is then followed by the use of the three Taoist explanatory angles to suggest a fuller and more personal multi-layered understanding of the phenomenon.

Mitchell describes both 'Outer Door' and 'Inner Door' experiences of experiential transmission. Although in the early stages of my project I am mainly concerned with the 'Outer Door' experience of experiential transmission (it is not until Chapters 5 and 6 that the Inner Door experience is more fully explored), I have explained both aspects here to provide a sense of context.

Mitchell's Outer Door descriptive phrases

With his Outer Door explanations Mitchell presents the reader with some facts about experiential transmission:

1. Experiential transmission is a natural social phenomenon: 'The view is that transmission happens all of the time – between all of us' (Appendix 1.11a).

2. Experiential transmission is immersive: ‘The whole of who the person is is transmitted’ (Appendix 1.3).
3. Experiential transmission is intrinsically personal. Mitchell states that experiential transmission contains ‘... the sort of passed on qualities that come through behind what the person is teaching’ (Appendix 1.4a). He also states: ‘It’s who the teacher is behind the skill they are trying to pass on’ (Appendix 1.18).

Mitchell’s Inner Door descriptive phrases

Mitchell’s Inner Door explanations go deeply into the more secretive side of experiential transmission:

1. Here Mitchell talks about alignment:
 - ...it’s almost like a radio station. So the human body is like a radio able to pick up certain different radio stations – but the problem is that people aren’t tuned into it (Appendix 1.2a).
2. Here he talks from first-hand Inner Door experience:

They call it a Shin Yin which means to – a yin is a seal – you know the red chop that marks ledgers and things? And the shin is that space within the centre of your being – so what is meant is they literally stamp a seal within the centre of your being. So first thing after they’ve done it you feel really stoned (laughs) for quite a while – it’s a mind wipe – if you’re already very close to the tradition you are essentially dragged a very little amount so what happens afterwards is a feeling of openness or maybe clarity – that people can associate with the meditative experience – if you’re still quite a long way from the tradition then it can be quite a violent drag towards that state so for some people it can be quite debilitating – it can leave you with feelings of depression, anxiety even sometimes physical pain – that you might feel for quite a long time because of the sheer distance you’ve come in order to touch that state. Once you’re then in the tradition and everything’s settled down (Appendix 1.11).

... then lots of strange things happen – the first thing is that you understand all of the teachings just like that (Snaps his fingers). It’s like becoming a complete know-it-all overnight – in the tradition – even to the extent you can pick up an arcane classic within that line and it’s like reading a DVD manual. It’s very clear. Anything the teacher says you can understand – and also, they can pass on teachings mentally to you – they can transform the shape of your body by their intention – and things like this or – transfer moods or even visual information to your mind in a psychic manner which they can’t do if you’re not in that tradition. So Inner Door has a whole telepathic psychic aspect to it that the Outer Door teachings don’t have (Appendix 1.11a).

3. Here Mitchell introduces us to the communicative nature of experiential transmission:

So for a teacher to teach what they have are their external practices which can be chi gong, meditation, scripture – whatever the tradition is based on – but then on top of that they have a kind of internal teaching that is passed through to you which is kind of initially like a rewiring about how you perceive things (Appendix 1.5).

4. Here Mitchell discusses experiential transmission's genuine nature:

Somebody that's received the transmission at a very high level and who is able to teach to that level is called a "genuei" – it means a true person – someone who is speaking from truth (Appendix 1.12a).

5. Here the importance of the coach's personal experience of experiential transmission is stated:

That was the prerequisite for someone to become a teacher or a coach (Appendix 1.7a).

I think it is important at this juncture to emphasise that I am not a guru nor do I advocate anyone acting as a guru in a coaching scenario. I acknowledge that a coachee has her own agency and that my use of experiential transmission does not undermine her agency in any way. Furthermore, I realise that Damo Mitchell appears to make specific claims about experiential transmission. I am not he, and I am practising my own version of experiential transmission. I am a coach and Damo Mitchell is a Taoist Master, quite different roles.

Examples from each descriptive category – personal extrapolations

The following descriptions are designed to elicit a deeper understanding of experiential transmission. The first category describes the phenomenon by what it is not – by the absence of certain specific qualities. As previously mentioned, this technique is designed to enable the reader to draw an individual picture as to what experiential transmission is for her personally. The second category looks at the natural world. From the Taoist perspective 'natural' is an effective form of description because it is alive but unburdened with self-consciousness and therefore offers a sense of uncluttered clarity (Hu, 2005). I use the term 'natural' throughout my project to describe what is close to nature as opposed to something artificial. The third category is storytelling and metaphor where the reader is offered the opportunity to experience a more personal emotional response.

Describing the phenomenon by the absence of its qualities

Experiential transmission is not superficial. By superficial, I mean on the surface. By way of example, there are coaching models that to my mind are designed to work on a surface level. They may be focused on addressing short term needs and specific tasks – the GROW model (Whitfield, 2017) comes to mind, and many other performance based coaching models that, despite their advantages in helping coachees visualise what problems lie in front of them, do not set out to address a person's emotional state.

Another example is a coach presenting as being a confident individual in the coaching room, but not being entirely confident underneath. On a superficial level the coach might seem to be self-assured by the client. However, the coach's transmission cannot possibly be one of confidence or self-assurance because experiential transmission transmits the whole picture of the coach's state. The coach's transmission reveals the totality of the person: in this case the coach pretending to be confident – the coach putting on a front. The quality of the coach as a person is always transmitted in its entirety to the client – incongruities and all.

Nature and the natural world

Experiential transmission is a form of communication, without boundary, that is around us naturally and continuously.

If a gardener tending to a tree focuses only on its visible elements, the trunk, the leaves, the twigs, the branches, its blossoms and fruits, then the tree will inevitably weaken because the root has been ignored. The entire tree will eventually become malnourished and die.

From the Taoist perspective, a coach/teacher delivering an excellent technical session (represented by the branches and leaves of the tree) will not be as effective as a coach/teacher doing the same who has an awareness of the importance of the whole (represented by experiential transmission). As illustrated previously, the lack of awareness is likely to develop transmissions of a contradictory nature that will unintentionally negatively impact the client (Appendix 1.19a). The results of the coaching sessions may therefore be haphazard and resemble something of a potluck scenario dependent on how the coach may be feeling on any given day. If the coach feels centred then their transmission will be centred. If the coach feels frustrated then their transmission will reflect this frustration, hidden or not. Because experiential transmission concerns the projection of the whole person it means there is nowhere for the coach to hide.

Storytelling and metaphor

Healthy experiential transmission can be transmitted only by a coach who has an understanding of the value of simplicity (Appendix 1.8a).

Before presenting my story I will be taking the opportunity to explain a little about how the Taoist concept of 'acquired learning' relates to simplicity. 'Acquired learning' is the knowledge acquired throughout our lifetime (Appendix 1.8a). From the Taoist perspective it is the learning that masks our reality: it could be considered superficial. Simplicity is attained through the process of releasing our 'acquired learning' to reveal the clearer self, underneath. Examples of the release of 'acquired learning' are often presented through Taoist storytelling that presents as fable. For example, Chuang-tzu (Trans. Cleary, 1994) relates the story of a bird whose back is thousands of miles long, and of the extreme effort needed (representing the release of 'acquired learning') for it to fly high into the sky. He goes on to say that when the bird is finally up in the air it is able to glide effortlessly amongst the stars (representing the ease of life once 'acquired learning' is dropped). In the short story (below) I describe the natural power of experiential transmission and then demonstrate what occurs when it is constrained and caged. Consider the following vignette:

There was once a park ranger in Africa whose job was to oversee the safety of the cheetahs on the plains. For twenty years he watched and guarded them from poachers. He got to know their ins and outs. They were wild animals in their natural habitat and he came to love them. After he retired, he took it upon himself to go to a zoo to once again be with animals. As he walked from compartment to compartment he became sadder and sadder. Then he came across a cheetah in a cage - and his heart broke. The cheetah – its spirit was gone. Its spirit was gone.

My path in the context of the research question

In this section of my project I will explore the experiential learning that has led to my interest in Taoism. I will take the reader on a path through my early years, through a chance encounter with Taoism at college, to me failing dismally as a newly qualified teacher. I will then relate my experience of being a professional actor before returning to my educational roots once again. Finally I will discuss my learning from becoming a freelance educational coach and author. Within my narrative I also emphasise the significant experiential learning that has come about from travel. In my case 'travel' is represented by long periods spent in China and India. Auto-ethnography's core values, especially those centred on authenticity, emphasise the researcher's personal

experiences (Ellis, 1999; Adams et al., 2015). In my case this experience is reflected in my life's influence by experiential Taoism and in my role in the coaching community.

My journey began at five years of age with my father's stroke. It left me with an insatiable need to fill the emotional void. At home there was almost no support or modelling for a healthy emotional life, and the need to find meaningful emotional connections seized me forcefully. I have made the decision not to go into any further details about my early family life. Suffice to say that my mother was emotionally withholding, my father less so. Perhaps that is why his stroke made such an indelible impression of loss and longing on me.

Early clues as to how experiential Taoism could fill this emotional gap began when I left home to go to teacher-training college. A memory here is the influence of Maslow (1954) whose theory of self-actualisation instantly became attractive to me in my vulnerable state. With Maslow (1954) I found what I thought to be a resolution to the personal, intimate and emotional dramas of my previous years. I certainly felt inexorably drawn to his concept of 'needs' (Maslow, 1954). From my rather desperate perspective Maslow's hierarchy seemed to offer the opportunity of a type of clear linear experiential pathway out of my emotional situation and into something radically improved. I was also inescapably drawn to some of the extensions to Maslow's Pyramid that moved the experience beyond self-actualisation into what Maslow (1962) described as 'transcendence'. It could be said that Maslow's (1962) approach inspired the beginning of my life-long association between Taoist ideas and coaching.

After qualifying as a teacher my emotional immaturity brought about a type of idealism that did not sit comfortably with the reality and responsibility of the classroom. I failed dismally in my first school. My interpretation of Taoism at the time was to use it as a way of escaping my reality rather than as a way of dealing with it. I became more and more frightened in the real world of work and almost always felt intimidated by the aggression and immediacy of the students and the hard-edged nature of the members of staff in this difficult school. I remember walking into any classroom feeling as if I was facing a wall of threat. Being a teacher was not what I had expected. It was emotionally similar to being back at home, the very place I wanted to escape. From this position the only option I could see was to once again run away in search of a better experience, one which would satisfy my still vulnerable child archetype (Jung, 1934). I had trained as a drama teacher and so I decided to become an actor. It never occurred to me that I wouldn't be able to become one.

Rather surprisingly I found work as an actor on the stage, and the level of freedom I discovered in performance seemed to offer a temporary solution to my problems. Acting became a type of all-encompassing experience that took me away from my real-life dramas and emotions. This sense of escaping into my work was further developed when, as my acting career developed, I had the opportunity to work alongside better known and accomplished actors. At the time few established actors analysed or questioned their acting technique from fear of paralysing their sense of spontaneity. To these actors acting was a type of felt, communicative experience that could not, and should not, be described. I learned experientially that there was a subtle type of transference that could occur in rehearsals between actors through absorption. This transference seemed to happen in a different way to anything I had studied as a drama teacher. This particular aspect was not linear but was more aligned to a sense of 'being in the moment'. These actors were individual, free and absolutely present in their work and it was this 'beingness' that made them so vital. Because I was with them I was inspired to do and to be the same. This communication (what Stanislavski in 1936 described as a type of communion) seemed to work on a very subtle level but the effect was powerful. Rather than seeking to *create* a character, I was more involved in entering a different type of emotional dimensional space where the character could be *accessed*. The skill was to be open enough for the character to permeate consistently and so breathe life and longevity to the characterisation. It was freeing, natural and immediate and I was able to personify this newfound sense of liberation on the stage with considerable success.

For an emotionally over-sensitive young man, alignment with the acting profession eventually proved unsettling and upsetting. Fundamentally, although I had matured a little emotionally, I was still volatile and found myself seeking security amongst others who were the same. It was easier to join the backbiting members of the cast than it was to fight against them. This type of immersion tends to happen a lot when actors are on long runs of plays and I now know that my reaction emerged from the experience of the darker side of experiential transmission: an experience of the impact of the phenomenon when it was negatively permeating the environment. Even though my approach to Taoism was maturing it was not at a level where it could impact my dealing with difficult emotional situations such as these. On my thirtieth birthday, while sitting in my dressing room in London's Dominion Theatre, I decided to leave the profession and to re-focus my life – but I couldn't think of anything to do – so I returned to teaching.

This time my school was in a deprived multi-cultural area of London's East End and saw me aiming to survive as a competent professional. My emotional maturity was now at a level where I could just about keep my head above water. Over the years that followed, my ability to integrate Taoist ideas gradually grew stronger alongside my slowly blossoming teaching career. The two together became a more and more established way of being in the classroom. Taoist thought permeated who I was as a person and this resonated through my approach to teaching. Career success followed. From within the various schools in which I taught, particularly as the sole drama teacher, my subject began to become more and more interesting to the students. They reported being attracted to the atmosphere and the 'feel' of the drama lessons. At one point, at Bassingbourn Village College, in a year group of a hundred and twenty pupils, all but one student chose my subject as a GCSE option, and all passed with A or A* grades. This result drew the attention of *Stage Write*, the Royal National Theatre's educational magazine, and I was asked to write an article about the techniques I had been using with the students (Rowe, 1997, reproduced at Appendix 4.1). Re-reading it now, I can see that phrases such as 'If complexity distances us then surely simplicity must be the magnet that draws us closer' seem to ally my success with an appreciation of the broader Taoist perspectives. The magazine titled the article 'Tune in and turn them on', a phrase from 1997 that might well relate to elements of experiential transmission today: 'The human body is like a radio' (Mitchell, Appendix 1.2a). Alongside this success, my need for a sense of personal fulfilment still remained overly strong and manifested as a desperation to prove myself further and further. This need led to periods of mental and physical exhaustion and my having to take long breaks between jobs. During these times I travelled.

The one-year periods spent away from school in China and then in India were deemed to be professionally wasted periods by those in the educational establishment yet these times were, and continue to be, the most valuable components of my personal and professional development to date. In particular, it was the experiential learning of Taoist Internal Alchemy meditation in the Wudang Mountains of China that resulted in a subsequent reduction in my hubris, a lessening of my desperation, and an improved ability to observe the workplace back in the United Kingdom in a more focused and more calm professional sense. My experience in the mountains was deep, crisp and clean. It contained no sides and none of the discomfort that I had experienced in acting and teaching. I felt like I became not only refreshed but reborn. I had studied various approaches to meditation close to where I lived in the United Kingdom but had always been left unsatisfied at what felt to me like a lack of depth of validity to the experience. In

China, with a teacher who had gained experiential alignment with his craft, the experience was altogether different. It seemed to be connected to a far larger force. There was an immense amount of unspoken power. My Taoist teacher's ability to promote wellbeing from his mainly unspoken position was masterful. There was clearly another dynamic at play.

In China, as the weeks passed, I began to realise that my most significant learning was not simply linked to the meditative technique I was being taught. The techniques were tools, but they were only part of the equation. The other half was the 'sitting with the Master'. It felt good to be meditating alongside him and the meditation experience was more powerful than when I was meditating alone. I felt much more centred. Everything was easier. It was as if being with the Master was somehow an essential element to learning how to access the fuller benefit of the meditation itself. The Master rarely talked about the importance of transmission to the coaching process. Nevertheless, I began to consider that such a full communicative experience might be a missing element to my teaching practice in school.

When back at school I channelled my experience in China in order to provide myself with a more grounded and educated professional instinct, and from here a clearer understanding of what could be done to improve my teaching began to develop. In the early stages learning how to consciously integrate an esoteric phenomenon into my practice worked in two parts. The first was the integration of the technical and the personal: the more compartmentalised side of how to integrate what I had learnt in China into my own way of teaching. The second step, more complex, was the gathering of enough emotional intelligence to be able to begin to share the idea of this integration with others, especially those in authority. The process took about ten years to form itself into a single outlook, finally taking the shape of a one-to-one coaching structure for teachers in the workplace.

The skill of learning to work broadly in narrow environments, without causing conflict and therefore without creating opposition, brought about a successful foray into coaching in schools. Much of the coaching I delivered, together with my later international publications (Appendix 4.2), began to incorporate the concept of the importance of the person behind the leadership mask to the coaching outcome. As I became more confident and developed my ideas further (deepened, for example, through Bennis' (1959) philosophical ideals such as the leader being the author of her own creation), my understanding matured enough to begin to develop my own coaching model.

Despite a lack of funding in the state sector for coaching outside of the standard remit, I have now delivered over seven thousand paid coaching sessions to teachers and senior leaders in schools. I have also coached over three hundred sessions to head teachers. Clients report that the coaching really works in situ, and that they feel emotionally elevated after their sessions. Often there are long waiting lists to see me, and as yet I have not needed to advertise. From my perspective this success is a result of strong and confident technique supported by what I have come to suspect is a growing understanding of, and a thirst for, something that helps educators reflect on their professional lives - experiential transmission.

I have now reached a stage where I believe that understanding experiential transmission and understanding how to nourish coaching in schools are synonymous. I believe that as the teacher/coach develops her sense of self then this growth surrounds and lifts the experience of her coaching technique for the student/client. This process happens via the phenomenon of experiential transmission. While there is some research into how coaches present themselves in the coaching room (and into similar areas of psychology and sociology such as social contagion; see Hatfield et al., 1994), this project aims to embrace something particular: it aims to explain how I affect my clients in schools, and how experiential transmission might inform the coaching profession inside the school environment.

Steve Jobs in his Stanford Commencement Speech of 2005 claimed that his life's pathway became clear only retrospectively. He said that he had no plan through college and that he dropped out only to study what interested him. Jobs was interested in computing and calligraphy, two very different subjects, and despite well-meaning tutors advising him to focus on one or the other he studied them both avidly. It was this joint expertise that led him to become the first to develop computer fonts and to become a very successful man. Jobs' statement in some ways reflects my personal journey. It is as if I have been instinctively drawn to embark on my venture to combine my own experiences in education with the Taoist approach to coaching. Unlike Jobs, much of my early situation was driven by desperation rather than a healthy interest, but nevertheless, looking back now I feel as if I have always been heading that way.

Summary

In this chapter I have described some of the ways experiential transmission might be explained and I have offered the reader the opportunity to construct a multi-layered definition of experiential transmission for herself. I have then offered a frank account into

what has led me into experiential Taoism and eventually towards my interest in experiential transmission itself.

In the next chapter, my literature review, I explore experiential transmission in the context of experiential learning. I move beyond the relatively compartmentalised perspectives such as those of Lave and Wilson, via those who seek experiential expansion such as Giroux, to those who appreciate a more free and expansive understanding of the form such as Chuang-tzu. Throughout my survey of relevant literature in the area of education and coaching, I hope to take the reader in a direction that leads them closer still to an understanding of experiential transmission.

Chapter two: literature review

India – high in the Himalayas – the rainy season – sometimes it really pours – like buckets of lukewarm water over your head. I was descending on foot.

My journey down – a daily one – took me past many people – men, women, and so many children – barefoot workers. The children wanted sweets. I gave a little girl a whole packet – she beamed. Workers employed to repair the holes in the mountain road. They had no tools. Everything was done by hand.

As the rainfall increased it was difficult to breathe. I had to stop, sit and wait, hoping for shelter where there was none. I peered ahead. Through the downpour I could make out one thing: the silhouette of a woman in a bright pink sari – there were many more people there – families – I could hear them arguing from within the driving, loud rain.

And then it happened – all of a sudden – the road collapsed. It collapsed more or less in front of me. Everyone was suddenly silenced. Then there was a roar. Then silence again. I looked down through water hoping to get a glimpse of the bright pink waving or walking back up – but I could see nothing – nothing at all. The people – no people – just rock, and slurry, thick, thick, mud. Oh my God.

And when the rain subsided we began our search. But we found nothing – nothing at all – nobody. It was as if they had never existed. It was as if they were never there. And then we had to go – go the other way – to save ourselves.

*

This tragic story is my way of introducing a literature review focusing on the nature of learning through experience.

*

Experiences such as those in India continue to remind me that learning through experiencing is impossible to describe fully in logical and propositional terms. Therefore, for this chapter I have sought out practitioners who envisage learning from experiencing in differing ways and from varying dimensional (Nakagawa, 2000) viewpoints. The practitioners I have chosen move from the more compartmentalized approaches of Wilson (1993) to those who have found alternative methods of expressing and explaining their observations such as Nakamura (1984). By exploring learning through experiencing as

widely as this I hope to find a viable way of describing the immediacy of experiential transmission, which as the name suggests, is an experience in itself.

In this chapter I wear three hats: the teacher, the coach, and the researcher. The teacher explores the past: the experiential learning that has happened to me inside and outside of the school environment. The coach concerns the present: the learning I continue to experience both as a coach and as a client. The researcher explores learning from experiencing in the context of experiential transmission. Interspersed among these three categories of teacher, coach and researcher are more stories of my own experiential learning. I hope that these will add a more immediate and vibrant dimension to this chapter.

Before I begin I would like to remark on my conception of reflection and reflexivity since these terms come up in the course of the project. I take reflection to be common knowledge among coaches. When we reflect, we ponder our ideas. All coaching embraces some idea of reflection – on the past, present or future. Experiential transmission is expressly directed to those beliefs and behaviours on which the act of reflection will focus for the coachee. It is incumbent upon coaches to engage in reflection about knowledge in their own practice and in addressing the needs of their coachees. Like teachers, coaches use reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983). Reflexivity is one's internal dialogue 'that takes place in order to understand and evaluate multiple perspectives' (Lunn Brownlee, Ferguson and Ryan, 2017). I want to emphasise that experiential transmission draws on both reflective and reflexive practice.

The Teacher

In the early part of my teaching career, the 1990s, in the midst of the newly formed National Curriculum (1989), I would not have agreed with Seaman's (2008) argument that schools were using the concept of 'experiential learning' poorly, and that there was an apparent disregard to its fuller potential. At the time I thought I was being wonderfully experimental.

I was happy to teach English alongside my Drama position and it was here that the Head of English first instructed me in the 'new' technique of 'experiential learning'. I was told to tell the students, for homework, to find a plant or a flower and to look at it, to examine it, to (dramatic pause) experience it. Then, in the following lesson, I was to ask the students two questions: What did you do? How did it make you feel? The students were then instructed to write a description in either prose or poetry (their choice – again quite radical

for the time) about their experiences. I recall the teaching feeling very up-to-date, immediate and relevant.

Then I became a teacher in India and found experiential learning to be something altogether different:

3.50am – pitch black in my monastery cell – my teacher’s cell. A very loud bell is ringing – a call for prayers – and, as usual, things are about to get busy outside. No point in trying to sleep now – none whatsoever – time to get up – to face the dawn. Dawn – meant to be the most exhilarating time of the day – but for me there is fear – extreme fear. Right now, at this very moment, if I make a mistake – a wrong move – I could die.

I reach down from my stone bed and carefully pat the ground for my torch, and I find it – where I left it – that’s important. Now I brace myself for what I might discover when I turn it on. I had made the mistake of eating a packet of crumbly madeleines in my room in China – a rare find in the local market – only to wake up in the night with a multitude of rats on top of me, gnawing at my blanket. You learn from experiences like that. I take a deep breath.

Torch – on – to its dimmest setting – as if that will somehow lessen the show. It’s now the middle of the summer in the Himalayas, and my cell brings out the huge spiders – the ones that search out the damp walls in the extreme heat. I take a breath and slowly begin to move the beam around. It’s okay. And now the ceiling – heart is beating – relief – no spiders to fall onto me as they have done so before. I think it’s a good start. The real question is – the important question is – what’s on the floor? Are there snakes? I shine the beam to check the gap between the old door and rock floor. I have learnt to stuff that gap no matter how small, with my rucksack and a towel, but snakes sometimes get in anyhow. How do they do that? Gap still plugged. That’s good. The beam searches the floor – twice – three times – four times to make sure – no snakes – and no roaches either. I smile. The one good thing about a bed carved into a rock wall is that there is no ‘under the bed’ for things to hide.

Up and dressed in a flash – no shower – not outside in the dark – and definitely there’s no visit to the toilet – the hole in the ground at the end of the row of cells – not in the dark: snakes live down in it – lots and lots of snakes – proper vipers. A barefoot traveller made a mistake about a month ago of going there in the dark – people took him away afterwards – nobody said to where – but it was to get help, I’m sure. I saw him being taken – by moonlight – disappearing into the distance – lots of people saying they knew the way –

lots of shouting and arguing. I was grateful that my old trainers had thick soles: strong and comfortable shoes that let the air in but nothing else – my best friends.

I leave my cell knowing it's safer outside than in. Creatures tend to avoid you there. I make my way along the walkway, past five guest cells, up four broken stone stairs to what can best be described as a moonlit courtyard. In front of me is the prayer room – now scented – and behind it are the monks' cells – hidden and safe. I'm heading to the monastery's café, put up for passing tourists, although few ever pass, in fact I have never seen anyone stop there. This particular monastery is one where the Buddhist monks still, to this day, flee to from Tibet, and therefore it is somewhat of a secret place – so why is there a café for passers-by? Maybe it's a façade? Who knows? It sells food – I know because I buy it. The café isn't open – not yet, not until 7am, so I sit outside, under the makeshift tarpaulin.

I look ahead and squint and see, as I do nearly every morning, the two youngest monks, both of whom I teach, running round a corner to get to prayers on time – just about getting in through the closing door, at the very last moment. No skulking in late with an apology here – when the door is shut the door is shut.

I have time to think. I am amused at how much being in a Buddhist monastery is not what I expected. I didn't know that the monks took it in shifts to pray – like a job roster – or that they get a day off a week – or if they can't do their shift they can get a friend to cover for them. Communities I have been in, both Buddhist and Taoist, and even with the guardians of the oldest Kali temple in the world with whom I spent a couple of days, surprised me in a similar way – at how ordinary and natural everyone was – no airs and graces whatsoever. I have even seen some monks look around the room during prayers obviously bored with their banging and whistling, others taking a swig of their tea from their flasks when they think nobody is looking, with their friends catching their eye wishing they had the courage to do the same. There is such a lot of lovely ordinariness.

Perhaps the most striking example I found of this 'ordinary-ness' was in Dharamsala, and the Dali Lama's monastery. Once past the guards and the high-level heavy-duty electronic security system one is likely to find any number of children, in their orange robes, screaming around the courtyard, perhaps chasing a makeshift football of tied rags. Even in the height of ceremonies and other people's prayers the game continues – and the only ones who ever seem to find this a problem are the visitors who come to do their 'serious' contemplation. One of the times the ball was kicked wayward and extra hard and ended up in the centre of a prayer room in the middle of a meditation. All sorts of bells went flying

and clanging. At the time I thought that this was not particularly harmonious in any way – but it was very amusing. A monk simply got up, scowled a little and threw the ball back so the children could carry on their raucous game. The children thanked him for the ball and then moved their rule-less match further away. No need for an apology. I thought: perfectly natural – the young expected to be young.

Back in the monastery – 5.30am. Prayers have finished and the monks have gone for their breakfast. 5.55am arrives along with the first batch of monks and then, at 5.59am the same ones who were running late to prayers run to our table apologetically, again in the nick of time, something they seem to have got down to a fine art. 6am – the outside space of the closed café becomes my classroom. The first class of the day is for absolute beginners and involves a lot of pointing and repeating – mostly by me. There is a lot of laughter. I have bought with me three textbooks that we share and the monks have an exercise book each and a pencil. They are open and genuine, fun, a joy to be with – full of natural personality – everyone with a sparkle in their eyes. I have no choice but to feel the same.

Lesson over and this time it's breakfast for me as the café opens up. On this particular morning, just as I am about to order my tea and pancakes, the Abbot arrives through the mist of the rising sun. I bow. The monks don't like his presence and neither do I. Despite his prayers and his smiles underneath lurks what I feel to be a dark presence which is amplified in this bright and kind place. He patiently explains to me that he no longer thinks it to be a good idea for my classes to take place in the café – in case visitors want to come and eat – there wouldn't be any room for them. I look around at the ten or so large empty tables. I then bow again and ask him where I should go? He points to a large rolled up carpet and says we could place it in a corridor and work there. I thank him.

The next class arrives at 7.30am. Luckily, it's small, only four students. It's more advanced. We take our rolled up carpet to a covered corridor. We open it to find it infested with fleas – full of them. The monks say that the Abbot knows about the fleas and it is why the carpet was rolled up in the corner in the first place. For some reason we actually try sitting on it but of course we cannot. Quickly one of the monks invites us all to work in his cell. The thought of damp stone and semi darkness does not appeal to me but despite there being the whole of India outside there seems to be little other choice. Monks don't take rejection well. So it is with some trepidation that I move round the corner to where the monks' quarters are situated. It's brighter and drier than mine. Then we arrive at the cell door. Wait. Is that a real door with a lock on it? And is the monk getting out an actual key? And

did he just switch on a light? This cell has electricity? What the? What? Is that – a bed! A real bed with a mattress!

We start the lesson. I am graciously offered the prime position, sitting on the bed, while the rest of the class sits happily on a flea-less mat. And it is at this moment, in a dry clean secure environment, that I decide it is time to give in my notice and to leave. The Abbot had told me that my cell (because I was a teacher) was slightly bigger than most and he had not lied, but he was being evasive and to me this attribute was not in the spirit of the community that I had grown to love and respect. Everything the Abbot had done seemed to be gracious, from the offering of the carpet to the caring for the commercial success of the café. He presented many positive traits but I experienced him as manipulative.

And later with a cup of tea – as clear as the afternoon sun that shone its way relentlessly down – I knew that my unease wasn't caused by my damp cell – I was truly glad that the monks lived in safer conditions than me. The truth was that I was leaving because I did not want to be in the presence of the Abbot – no matter what he had achieved. I could just about deal with physical challenges of India, but the Abbot's continuous and unrelenting underhand manner was making me more and more unhappy. I began to reflect on the same situation in schools and to wonder why the 'feel' of head teachers was not taken more into consideration when it came to their training – if it was at all. I had always been encouraged by my parents to put 'important' or 'brave' or 'virtuous' people such as teachers on a pedestal but now this was changing: no matter what someone has done, sacrificed or achieved I was starting to think that for me the feel of who they were was a factor in whether or not they were inspiring to me – regardless of what they had done.

The Abbot's style of leadership did not nurture my spirit, nor did he lead by personal example: I felt strongly that he was never going to lead others to believe in themselves and awaken their spirits. I experienced him as the antithesis of what a good leader and by extension a good coach should be. We need to learn by experience, seizing those major moments of clarity that guide us into an awareness of what we are trying to accomplish in our lives: exemplary coaching aims for this for coachees.

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Thomas and Brown (2011) when describing situated cognition state that experiential learning is about the student's ability to participate meaningfully. It is a situation where 'every answer serves as a starting point, not an end point' (Thomas and Brown, 2011, p.81). Here what seems on the surface to offer multi-dimensional potential (described by

more than one of Nakagawa's (2000) 5 Dimensions) is explained and developed mostly through reduction – Dimension I (Nakagawa, 2000). Like many practitioners, Thomas and Brown (2011) compartmentalise learning through experience and from this position it is difficult to accurately reflect the experience in terms of its moment-to-moment emotional immediacy.

Similarly Lave (1988) explains that students as a community learn authentically 'from', by giving 'to', and 'with' each other, and Wilson (1993) surmises that experientially in schools what is learnt most profoundly is how to deal effectively with the classroom environment and the series of experiential interactive challenges it contains. Although these statements allude to the possibility of broader multi-dimensional interpretation both Lave (1998) and Wilson (1993) mostly describe their ideas in terms of the reductive and analytical and so they are not particularly helpful when describing the moment of learning through experiencing in a more deeply felt, immediate way. Similarly Kolb's (1984) ideas describe students needing to *hold on* to their experience before being able to be specifically 'transformed': 'Knowledge results from the combination of *grasping* and transforming experience' (Kolb, 1984, p.41). Kolb implies a considered linear process, similar for everyone.

Marsick and Watkins (2001) on the other hand describe learning through experiencing in a multi-dimensional way. They describe 'informal learning' and 'formal learning' existing together as equally valid methods of learning from social experience. The 'informal' is generally less controlled than the 'formal' (Marsick and Watkins, 2001). This description implies a Dimension I experience (the 'formal') existing alongside other dimensional experiences (the 'informal'). Marsick and Watkins (2001) can be said to be describing the nature of learning through social experience on different dimensional platforms: objectively (Dimension I), and felt (Dimension III), with each approach enriching the other. Observations such as those of Callahan (2001) also place value on 'informal' learning by noting a type of positive hybrid experience for the student: 'formal' learning and 'informal' learning combined. When this event occurs regular practices are proven to be nourished beyond what might be expected from the classically 'formal' approach alone (Callahan, 2001).

Although concerned with leadership, not coaching, Joseph Jaworski (2012) draws on Taoist thinking in explicating his enlightened ideas on finding the inner path to self-discovery. Like experiential transmission with its elusive meaning, Jaworski's 'source' (meaning our capacity to access the knowledge for actions we need) cannot be defined

precisely. Jaworski identifies an evolution of leaders from those with underdeveloped spirituality and lack of integrity to those who value others and are respectful and decent to 'servant leaders' who transcend conventional rules, thriving in times of turbulence and complexity to 'renewing leaders' who believe there is intelligence in the universe capable of guiding us. These renewing leaders have a strong interior knowledge of their own and others' hidden potential. I am less convinced that guidance lies in the universe and tend instead to perceive it as existing within us, but experiential transmission and Jaworski's conception of 'the source' share a deep preoccupation with experiencing self-realisation.

The notion of an amalgamation of the 'formal' and the 'informal' aligns with my experience of studying Taoist Internal Alchemy meditation in China. I would learn, for example, the technique of the art form, the 'formal', and at the same time would gain another level of understanding through simply being in the environment created by the Master: the 'informal'. In a Taoist sense both were vital to the learning of the meditation with each supporting the other. Progress concerning the 'formal' was easy to monitor because of its focus on technique. Progress concerning the 'informal' more defied description because of the nature of the felt experience. Nevertheless both together created a deep learning curve – a concept explored in Chapter 5 of this project.

Here is a glimpse of a particular but relatively ordinary morning meditation session that took place in the mountains of China. This account reflects both my 'formal' and my 'informal' learning experiences:

My alarm buzzes off at 4.50am, and still more or less asleep I pull on my old t-shirt (always clean), warm fleece hoody (not always clean because it takes too long to dry), and black cotton meditation pants (always clean) bought in the mountain market. I'm really tired. Those students more advanced than me always sleep peacefully – every night – no dreaming whatsoever – but for me, especially at this altitude, dreams are very bright and sometimes frightening. This morning I wake up feeling the need to rest after some kind of dramatic adventure.

I grab my pillow and blanket and head out of my room. After a short walk I enter the meditation area and here I meet the rest of the crowd. There are ten of us. The Master is already sitting on the floor, cross-legged, supported on either side by pillows, two on one side and one on the other to protect his damaged knees. The pillows have been, as always, arranged immaculately by his assistant. She is Japanese, the next in line for the lineage. We are grateful they are still here teaching. Soon the two of them will disappear

into the wilderness of the mountains for three years for the final stage of their practice. There is only the craft of meditation for these two. There is a single candle lit in the corner, and in front of a hand painted scroll a single incense stick fragrances the room.

The members of our group know that to sit closer to the Master improves the intensity of our two-hour session. Even kids in a school classroom concentrate better when they are closer to the teacher. But Will and I are the last ones in so we are the furthest away. Will is a teenager. He's sixteen and he looks every inch the half-dead skinny zombie that teenagers are at 5am. Poor guy can't even lift his feet and so has to shuffle to get to his place. We sit about a metre and a half away from each other. When you meditate for six to eight hours a day – in two-hour blocks – even though your eyes are closed you can absolutely sense the person next to you. The distance you sit apart from any individual isn't judged or spoken about. You just find a spot as a place that feels 'right', balanced between yourself and the feel of the people directly around you.

I sit on the floor with my pillow supporting one knee and my rolled up blanket the other. I am grateful that the Master regularly reminds us that it is the quality of the meditation that counts, not the exact position we sit in. For those of us who come to meditation late in life I now know that it is not about sitting painfully – until I am in the perfect lotus position – and have wrecked my knees and my hip joints to the extent that I can no longer walk. Greats such as the Dali Lama meditate sitting on a chair and are grateful for the support it offers. Will however does sit naturally and easily in full lotus – he and the floor are at one – he's been meditating this way for years – perfectly comfortable. The only other student in full lotus is the Master's assistant who has been meditating since she can remember too – as early as four or five. She says that she has always loved sitting this way and meditating, much to the chagrin of her father who wanted her to focus on her studies.

The Master takes three deep breaths and we join in. For this morning's session, for the first part, we are to use the body's energetic system to hold our arms in specific positions for extended periods of time, at the same time as meditating. Imagine sitting on the floor and lifting your straight arms to the side of you to shoulder height. Now imagine flexing your hands so your fingers point to the ceiling. Now hold this position for an hour or two. Today the Master demonstrates three positions that we must memorize because at some point during the meditation he will tell us to change the position from one to the next.

I close my eyes and outwards I go – knowing the technique is to forget entirely about my outstretched arms until suddenly I hear the instruction to move them. When I first began meditating in this room I remember being extremely excited by the type of imagery that my meditations would produce. Often I would seem to be taken on some kind of journey – through doors and the like. Then one day I plucked up the courage to talk to the Master about my wonderful experiences. He looked at me with a pitiful expression and told me not to worry about it – that sooner or later I'd stop being bothered by such interference. That was a good lesson. Over time I have grown to know that for me simplicity is the subtle key that unlocks the meditative experience – not vibrant and dramatic journeying.

It is meant to be impossible to go to sleep when one is meditating properly because the falling reflex kicks in as you start to drift, and the shot of adrenaline it produces will always wake you up. However, nobody has told this to Will who has mastered the art of morning meditation sleep on a daily basis. Some time into the session I hear a gentle but familiar thud – in the still of the mountain. I know that next to me is a teenager sitting in the lotus position, now bent impossibly forwards, with the top of his head resting on the floor – and soon there will be the sound of gentle snoring. I don't need to look around to know that everyone, including the Master, is smiling because of Will, and that our meditation is more enriched because of him.

*

In this particular example the 'formal' and the 'informal' experiences seem to work together to enrich each other. It is as if the generic feel of the room (the 'informal') informs the quality of the meditation (the 'formal'). It might also be said that the 'feel' of my young colleague (in this case Will – the 'informal') improves the quality of my meditation experience (the 'formal').

Furthermore, our search for an inner path through meditation is strikingly similar to Jaworski's concept of 'source.' The best leaders (like the best coaches or practitioners of meditation) are acutely aware of what is happening with them internally: they are conscious of what they are thinking and feeling. Jaworski urges leaders not solely to listen to their inner voices: they must also then have the courage to act. What I hope to reveal in my penultimate chapter is the story of my coachees, who, after experiencing my coaching using experiential transmission, started to see what was possible in their lives, and seized the opportunity to change their lives.

When it concerns teaching in schools. Marsick (2001) places 'informal' experience under the aegis of 'incidental' learning (Marsick, 2001, p.25). She observes the 'informal' and the 'formal' working together: '[w]hen people learn incidentally, their learning may be taken for granted, tacit, or unconscious. A passing insight can then be probed and intentionally explored' (Marsick, 2001, pp.25-26). Carter (1995) who studies successful stroke survivors, states that they almost always have to develop their own strategies in order to overcome their problems with recovery, in the midst of their personal or medical support. This 'learning' can be said to fall into the category of 'informal' situated cognition or of Wortham's (2001) 'interpersonally-situated' cognition. In this case the disease and the specialists become the 'formal' environment that must be, in a sense, further educated by the 'informal' approach coming from the patient.

There is also another category that relates even more closely to the Taoist experiential approach because of the value it places on one's naturally instinctive nature: 'non-formal' (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974). An example of non-formal learning might be toddlers learning to swim and instinctively knowing to hold their breath.

Below is an example from my drama teaching. It is a time when I was beginning to be able to use a 'formal' approach to bring about 'informal' and 'non-formal' experiences for the students. It is a drama class I taught to Year 9:

'Okay. Let's remind ourselves of the three rules of the lesson – Jeremy?'

'Erm.'

'The three rules?'

'Erm.'

'*One* of the three rules?'

'Erm. I used to know it – we haven't been over them for ages sir. A clue?'

'How long have you been taught by me?'

'Erm.'

'Can anyone help Jeremy out? Beatrice?'

'Wasn't one – don't take the piss?'

'Nicely put Beatrice.'

'Sorry.'

'Yes. Thank you. Rule one was 'nobody is allowed to criticize anyone – good or bad – in this class in any way ever'.

'Rule two?'

(Twenty-six students are totally silent.)

'Good grief. Rule two is that there is an expectation of a hundred percent focus and concentration at all times.'

'But we do that anyway.'

'Thank you for that Jeremy.'

'And rule three is: always be as creative as you can possibly be.'

'Can we get going sir? We only have forty-five minutes.'

(Various phrases from the class such as 'come on sir' and 'my group had to rush last time' and 'get a move on sir'. I quickly number the students randomly either 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. There is no complaint whatsoever that I am choosing the groups. It always happens this way because my clear focus is on the benefits that the art form can bring to the students – not on the social aspect of them choosing their groups.)

'Okay. Number 1s over here, 2s over here, 3s there, 4s there, and 5s at the back.'

(The students run to their groups. They would not think about complaining about who they are with because they know they just have to get on with it.)

'Okay. The theme for today is 'confinement'. You have thirty seconds to talk within your group to check that you know what 'confinement' is. Go.'

(Thirty seconds are timed by the teacher. Most of the class finishes their discussions in ten seconds.)

'Right. Peter. What is confinement?'

'Being trapped in a small space.'

'Janice?'

'Being locked away.'

'George. Can you give me an example of being confined?'

'In prison.'

'Right. Now. You have three minutes to develop the bones of your idea. Remember you only have time to go with your first instinct on this and to make it work. Your piece will be in an A B A structure. 'A' is a short piece of physical theatre, 'B' is a short naturalistic scene. 'A' is the same piece of physical theatre that you started with but slightly adapted because of what has happened in the scene. Gottit?'

(The class reply 'Gottit'.)

'Go.'

(There is quick and focused chattering and fast decision-making.)

'Two and a half minutes left. One minute left. Thirty seconds. Okay. Joyce. What's your group got?'

'We are going to do a sequence of people arriving and waiting in the waiting room of a prison. Then we are going to show a convict being walked down a long corridor and talked to by the prison guards – across the whole drama studio. Then back to the waiting room where they look up to the screen and see him put to death.'

'So a comedy then?'

'Well we want to make the middle surprising so maybe the middle bit yes. I'm not sure.'

'Sandhir. What's your group going to do?'

'We're going totally abstract sir. We are going to use one corner of the studio for the physical stuff – people confined and bumping into each other – the middle is a single person a monologue of someone who has a huge amount of space – then at the end we find out that he is lonely and he goes and joins the group in the corner.'

'Interesting.'

(The rest of the groups explain their work. None of the explanations are what you might expect from Year 9 Drama students. They are hugely experimental after having worked like this for over two years. They find naturalist acting incredibly easy. Shy students or those that 'don't like drama', in Year 7 are encouraged simply to take smaller parts – the only rule is that they must be entirely focused when they play the part they do. It may be that they walk across the scene once in the background. This is totally acceptable. What is not acceptable is them playing their chosen part without focus. Even in the lesson today, those that have had a bad morning can chose to develop a small role, but they must adhere to the three rules nevertheless. The students have fifteen minutes to develop their pieces. The teacher simply walks around and makes his presence felt as he counts down. Everyone is rehearsing to the last second.)

'Right. Time's up.'

(The class is still talking.)

'Time's up guys – otherwise we won't get to perform. Right. Today my comments are all going to be about timing. Let's start with – group – 3.'

(The groups perform in turn. The groups not performing are the audience and they watch in a relaxed engaged manner. As each group stands to take the stage they speak ridiculously quickly amongst themselves to remind themselves of what they are going to do. After the final performance the teacher says:)

'Okay. This was interesting work. Regarding the rules. There were two people who during the working out and rehearsal stages stopped to watch other groups for a moment or two. There is a real difference between what you can achieve by making the decision to focus completely, and to let your focus slip, even for a moment. Something to work on next time. Also, I think this work should be shown in a lunchtime performance. If you show it to Year 8 I think it will give them some great ideas – What do you think?'

*

It is instructive to note that should I teach in this way now I would certainly fail any inspection, mainly due to a lack of obvious evaluation and assessment on my part and on the part of the students. Below is a list of some of what might be expected nowadays. These benchmarks are taken from 2019:

Assessment and evaluation of and for Student Learning

- Analyzes from district benchmarks as determined by the school
- Uses assessment tools based on division curriculum and pacing guides
- Uses a variety of valid, appropriate assessment and evaluation techniques within the lesson
- Uses pre-/post-assessment data on each student

(Taken from 'Assessment definitions for teacher observation', LTC, 2019)

Illustrated in the lesson above is how the students learn by experiencing rather than analysing each other's performances. (It might be said that analysing only accesses Nakagawa's Dimension I, whereas experiencing opens the learning up to the other dimensions.) To evaluate only in a compartmentalized or reductive way would be to lessen this learning experience by limiting its emotional depth. To only compartmentalize would be to cage and to confine the drama experience.

Consider this story told to me by my teacher in China to discourage an over-analytical approach:

There were once two men, in the olden days, who loved the spirit of the monkey. They would often sit under the trees and watch the monkeys doing what monkeys do, enjoying their energetic nature. After a while the men decided to find out what made a monkey so energetic. How were they able to be so energized for so long? The men shot a single monkey down from the tree with an anaesthetic dart and waited until the animal was fully asleep. Then they cut off its head to examine inside for evidence. After searching around for an hour or so, and finding nothing to help them, they carefully stitched the monkey's head back on. But to their surprise they found that they could not wake the monkey up. The examination had killed the very thing they had admired – the monkey's indescribable life force. By dissecting the monkey they had killed the spirit of the thing they were seeking to understand. Perhaps not everything can be accurately described by analysing the sum of its parts.

*

When considering my drama lesson with my Year 9 students, working in a 'non-formal' way leaves both the students watching, and students performing, free to learn experientially simply from their moment-to-moment experiences of being involved in the activity. Of course, as my lesson implies, this 'non-formal' experience is accompanied by working with various structures and techniques, but similar to my meditation experiences these techniques are threaded into the 'non-formal' learning. The 'non-formal' permeates and takes priority. It could be said that the formal is used to access the experiential

benefits of the non-formal. And in my experience drama lessons like the one described, when regularly encountered by the students, definitely improve the students' confidence. With examination Drama (Years 10 and above) such an open approach cannot be solely the case because of the nature of the examination requirements. But by then the students' performance capabilities are established. The experience of acting 'in-the-moment' has been enjoyed and appreciated enough to supersede the more contrived nature of the examination.

As a corollary I should mention that, regarding 'value added', my classes were regularly in the top 0.01% of the country – and as mentioned previously my subject drew a great many students of all abilities towards success at examination level. Quite a few went on to work professionally. These working actors are now often noted for the immediacy of their performances – one recently won an Oscar. While I claim no credit for these achievements outside of school I do find pleasure in the thought that, at an early age, I did not impede these students' creativity by overly compartmentalizing the personal, open, free and individual nature of their craft.

The Coach

I was asked to coach all of the staff of a Studio School before it opened. This situation gave me the opportunity to develop and then publish stage 1 of a new coaching model: The YouSITT Momentum (Rowe, 2015). Although many practitioners such as Clarke (2014) place equal emphasis on the technical and the experiential, as far as I am aware YouSITT is the first coaching model to also place emphasis on the quality of the person, the coach, the individual, behind the coaching mask.

Experiential transmission in YouSITT coaching sits firmly in the 'informal' and 'non-formal' areas of learning by experiencing because as the name suggests experiential transmission *is* an in-the-moment experience. Dimension 1 explanations are of course essential and form an important part of the puzzle but they do not come near to creating the picture as a whole. Indeed, through my work in schools I have discovered that some established coaching methods, those usually explained in a reductive way, can be adapted in practice to incorporate more of Nakagawa's (2000) dimensions. Here is how I have used the transactional approach in the past:

This session is number five of twenty. Typical of YouSITT, previous sessions have looked at the importance of working in a tension free manner, and this particular head teacher has already discovered the ways in which such a state can positively impact his daily life

at school. He has also found out that, via experiential transmission, the people around him work more effectively when he is less stressed. He used to be tense and reactive and therefore appeared to encourage this state in all of those he interacted with every day. Now he is more tension free and proactive and has already noticed that those around him have become the same. In the session before this one the three transactional ego states of parent, adult, child were discussed and then the task set was for the head teacher, James, to get a feel for the nature of the child ego state that surrounds him on a daily basis.

My coaching James exemplifies my strong belief in the influence of incremental trait beliefs, those beliefs that are malleable and contagious (spreading from one person to another) as opposed to entity trait beliefs which are fixed at birth. Through the practice of experiential transmission in coaching, James has been motivated not only to learn how to be less tense and less reactive to situations but to recognise how a renewed optimism can encourage more positive emotional responses, better performance and self-improvement from his staff. Experiential transmission focuses on the perspective of others (the coach) in order to influence a coachee in developing her own self-belief. This spreading of thoughts, emotions and behaviours either within a coaching context or less consciously as James was doing as a head teacher can be referred to as social contagion (Burkley, Curtis, and Hatvany, 2017). James needed to serve as a positive role model and an inspiration for his teachers and student body: 'whether they be teachers, coaches, managers, [people] should emphasize an incremental perspective when communicating to their audience' (p. 48).

James, come in, come in. How's it going?

I'm good. How are you?

Good, yes, good. So how did you find the task?

(James laughs.)

I found the task interesting. No. Mind-blowing.

Go on.

Okay. To begin with I had no idea how often the child ego state was around the school – in the teachers – and to be quite honest the management team too. When you look for it – it's everywhere. And it's so destructive.

Example?

(James laughs again.)

There are many. Okay. I was observing a lesson and in it a child misbehaved. The teacher, in order to deal with this in a way that he perceived to be effective

immediately jumped into child mode and shouted the child down as if he, for that moment, had little control. He was then mortified when the child, themselves in child mode, shouted back. In other words I could see that the child ego state often brings about the child ego state of the other person – a no win situation. It is like the student in child mode activates the child mode of the teacher and the situation escalates.

And how did it feel being close to that situation?

Uneasy. There was a sense of it being out of control. Potentially explosive. And I noticed it everywhere – dealing with parents – definitely in meetings with certain members throwing their toys out of the pram.

And is this something you would like to actively encourage or discourage in the workplace.

Discourage.

Why is that?

Because it's all so – unnecessary – causes unnecessary problems – causes escalations rather than solutions.

Okay – let's go for a walk.

Pardon?

Let's go for a walk around school.

(Joking) I was just getting comfortable.

(Both grab their jackets and put them on.)

First of all we are going to walk slowly – naturally but tension free and slowly.

(They leave the room.)

James, you lead the way. And James slow down a little more – walk with me – alongside me.

It's just I'm used to walking quickly.

I know. But for the moment we are controlling the feel of our environment. James, you're pushing the pace still.

I know. I know. Okay. Okay.

(After five minutes)

I'm getting the hang of this now. It feels – it actually feels quite good.

Right – Let's discuss the adult ego state.

Okay.

It is the state we are in right now.

Is it? It's quite powerful isn't it? It really does feel good.

Yes. In my experience the tension free adult ego state is the broad state from which nothing bad can come from the leadership perspective.

What is interesting to me is that it is not distant – I always thought the adult was somehow detached.

Yes. You still care – still can be empathic but from the adult perspective rather than from the perspective of the parent or the child. When you were looking at the child this week would you say that people in that state were acting it?

No. I wouldn't.

How would you describe it?

It was as if they were becoming it. As if it was fully taking over.

Yes. And the same is true of the adult.

I see.

Many, many, managers and leaders think that demonstrating their skills or their demeanour is enough, but when it comes to genuinely influencing the environment around you I don't believe acting it in this way to be enough. If as the leader we act it we encourage others around us to act it too. If we are it, then we encourage others around us to be it too.

And it feels so – good. Really good. Like I said – powerful – but how do we become it and not act it?

Well – how did you just spend the last ten minutes being it rather than acting it?

I walked around with you – as you were being it.

That's how it works. That's how it works.

*

Rather than reducing the technique to, for example, a discussion on Bernes' (1964) ellipses and triangles that support his original version of transactional theory (and create a Dimension I explanation), here the reductive explanations are not mentioned or even alluded to. Instead the immediacy of a particular ego state is felt by the client and sensed in those around him (Dimension III). This increases his awareness, and this improved state then forms a basis from which other more technical decisions about the school can be made. Unbeknown to James he is affecting his environment through social contagion.

Potentially helpful in understanding the experiential nature of experiential transmission is the critical cultural perspective, in particular the ideas of Giroux (1983), Freire (1970), and Lather (1994). Giroux's (1983) concept of us being experientially educated by the people around us seems to resemble the concept of experiential transmission (with the student learning experientially by absorbing the quality of who the coach/teacher is). Giroux's work is also concerned with the educational professional being a facilitator (Giroux, 1983). Yet unlike my work with James there is a considerable emphasis on the political nature of the methodology. Giroux focuses on the political principles of social justice and sense of

community in the classroom, lecture hall, or coaching room (Anctil et al., 2006) which underpin and drive his methods. Unlike experiential transmission (which does not utilize the concepts of social politics) Giroux (1981) is openly critical of educational practices and sees the direct correction of these as the way towards social reform and transformation.

Giroux (1981) does seem to come close to the concept of experiential transmission again when he explores the importance of the teacher as a person in relation to the quality of the experiential education received by the student. But unlike the concept of experiential transmission, he insists that the teacher robustly challenges his or her own opinions and pedagogical assumptions on subjects such as 'human nature' and 'achievement' in order to be able to educate better. Giroux (1981) introduces the theme of transcendence but it is used very specifically. Transcendence to him concerns teachers 'moving beyond the role of being agents of cultural reproduction to that of being agents of cultural mobilisation' (Giroux, 1981, p.68). As with my session with James, with experiential transmission the transformative transmission supports, nourishes and informs the technical. In the case of Giroux (1988) the technical (the prescribed and circular nature of the school environment) impedes the experience, something Giroux's theory aims to readdress.

Freire's (1997) ideas also seem to resemble something of the immediacy of experiential transmission with his argument that conscious engagement is not linear, rather it is a development of a critical transitive consciousness. With a Freirean teacher, 'students learn to question answers rather than merely to answer questions' (McLaren and Leonard, 1993, p.25). Freire's description of learning by experiencing is set against a backdrop of authority (of parents, teachers and students) and it is this set up that needs to be consistently experientially overcome in order for the student to learn. It is in this context that Freire wants to see a 'liberating' environment (Freire and Shor, 1987). In dialogue with McLaren (1993) he reveals that this goal, unlike that of experiential transmission, is very specific. Freire wants to move from authoritarian to democratic approaches (McLaren and Leonard, 1993). In comparison, my coaching session with James contains no such political agenda. It simply seeks to nourish, support and inform.

Like experiential transmission in coaching, Freire's (1998) pedagogy embraces the necessity of personal awareness and emotional commitment to the goal as essential to learning and progression. Aspects such as 'love' and 'conscientisation' are identified as direct links to the inspiration of our curiosity (Freire, 1998). Unlike the coaching session with James, and similar to Giroux (1988), Freire (1998) implies that these emotions underpin the experiential learning that happens through conflict. He emphasises that they

are 'the roads we have to follow if we are to deepen our awareness of the world, of facts, of events' (Freire, 1998, p.55).

On the subject of conflict, perhaps rather unexpectedly, the experiential aspect of my coaching has been influenced by the work of Patti Lather (1994). From my perspective, she seems to entirely live her creed, a practice that is irrepressibly conveyed through the tone of her work. From a transmission perspective she could be said to embody her beliefs in a way that seems to be instantaneous and without boundary. Who she is and what she says seem to be at one – a singularity. But, unlike experiential transmission, and unlike my coaching session with James, Lather (1994) seems to be driven by, and to openly inspire, conflict. Lather is a self-proclaimed feminist methodologist (Lather, 1994) whose experiential approaches battle the norm by striving for equality. While experiential transmission permeates the coaching environment and aims to inspire wellbeing, Lather, by being so boldly outspoken, has a transmission that could inspire anger and aggression.

Jaworski (2012) envisages a far quieter way of exploring the cognitive and emotional understanding of ourselves and of our world. When we are guided by a strong personal sense of possibility, we will flourish. Lather would rather cross swords with someone ideologically opposed to her – encounters would invariably be adversarial. My coaching draws on a centred and balanced sense of myself: in my desire to be calmly present to my coachees, I help them to reflect positively, thinking about break-through strategies in their lives (as Jaworski imagines the highest levels of leaders to urge their followers) rather than reflect on anger. Real transformation transcends anger.

Childers (2008) agrees that Lather's emotions muddy the waters: How much doubling and troubling can we do before we forget our work in the first place? (Childers, 2008, p.300). Unlike Lather's approach, experiential transmission in coaching works quietly and seamlessly. It does not seek to draw attention to itself and it certainly does not actively seek conflict. Because who we are is what we transmit, when we are angry (as Lather seems to be) this anger permeates our coaching sessions with our clients. Lather pushes the boundaries, but what she transmits might be said to encourage a battle rather than a sense of unrestricted growth. This being said Lather has inspired me to work with a more liberated energy and with a sense of unrestricted self.

Below is a story describing the most profoundly successful coaching I have ever experienced. In it the coach's technique might be said to be the antithesis of being challenging or confrontational.

Coaching – China

For someone who has spent a great deal of time in the mountains of China and India, the fact that I suffer from extreme vertigo might be deemed to be somewhat of a major problem. The truth of the matter is that good planning, and sitting on the seats furthest away from the edge of mountain roads on buses (and closing my eyes until we get there) seems to work. Excursions for me, away from the safety of where I am studying, are rare and I always plan meticulously, well before deciding on my route – checking that I will not be required to go close to the edge of any sheer drop at any point. My absolute worst nightmare would be to have to climb those crumbling narrow steps cut into the sides of mountains, those with a sheer drop of thousands of feet, only inches away.

An important mountain in the Wudang region to us Taoists is called Golden Top. And as part of my meditative training I had to experience the particular energy that can only be found at its summit. Many people visit from many different religions. In short – I really had to go. I was assured it was an easy six-hour ascent and that there were absolutely no mountain steps or sheer drops anywhere nearby. ‘People go there all the time’ I was told. This information came from colleagues who had been there before and so I felt safe to take the journey.

Five minutes before reaching the summit I turn the corner to find myself suddenly on a ledge – a sheer vertical drop. To the right of me are steps – carved into the mountain, less than a metre across, and crumbling. The drop is around three thousand feet. If I fall I die. It is not a case of whether or not I can climb the steps. It is a case of whether or not I can actually move from the spot without collapsing – entirely paralysed. My friends offer to stay with me or even to walk up the steps alongside me – but as anyone with extreme vertigo will tell you, watching someone else be close to the edge is exactly the same feeling as if you are standing there yourself – an overwhelming desire to die.

Eventually I persuade my friends to go on without me. I know that if I can just manage to stand by myself for half an hour or so I will be able to develop the courage to turn around and to head back to the safety of ‘no sheer drops’. It is simply a terrifying waiting game – one I have played only twice before and had obviously won both times. I did however need days to recover afterwards before I could stand without shaking. But I would worry about that later. I’m relieved that I have insisted my friends go on without me. The experience of Golden Top is vital for them. In this situation it is better I am left alone.

Then something happens. An old monk, perhaps in his eighties, stops and looks at me – eventually he asks me very quietly if I am okay. Out of extreme respect I somehow manage to find the words to explain that I am afraid – of heights – especially the stairs. Then – he looks me square in the eyes and gently says the following – meaning every word: ‘Don’t worry. I will carry you. I will carry you.’

There is a pause.

The pause continues for some time.

And in that moment, I am so ashamed of my fear, so humbled by the offer, so embarrassed that an aged man has to offer to carry me, so affected by the feel of the strength of character from this man, that I find myself momentarily in a different space. I attempt a smile – I’m not sure that it reached my face – I kindly refuse his offer. Then the monk puts out his arm as if to encourage me to go ahead of him – and somehow I am too ashamed, and too grateful not to do it – I climb the stairs despite my fear. It is as if something bigger and broader and more powerful than extreme fear itself has taken over. The offer is so genuine, natural, and authentically given that it touches me – and I am able to move.

I meet my friends on Golden Top one of whom was kind enough to take this photograph:



It is me, sitting on a stone lotus. Directly behind me is a sheer drop of 3,000 feet.

The effect was short lived, perhaps two hours or so, but my moment in time, with the monk on the mountain, remains the most gentle, matter of fact, effective coaching experience I have encountered. I began to realize that it was possible for a coach to inspire a healthier way of being beyond any benchmark I had previously known.

The Researcher

I have found the enactivist perspective to come the closest so far to being able to describe the experiential nature of experiential transmission. Enactivism offers many potentially rich areas such as the socio-psychological angle and an amalgamation of Eastern and Western approaches to learning from experiencing that seem to align well.

Enactivism posits that, similar to experiential transmission, experiential learning comes about from essentially interactive encounters that go beyond the traditional teaching and learning paradigm (Thompson, 2010). Similar to the process of experiential transmission, it is from these encounters that we are transformed:

Organisms do not passively receive information from their environments, which they then translate into internal representations ... (they) participate in the generation of meaning ... engaging in transformational and not merely informational interactions: they enact a world (Di Paolo et al., 2014, cited in Turner, 2016, p.99).

Such enigmatic descriptions as ‘participating in the generation of meaning’ (Turner, 2016, p.99) together with Rowlands (2010): ‘information is present in the environment over and above that contained in sensory stimulation’ (Rowlands, 2010, p.4) imply the introduction of more mysterious concepts that, like experiential transmission, are not explainable in the traditional sense. Rowlands (2010), for example, rejects dualism and presents a singularity: mind, body and spirit essentially experienced as one. In a sense Rowlands (2010) describes us as arising from our experiences similar to the proverbial phoenix from the ashes (Burman, 2006).

Other enactivists do reduce. For example Johnson (2007) who sees the issue with duality as a balance between our biological selves and our intentionality, posits that while our intentionality goes out into the world, our biological self ‘hides out’ in the background, consistently providing context to our changing situations. With experiential transmission all of who we are is transmitted as one. It is a type of embodied singularity. If we ‘hide out’ then the fact we are ‘hiding out’ is transmitted too.

Similar to the approaches of Thompson, (2007a) and Rowlands (2010), the socio-psychological angle (Torrence and Froese, 2011) explores the interactive process as a

singularity. They explain that the interactive process itself – what might be described as the ‘feel’ of the process ‘can facilitate the realisation of the [autonomous] goals of the agents’ (Torrence and Froese, 2011, p.2). Stewart (2010) and Froese (2012) go so far as to say that this way of looking at the interactive process heals the ontological-epistemological ‘double articulation’ gap. This ‘healing’ happens by continuous processes (such as embodied action-as-perception) that support or even replace the hierarchical position of what are often considered to be the more important cognitive capacities. In the case of experiential transmission, embodied action-as-perception might be interpreted as the coach’s embodiment of who they genuinely are, (something that cannot be falsified). The coach, the person, is then transmitted to the client as a type of singularity – a feeling. Similarly, Froese (2012) seems to imply a singularity overcoming a duality with his description of embodied action-as-perception (Froese, 2012).

Developments in social neuroscience also mean that the enactivist ecological perspective shows enormous potential for the expression of the type of singularity that resembles experiential transmission. For example, rather than separating cognition and environment, Valera et al. (1993) explore how the learner assimilates cognition and environment simultaneously. Also according to Eitan and Timmers’ (2010) cross-modal relations enable the mind to go beyond the descriptive linguistic boundaries (that are thought to describe the non-linguistic processes) to resemble a more significant aesthetic experience. Similar to experiential transmission again are the ideas of Rizzolatti et al. (2002) who point out that singularity is achieved in the form of a type of embodiment: that mirror neurons activate similarly in both those involved in the activity and those observing the activity, which leads to the assumption that embodied empathic states of being actually exist (Thompson, 2007). This description seems to describe the transmission process itself during which the coach’s state of being affects the client.

Sumara and Davis (1997, p.iii) move beyond the Dimension I (Nakagawa, 2000) objective description too. They explain that enactivism can be used as an explanatory tool resulting in ‘a continuous enlargement of the space of the possible’ with learning being fully inclusive of experience. Jerome Bruner, credited with introducing ‘enaction’ (Pugliese and Lehtonen, 2011; Hillen, 2013), describes ‘enaction’ experientially as ‘learning by doing’: ‘in such a way that one is enabled to go beyond the evidence so reassembled to additional new insights’ (Bruner, 1961, p. 22). Alongside ‘action’, he introduces knowledge organization as iconic and symbolic. The iconic are images that, similar to experiential

transmission, represent a concept without the requirement for absolute definition (Bruner, 1966, p.44).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Johnson (1987), come closer still to describing the immediacy of the interactive process of experiential transmission with the development of a 'bodily basis of thought' (Johnson, 1987, p.42). Through the use of metaphor a 'bodily basis of thought' interprets indefinable aspects of understanding such as imagination, and what Johnson (1987) terms 'image schemata'. Learning occurs and is extended through 'metaphorical projection' to form a situation, a singularity, of 'learning and being' (Johnson, 1987, p.42).

Nakagawa (2000) again offers the idea of embodiment. This time embodiment is interpreted as the expression of one's mind and consciousness as one (van der Schyff, 2015, p.2). Like Mitchell's (Appendix 1) explanation of experiential transmission van der Schyff (2015) explains Nakagawa's (2000) ideas as a duality (mind and consciousness) being understood as a singularity (embodiment). With experiential transmission the whole of who we are (what we embody) is transmitted. It is then this embodiment that becomes the individual quality of our transmission to others. In my coaching this embodiment becomes similar to Jaworski's (2012) ideas on reflecting on possibilities. These include experiential thunderclaps that get us to change direction that punctuate our lives. As a coach I try to embody my appreciation of the thunderclap, supporting my coachees to see how they can influence the order of unfolding events in their lives by the choices that they make.

For example, at fifty years old I changed my career from teacher to coach and this decision has altered my life. Now, when I coach teachers in their fifties who tell me that they are too old to make new choices, my experience of having actually transitioned means that my transmission contains the certainty of the possibility for them too. Beforehand my clients reported that they knew it was possible to transition at fifty, that they had read that fifty was the new thirty, but such phrases did not seem to reach them anything like as profoundly as working alongside someone who had actually had the experience of successfully navigating such a course.

Similar to the transmission process Costa and Murphy (2015) write that Bourdieu's quest was to 'transcend a set of interconnected dichotomies – structure-agency, subjectivism/objectivism, theory/practice' (Costa and Murphy, 2015, p.1). One of the key thinking tools Bourdieu developed to overcome these potentially contrasting aspects was

the theory/method of habitus. Habitus includes both personal history and collective history that by its nature then brings about more history (Bourdieu, 1990, p.54). Similar to experiential transmission (where one's entire personal history is personified in who we are, and it is who we are that is transmitted) habitus happens through a naturally developing social process. It concerns past events that condition our perceptions and therefore shape our current social structures. From the perspective of experiential transmission it might be argued that it is each individual's personal experience of these events, (experience that becomes embodied in them as individuals), that via experiential transmission is then shared by the community. As such, the community develops as Bourdieu suggests.

Habitus is also relevant to my exploration of experiential transmission because it sits in a space between free will and structure. It comes about from a type of interplay of the two, over an undefined period of time. In other words, similar to experiential transmission, habitus continuously both describes and impacts upon the sense of what our society becomes. With both habitus and experiential transmission a broad singularity (in this case 'interplay') explains and overcomes the duality ('structure versus agency'). Habitus oversees society from a position broader than the dichotomy and is therefore able to observe social growth and change from this overarching angle. Similar to experiential transmission this process is 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.170).

Foucault (1991) sees social interaction from the perspective of embodiment. He examines that which is diffused (Foucault, 1991). Similar to experiential transmission he also moves away from the idea of people being actors who use their social positions as instruments of coercion. Instead Foucault views one's power as being more immediate and less considered 'embodied and enacted rather than possessed' (Gaventa, 2003, p.1). He states that 'Power is everywhere' (Foucault 1998, p.63).

If we see experiential transmission from the point of view of a type of natural social interaction then Vygotsky's (1962) social development theory becomes relevant. For Vygotsky, social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Therefore what might be implied is that experiential transmission (a form of social interaction) plays a part in the development of cognition too. My theory seems to be supported by Vygotsky (1978) who examines cultural development as appearing twice: first in the social arena (interpsychological – for example experiential transmission from coach to client) and then within the individual (intrapyschological – for example the effects

of experiential transmission on the client). This process leads to a development of the consciousness of the client as a result of a type of socialization. This process might be described as the client experiencing experiential transmission from the coach and this event inspiring a cognitive change within them.

Clarke (2008) sees 'experience' as equal value to logic and rationality. Although her views are not identical to experiential transmission (which sees experience as permeating and educating the rational rather than being of equal value) there are most certainly similarities. Indeed Clarke (2014) inspires me to view experiential transmission a little differently. In her work she explores the obvious power of overwhelming emotions such as love and loss. From this standpoint she makes a case, similar to experiential transmission, for the importance of us realizing that we are being profoundly educated by our emotional reactions to our experiences. Clarke (2008) also argues that there are particular subsystems in the brain that challenge our understanding and our comprehension of the rational self – that in a sense move from describing the way the brain functions away from a duality to a type of singularity. For example, Clarke (2008) states that the 'propositional' (logical thought) and the 'implicational' (overseeing emotion) subsystems are both of such equal importance that rather than one (the 'propositional') directing the other (the 'implicational') both enter into what seems to be a type of dialogue. In other words they share control.

Similar to experiential transmission Clarke (2008) refutes the value of compartmentalization when it comes to the concept of individuality by examining the advantages of stepping out of one's objective hold on oneself. It is from this position that she explains a way to lose oneself in the full experience of the transliminal. Clarke (2008) explains that we can become one with the crowd, even experience telepathy. Such an approach seems to me very similar to Mitchell's (Appendix 1) explanation of the Inner Door workings of experiential transmission where student and coach develop a type of telepathic relationship.

Other practitioners such as Miller (1994) explore the levels to which communication can become a sharing experience to the point of it becoming a common possession. Miller (1994) in particular discusses the effective teacher working from deeper areas of the Self, and values 'depth' and 'presence' alongside technique. He describes two levels of communication: one based on ego and the second based on Self: the ego-based teacher is concerned and affected by the social world that they share with the student, while the Self-based teacher values connection with their Self and the Self of the student. The Self-

based teacher experiences 'centre-to-centre' encounters that are essentially characterised as being on a different level of awareness to that of the ego-based teacher. Similar to experiential transmission this level is one where there are no boundaries: 'When we teach from the Self we gradually experience more moments of communion with our students' (Miller, 1994, p.122).

Moving onwards to explore the Self as a singularity, of the embodiment of our experiential learning, the value of experiential learning is often linked to a type of all-encompassing personal singularity brought about by a specific type of lived experience (Appendix 1). This singularity essentially occurs by releasing a world of complex duality into a simple all-encompassing 'way'. This 'way' has many descriptions such as 'non-being' (Hisamatsu, 1987) or 'absolute being' (Nakagawa, 2000, p.33). As Nakagawa explains:

Eastern views of holistic education significantly differ from the ecological and cosmological views of contemporary holistic education. Contemporary holistic education tends to highlight 'interconnection' of all beings as the foundation of education ... By contrast, Eastern philosophy celebrates 'interpenetration' that does not have ecological and systematic connotations but means absolute freedom (liberation) in all relationships (Nakagawa, 2000, p.3).

Experiential transmission penetrates the environment, so Nakagawa's 'interpenetration' (2000, p.3) may be an effective way of describing this event. Nishida, (1990, p.xiv) too explains that there is no separation between subject and object, and it is this acceptance, this experience of oneness, that brings about a heightened sense of totality and immediacy in the individual. From the Taoist perspective experience (or experiential learning) at its most profound is intuited. According to Nishida (1990), and similar to the observations of Clarke (2008), the mind body separation actually adulterates 'pure experience' rather than enhances it. It is the singularity of 'experience', or what I might interpret as the lack of separation between coach and client, that perhaps comes very close to explaining the immediacy of experiential transmission in coaching.

Nakagawa seems to agree when he points out that:

To experience is to be immediately aware of what *is*. Any kind of intervention of the mind such as 'fabrications' and 'deliberate discrimination' disturbs the purity and directness of experiencing (Nakagawa, 2000, p.14).

Much of Eastern experiential learning involves the transcendence of the importance of 'thinking' as its ontological foundation. 'Thinking' is replaced by experiencing (Nakagawa, 2000). Also such approaches see the concept of continuous experience forming a moment-to-moment learning as collectivist. For example, Nakamura (1984) explores the

interrelatedness of existence that penetrates so deeply that it is almost impossible to isolate or establish anything as an individual entity to anything else in the total existential sphere. This explanation of communicative immediacy could be one that effectively describes the environment within which experiential transmission can reside.

'Returning in contemplation' is summarised by Nakagawa (2000, p.33) as moving from language to silence. The Tao Te Ching states: 'The Tao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Tao' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.38) and goes so far as to say: 'One who is aware does not talk. One who talks is not aware' (Trans. Chang, 1975, p.154). Within Taoism there is the philosophy that words mask the unknown. It recognises that the traditional approach to knowledge can take us to the door of the profound but not beyond:

Knowledge wandered north to the banks of the Black Waters, climbed the knoll of Hidden Heights, and there by chance came upon Do-Nothing-Say-Nothing (Chang Tzu, in Pohl, 2015, p.33).

The above quotation helps us to understanding experiential transmission. In other words here it is not what the coach says or does that forms the transmission, rather it is the unspoken quality of who the coach is. Seng-t'san (609) in Clarke's (2013, p.2) translation of the *Hsin Ming* warns against 'wordiness and intellection' to the point where any sense of differentiation whatsoever causes a profound duality and therefore cannot induce the true singular reality. This philosophy does not seek to conflict with anything; instead it looks to transcend it. This transcendence is described by Wilber (1996) as a transverbal state of 'magic synthesis' that moves us significantly beyond the preverbal and verbal processes.

Similarly Ueda describes 'infinite openness' (1991, cited in Nakagawa, 2000) as similar to experiential transmission in the coaching room. With his description of 'infinite openness' (being the ontological ground where we are simultaneously in a *place* of infinite openness and are infinitely open *ourselves*) he might be said to be describing the way of the coach – the coach's way of being if they are to inspire wellbeing in the client via experiential transmission.

Summary

In this chapter I have explored various approaches to *learning through experiencing* in the context of experiential transmission and in doing so have gleaned clues as to how to forward my thinking for the rest of my project. The next chapter explores the journey that resulted in me establishing the research methodology that suited my study – that of auto-ethnography. Other possible approaches to the research were considered too and are

presented in the following chapter to justify my decision that to some might be seen to be an unusual choice for this type of doctoral project.

Chapter three: methodology

The form of any auto-ethnographic text impacts on its content. In this way, an ethics of writing is always present, and if the medium is not quite the message, then writing is part of the ethical relation rather than a report on it. (Freeman, 2015, p.5)

Introduction

Total and immersive immediacy constitutes the character of experiential transmission; therefore, my research methodology needs to accommodate the exploration of a phenomenon that has a personal and all-encompassing effect on both me and on my coaching clients. In this chapter I explore auto-ethnography for its possible potential to represent such an ineffable phenomenon. I will also link the work of Otto Scharmer to mine. In Scharmer's extensive research into change and leadership, he relates his observations, thought processes and experiences through an auto-ethnographic account of his life's learning journey. In his seminal work *Theory U: leading from the future as it emerges – the social technology of presencing* (2016), he uses stories from his life to illuminate and frame his ideas. By way of example, he recounts the devastating effect his family's farm burning down had had on him as a young boy. The story I am going to share with the reader is nowhere near as dramatic and horrific as that of the experience of an impressionable young boy witnessing his family home burning to the ground but there are similarities. Like Scharmer, I experienced a profound shift in how I attended to the world after my beloved dog died. I realised how much Trix meant to me, and I realised something else. As humans we experience a range of painful emotions. If, with experiential transmission, I could attend to a coachee's pain without intruding, simply being with her in a congruent way, I would be the best coach I could ever hope to be.

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On the 28th April 2019, at ten past two in the afternoon, my little dog Trix went to the corner of the garden, lay down amongst the pots, in the shade – and died. He was nine years old. I was left – abandoned. I was alone without my dog. During this time logic did not seem to exist, reason and the felt experience were worlds apart – nothing could possibly explain the feeling – there was just no space whatsoever for objectivity. For me there was quite simply a complete and complex single block of feeling, high and wide and deep, that could not be described, suffusing every corner of my life, accompanying every movement I made. And there was nothing more. Nothing else. Nothing mattered.

As I think about these moments of re-living a death, my mind slips laterally to my visit to the Paul Klee museum in Bern, and the Antony Gormley installation. Sixty imposing metal sculptures in lines of five. Before the spectator enters the arena she is looking at a small-scale model of the room – observes it objectively – as a singularity – and then she enters the space. But nothing can possibly prepare a person for the experience – the experience and the small-scale model are worlds apart. They are two distinctly different things. In the vicinity of the sculptures objectivity disappears – it never existed. Gormley was educated by monks, and the meditative silence that surrounds his art infuses this room – to the point of being overwhelming – spectators are crumbling – one is on the floor – it is similar to the silence of meditation. For me, now, with my thoughts, Gormley is demonstrating to the viewer that the objective study of a phenomenon (the small-scale model) and the experience of the phenomenon reside in different dimensional spaces. I think the same is true of experiential transmission.

By writing about the emotion of Trix I once again am enveloped by the memory of the event – simply by the mention of it. I know I should take a break from writing this chapter. I would certainly advise my coaching clients to do the same, and not to make any important decisions from within such a volatile emotional state: ‘If you want to make balanced decisions then you must be in a balanced emotional state when you make them’ I would advise. According to Amy Morin (2015) in ‘13 Things Mentally Strong People Don’t Do’ I would be right. In this chapter I am searching for a methodology to explore experiential transmission effectively – a natural experience that cannot be described easily. I find myself wondering if this section of my thesis might be more authentically informed from the perspective of a similarly overwhelming felt state. I know that experiential transmission is likely to be more difficult to grasp than grief, and in my coaching I want to understand experiential transmission enough to uplift rather than to upset, but surely the essence of the emotion is similar? Surely it’s worth a gamble? The worst thing that can happen is that after a while I have to start again.

When the teachers I coach in schools present as being overwhelmed by emotion I advise them to develop a simple and supportive mechanism for themselves. This mechanism takes the form of a structure based on clarifying their priorities and is used as a moment-to-moment guide to direct them towards a clearer state of mind where eventually they can see a pathway out of the mire. They are then able to re-establish their direction and move into more solution focused (O’Connell, 1998), proactive, and eventually creative ways of working. It makes sense to me to see my clients as whole and resourceful rather than

dysfunctional and needy, and the same applies to me too, even in such close proximity to my painful memory.

With this in mind I am led to think that a similar type of clear structuring might be necessary to explain experiential transmission for my project, and that I may have rejected the clarity and support of the quantitative angle too readily in favour of the creative. My readers too might need to feel safe, grounded, and secure in the quantitative in order to access an understanding of my phenomenon (O'Connell, 1998).

The reader may wonder how I can compare my little dog Trix's death to Otto Scharmer's recollection of his boyhood home going up in flames. As I noted before, these events created shifts in perspective. Like Scharmer's experience, Trix's death shifted my perspective: we both experienced a shift in consciousness we wanted and needed to share with others, Scharmer through his writing and me through my coaching.

Quantitative research

On reconsidering my notes on the quantitative angle I am reminded that there are different ways of interpreting the distance between the researcher and the people or events researched. I decided to investigate whether or not some of these interpretations show more potential than I had previously thought. Weber (cited in Betta and Swedberg, 2017) identifies the distance between the researcher and the researched in terms of 'value-freedom' – a term that on the surface seems to align with the non-judgemental nature of experiential transmission. For Weber (cited in Betta and Swedberg, 2017) 'value-freedom' enables the researcher to step into a realm where the individual disappears and the 'perfect researcher' emerges. It is this 'perfect researcher' that then produces the unbiased results. Unfortunately Weber's definition of the 'perfect researcher' is one unaffected by the human condition, so from the point of view of experiential transmission (that essentially concerns itself with the transmission of the human condition), Weber's definition is clearly not a match, but I am inspired to look further.

Science through quantitative research has produced what might be described as machines that mine for the researcher (Kvale and Brinkman, 2008). This way of looking at quantitative research delivers results that, while gauged to be quantitative, encourage the researcher to travel beyond their imagination for their interpretation of the results. Although these vehicles facilitate a researcher being able to observe the results relatively objectively, at the cutting edge of quantitative research the goal can have an essence of the creative:

Although we know what we hope for let's just smash these particles together and look at the quality of what is produced (Sample, 2008, p.3 talking about the Large Hadron Collider).

In Sample's (2008) quotation, similar to what I seek for experiential transmission and indeed similar to some descriptions of the qualitative approach (Heidegger, 1927), the quantitative approach offers the potential to 'look at the quality of what is produced' (Sample, 2008, p.3). Yet when considering the nature of experiential transmission there is still an unbridgeable distance between the researcher and the researched because data cannot be gathered in a personally interactive way, a process which is integral to my study of experiential transmission in coaching.

Post-positivism does show the potential to bridge the gap between experiential transmission and the quantitative approach. Crotty (1998) demonstrates this potential by introducing a more philosophical angle to his take on quantitative research: 'No pleasure is comparable to standing upon the vantage point of truth' (Crotty, 1998, p.29). With Hacking (1983) post-positivism goes as far as to recognise the nature of the individual in the research paradigm, albeit in a negative context, when he notes that results can be fallible because the observer can be fallible. Creswell (2013) states that the post-positivist believes that 'the goal of science is to hold steadily to the goal of getting it right about reality, even though we can never achieve that goal' (Creswell, 2013, p.114). Moreover, Robert Cox famously stated that 'theory is always for someone and for some purpose' (Cox, 1981, p.126), implying that a divide between science and social values cannot possibly hold. Onuf (2012) too reminds us that reality is absolutely a 'world of our making' (p.1).

Closer still when it comes to a quantitative approach aligning with experiential transmission is that of post post-positivism. Post post-positivism veers into the social aspects of research while still remaining quantitative, and therefore it seems to accommodate the needs of my project (Glaeser, 2005). Post post-positivism is summarised by Glaeser (2005) who states that within post post-positivism interest can attach itself to three different aspects of process. The first is the concrete embodiment in particular people (their actions in concrete time-space in all its singular curiosity). The second is the social formation as the effect of process, (its becoming, maintenance, and disintegration understood as a case standing for a class of phenomena). The third is that interest can attach itself to patterns, principles, or regularities (underlying the very dynamics of process). Post post-positivism shows the most promise of all the quantitative

approaches because of its potential to be able to work outside of a purely Dimension I (Nakagawa, 2000) perspective.

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Although hopeful that the clarity of the quantitative approach would offer me a sense of security of structure on which to build, I recognise that this it is not the case. I re-visit my reading on the qualitative approach. As I re-read Kvale and Brinkman (2008) I am reminded of the validity of my original qualitative choice. I also begin to be reminded that I require a methodology that can encompass the personal and interactive nature of my phenomenon, and that experiential transmission cannot be described only in propositional terms.

Qualitative research

Kvale and Brinkman (2008) ask us to imagine the difference between a 'miner' (representing the quantitative approach) and a 'traveller' (representing the qualitative approach). The first takes the epistemological position that to chip away at the rock under the ground will reveal the gold inside: this rock contains gold that has always existed; it has just been hidden. And ontologically, gold is gold. It contains the same qualities wherever it is mined. They then ask us to imagine the second epistemological angle: the traveller. This traveller is driven to explore new environments and so her context is essentially experiential (Beard and Wilson, 2013). For the traveller, ontologically 'gold' represents the experience of interacting with the environment. The traveller would not want to be down a mine searching for nuggets. Metaphorically speaking it would not suit her.

With this metaphor above Kvale and Brinkman (2008) introduce something of the felt experience into the argument. The question is: does being trapped underground tapping away at a rock surface in any way reflect the experiential nature of experiential transmission? To answer the question: no, it does not. The last thing I want my reader or me to be is trapped, held down, in any way. As stated in chapter one I want her to be free to interpret the nature of experiential transmission for herself. I want the chosen methodology to be wholly supportive of the possibility of individual response. With Beard and Wilson's (2013) description of the traveller being more of an explorer, I am once again reminded of the value of the qualitative approaches, and how with experiential transmission I need a structure that supports the personal, fluid, and immediate nature of experiential transmission rather an approach that inhibits it. I am searching to report

essences (Creswell, 2007) of the lived experience of something particular, something I understand, something so completely aligned with my personal relationship with my clients that the two are intrinsically linked. It is critical for me to find a methodology that supports this level of personal involvement. As Michael Caine (1965) famously quipped, '[t]he best research for playing a drunk is being a British actor for twenty years', or as Finlay and Evans (2009) state, 'Qualitative research is inductive and exploratory rather than deductive' (2009, p.5).

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The search for my answer leads me towards the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005). I tend to find strength, solace, and answers, in this Taoist text. It is a type of personal support. As my understanding of life moves and grows, so does my appreciation of the text. I know the Tao Te Ching can be interpreted on any number of given levels, some of which I understand, some I am yet to discover. But where might I start?

I find clues to how to continue my search for a research methodology in Chapter 53 of the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005). In this chapter Lao Tzu is purported to have said, 'They make the palace clear and neat, while the farmland is untilled and weedy, and the granary empty' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.156). Here, as visited occasionally throughout my project, is Lao Tzu offering advice on prioritising the fundamental over the superficial – the root of the tree over the twigs and leaves (Hu, 2005). In the case of experiential transmission it is important to structure my research in a way that enables the root – my lived experience of experiential transmission – to support the detail: my research findings. I need to be able to report on my findings in a way that represents the tree growing as a whole – naturally – in a full and healthy manner. I need to start by securing my epistemological position.

This is an anecdote from the Tao Te Ching but Scharmer's (2016) ideas too share a great affinity with this text, particularly in the prioritising of the fundamental over the superficial. In his discussion on how leaders operate, Scharmer emphasises the role of the interior condition, the source and quality of our attention. This accessing of an inner place is what distinguishes an average performer from a master practitioner. Scharmer created a diagram called the Five Levels of Change or the "U" (the diagram is U shaped) in which the bottom of the U is "presencing" or seeing something from our deepest source. He tells the reader that the concept of U emerged from different sources, one of which was Taoism. Like Taoism, Scharmer's Concept U reaches beyond standard cognition to a deeper level of knowing. His specific idea of presencing at the bottom of the U, or

connecting to the source, can be translated as the point when our moment of awareness of something deepens. Experiential transmission takes from Taoism the reintegration of matter and mind (as Concept U does): in order to increase the quality of any action – teaching, researching, coaching, leading – we need to pay close attention to the place from which we operate.

Epistemological position

Martin (2010) posits that research questions demand a favourable epistemological philosophy. Smith et al., (2009) state that this philosophy is likely to be influenced by the researcher's personal epistemological position. Charmaz (2014) agrees:

Social reality is multiple, processual, and constructed, and we must take the researcher's position, privileges, perspective, and interactions into account as an inherent part of that reality (Charmaz, 2014, p.53).

The researcher's personal effect on the research happens to varying degrees depending on the research methodology employed (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, for my particular project, alignment with experiential transmission on an epistemological level is of central value because it represents the intrinsically personal nature of the phenomenon. My search for a structure needs to be centred on the nature of the personal. On a fundamental level, if my approach to the work comes from my experiences of experiential transmission then the project that emerges should be contextually congruent: I am coming from a place of deep reflection that facilitates a connection to the sense of authentic presence (as in Scharmer's Concept U).

Phenomenology

With Lao Tzu's words (regarding focusing on the root of the tree) ringing in my ears, it seems prudent to re-explore the potential of phenomenology because, of course, experiential transmission is a phenomenon in its own right, that I wish to explore. This time I move more towards the outer edges of phenomenology and find that Derrida's (1980) ideas seem to resonate with the more mysterious and elusive nature of experiential transmission:

Contrary to what phenomenology – which is always phenomenology of perception – has tried to make us believe, contrary to what our desire cannot fail to be tempted into believing, the thing itself always escapes (Derrida, 1980, p.113).

Valuing the elusive leads me to Heidegger and the fact that phenomenology encompasses both a philosophical association and a research methodology. Heidegger explains that one does not *create* the other – one *is* the other (Heidegger, 1927). Similar to experiential

transmission, the combination brings together the study of nature and meaning, nature and worldly nurture in its widest sense in a vastly imaginative arena (Heidegger, 1927).

The hermeneutic approach too seems to offer the promise of being able to support the wider dimensional (Nakagawa, 2000) and spiritual aspects of experiential transmission:

Only when our entire culture for the first time saw itself threatened by radical doubt and critique did hermeneutics become a matter of universal significance (Gadamer, 1983, p.100).

Husserl (1970) too with his description of a 'life world' that is without categorisation or even conceptualisation experienced leads me to believe that I might be on the right track with hermeneutics. If experiential transmission is resident somewhere in this 'life world', then a hermeneutic methodology would enable me to accurately observe the lived experience in others. For example, hermeneutics would offer me the opportunity to eliminate mind-body dualism and give me the chance to view consciousness as a 'co-constituted dialogue between a person and the world' (Valle et al., 1989, p.3). This description certainly feels like a possible platform or even springboard that could allow experiential transmission in coaching to be studied, and captured in words.

However, the more detail that I eventually uncover during the exploration of this particular area of 'co-constituted dialogue', the more it seems to me that it does not deliver on its implication of non-compartmentalisation. For example Husserl (in Polkinghorne, 1989) states that co-constituted dialogue comes about as a result of *grasping* a phenomenon (as opposed to observing its fluid nature). I want something simpler. I revisit Heidegger (1977) and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis mainly because of its varied and (to me) more energised take on phenomenology. Here I am quickly reminded that bracketing (Gadamer, 1983) would distance me from my phenomenon, in fact my research would actually create a *quadruple* hermeneutic (Giddens, 1987): Me, analysing myself, relating to my clients, analysing themselves, in relation to both of our original reactions to the phenomenon. Not exactly the simplicity for which I am searching.

After a great deal of re-reading I am eventually inspired by the startling and challenging fact/fiction work of those who object to any distancing whatsoever, notably Maggie Nelson (2015). Nelson's (2015) attitude becomes an inspiration. I can now see that phenomenology's type of complicated attachment/detachment theory creates a distancing effect between research and researcher that restricts the level of personal immediacy required to study experiential transmission.

*

I feel re-invigorated by Nelson's (2015) bravery and boldness and she instils in me a more enlivened approach. I begin to feel more positive. I re-examine ethnography.

*

Ethnography

Ethnography is a field in which the issue of closeness between researcher and researched is seen to be a positive one rather than being something to be circumnavigated or avoided. Therefore, the immediacy of experiential transmission offers a great deal of potential from the outset. Moreover, the various interpretations of the term 'ethnography', that range from ethnography being a formalised method of qualitative research, to being described as 'simply what anthropologists do' (Walford, 2004, p.270), mean that there is room for manoeuvrability; there is space to select the specific research methodology to suit the nature of experiential transmission (Ellis, 1999).

Turner (1986) with his description of ethnography being 'coactivity' and even 'co-performance' seems particularly relevant to my research situation. These descriptions to me resemble the nature of the coaching environment. The terms 'coactivity' and 'co-performance' seem to imply a type of experiential singularity (the coaching experience as one, the coach and client together) as opposed to a duality (the coach and the client as separate individuals) and this observation brings about the question: What could possibly resemble the immediacy of experiential transmission more than the coach and the client being seen as the same single unit? With Turner's (1986) approach I am reminded why ethnography seemed initially to be a good fit. I am also reminded of Scharmer's (2016) focus on social connection: experiential transmission is underpinned by a social connection that is governed by the dynamics of collective creativity. When we inhabit the space of collective creativity, we are able to look deep into ourselves and our collective patterns of behaviour in order to reinvent ourselves. Coaching with experiential transmission could be envisaged as harnessing this collective creativity to effect transformational change.

I am once again inspired by the realisation that ethnography and social immersion can go hand in hand (Freeman, 2015). Ethnography's social guidelines mean that structurally my research can be formulated around capacious concepts rather than those that to me seem to want to hold the research firmly in place. Bryman (2001, p.10), in particular, offers a type of structure in the form of a number of aims that enable the study of the immediacy of the personal experience:

- ethnographers immerse themselves in a society;
- ethnographers collect descriptive data via fieldwork;
- ethnography concerns the culture of its members;
- ethnography comes from the perspective of the members of that society – the meanings they attach to their social world;
- ethnographers render the collected data intelligible and significant to fellow academics and other readers.

Even when presented as a set of objectives (Troman et al., 2006) the ‘rules’ still have the texture of being guidelines rather than restrictions:

- the focus on the study of cultural formation and maintenance;
- the use of multiple methods and thus the generation of rich and diverse forms of data;
- the direct involvement and long-term engagement of the researcher;
- the recognition that the researcher is the main research instrument;
- the high status given to the accounts of participants’ perspectives and understandings;
- the engagement in a spiral of data collection, hypothesis building and theory testing leading to further data collection;
- the focus on particular cases in depth, but providing the basis for theoretical generalisations (Troman et al., 2006, p.1).

Bryman’s (2001) description of ethnography is promising, although upon further investigation, I am struck by his searching for common ground rather than stepping out in order to embrace new possibilities. Furthermore, I am reminded why other descriptions of ethnography previously seemed unsuitable. They still, on second reading, seem to be somewhat wary of embracing the unusual. Fetterman (1998), for example, places the ethnographic researcher in the position of the reporter who juggles the facts to suit the story, and then quantifies this journalistic stance by stating: ‘the journalist seeks the unusual – the ethnographer writes about the routine’ (Fetterman, 1998, p.1).

Auto-ethnography

For me, from the moment I revisit Ellis’ (1999) auto-ethnographic work it feels as if ethnography has been ‘let off the leash’. Ellis and Bochner (2006, p.443) state: ‘[i]t’s writing in an evocative way that shows rather than tells...’. Relevant to the personal immediacy of my study, with auto-ethnography there are various ways of looking at the

nature of emotional immediacy. Freeman (2015) describes auto-ethnography as 'acknowledging the inevitable overlaps between the maker and the made' (Freeman, 2015, p.18), Ellis points out that with auto-ethnography 'the author seeks to develop an ethnography that includes the researchers' vulnerable selves' (Ellis, 1999, p.669), and Johnson and Strong (2008) explore the auto-ethnographic process in terms of the merging of the academic and personal voice.

The approach that most connects to the immediacy of experiential is from Ellis and Bochner (2000). They define the term auto-ethnography as 'an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.733). With 'multiple layers of consciousness' there seems to be the possibility to explore the various dimensional layering (Nakagawa, 2000) necessary for my project. Forber-Pratt (2015, p.1) goes a step further and describes auto-ethnography as 'exposing [one]self'. To me this implies a type of energetic immediacy that could help explain experiential transmission and could add an exciting and valuable extra dimension to my work.

Philip Squire's (2016) aspects of: 'I – We – Greater We' also offer potential. Such a three-angle approach would promote the opportunity of different viewpoints on experiential transmission. I could move from being personal 'I', through the inclusion of members of the social group 'We', to the benefit of the wider community 'Greater We'. The 'We' aspect, according to Johnson and Strong (2008), would also allow me to capture outer and inner dialogues 'with key individuals throughout the process' (Forber-Pratt, 2015, p.822). In this way my personal experience ('auto') would describe and analyse ('graphy') in order to analyse social experience ('ethno') (Winkler 2017).

Squire's ideas on promoting the opportunity of listening to different viewpoints and moving from the personal to the wider social group remind me of Scharmer's (2016) concept of presencing. In his discussion on companies struggling to succeed in a VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous), Scharmer warns that simply reflecting on the past will never be adequate enough to equip organisations to figure out next steps. All organisations – of individuals and collective entities – need to practice the act of presencing, or being aware of and experiencing the present moment. The "I" for Squire is contained within the "We" just as in Experiential Transmission, the focus is being aware of and experiencing the present moment, for both coach and coachee (I and We).

Analysing the embodied experience

Auto-ethnography offers me the opportunity to interpret and translate the embodied experience of my clients in the coaching environment. I can be subjective. I (the coach) can conduct my fieldwork and examine the findings from the perspective of my personal experience. I have the opportunity to translate my embodied experiences, and those of my clients, into analysable data (Richardson, 1994).

Hokkanen (2017) explores two ways in which embodiment in research can be understood. The first, mostly unsuitable for my project, is to see the body simply as an object and to observe it only outwardly. An example might be the description of a movement or of a facial expression to denote a reaction – the number of times a particular client smiled. The second way, and more relevant, encourages the researcher to work from the felt experience of the body as a subject (Csordas, 1990). With Csordas (1990) the body provides us with a first-hand, visceral experience of the world. Embodiment can therefore be explored from the point of view of the person experiencing it rather than objectively as a study. According to Hokkanen (2017, p.32): ‘a focus on embodiment and feelings helps in tapping into this complex network of involvement’.

When it concerns note taking there is a wealth of support for the subjective approach. Willis (2000, p.xii) sees the researcher’s words as ‘the translation of the embodied sense into language’. Chang (2008) describes the researcher’s notes as zooming in and zooming out. (The researcher zooms into their personal experience and zooms out to relate it to the bigger social picture.) Auto-ethnography certainly seems to align itself with the study of experiential transmission and the idea of my personal experiences and those of my clients.

Constructed fiction

Anybody writing a story that can re-create the feeling I have about the death of my dog will be re-creating a felt and immensely personal truth.

Auto-ethnography can sometimes be interpreted as ‘false’ or ‘invented’ (Walford, 2004). According to Walford (2004), and to Ellis and Bochner (2000), avoiding contrivance in auto-ethnography is attained by considering the nature of ‘truth’. One way of discussing the nature of ‘truth’ in auto-ethnography is via the value of constructed fiction (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

‘Truth’ is something Bochner (2007) justifies in auto-ethnography with the term ‘realist tales’. These tales ‘do not simply reflect back on the past using what we all know are very

unreliable memories of events' (Walford, 2009, p.276). Instead, although stories may be factually accurate, they can also be adapted to attempt to re-create the original feeling in the reader. For Ellis and Bochner (2000) the main quality of auto-ethnography is the fact that it *is* constructed fiction. With this genre the researcher is put at the very heart of the account and through the process of researching learns to understand himself or herself and those he is researching more deeply. Constructed fiction offers the opportunity for 'allowing and encouraging alternative readings and multiple interpretations' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.745).

Validity

There are those who question the validity of auto-ethnography, most notably Moors (2017): 'I was surprised to see that the authors use the term auto-ethnography for something that seems to me much closer to a social experiment' (Moors, 2017, p.1). From my current position, these arguments seem to come from a place of relegating the personal felt experience to below the objective one. Moors (2017) emphasises her position by questioning the consensus that the fundamental principles of auto-ethnography should lay with the researchers themselves. In her view there is no difference between the methodology of the auto-ethnographer and that of the anthropologist (Moors, 2017, p.1).

Forber-Pratt's (2015) approach refutes Moors' (2017) criticism and so aligns with my study. Forber-Pratt (2015) describes validity in auto-ethnography in terms of 'transactional validity' (Forber-Pratt, 2015, p.831). She quotes Cho and Trent (2006) who perceive auto-ethnography: 'as an interactive process between i) the researcher, ii) the researched, and iii) the collected data' (Cho and Trent, 2006, p.321). Pathak's (2010) take on validity also resonates with my study. She validates auto-ethnography through an ethical stance. She advises the researcher to consider accountability, context, truthfulness and community, as a type of structure from which to work, all of these areas being open to individual interpretation.

Performance auto-ethnography

From someone such as myself with an acting background, the idea of performance auto-ethnography is very attractive. It carries with it the feeling of being able to explore the felt experience in a way I know to be exciting – on the stage – on home turf. The question is: would performance auto-ethnography be a reliable way of exploring experiential transmission?

Despite Barad (2007) describing performativity (in a similar way to experiential transmission) as ‘...challeng[ing] the representationist belief in the power of words to represent pre-existing things’ (Barad, 2007, p.133), the arguments seem to be stacked up against performance auto-ethnography working in association with experiential transmission. Freeman (2015, p.210) hits the nail firmly on the head by explaining that the language of performance is in itself a language, an interpretation. When it comes to experiential transmission on the stage, I would almost certainly find myself in a very complicated situation. Questions would arise such as: would using the language of acting mean that I am interpreting experiential transmission rather than capturing its immediacy? From here even more challenging questions begin to take shape: when we watch a live performance who are we experiencing the transmission of? Are we experiencing the transmission of the actor or the character, or a mixture of both? Experiential transmission transmits the whole person to the audience, so does this mean we are always experiencing the transmission of the actor as a person? Or to be more precise: are we always experiencing the actor acting? If so, how is it we are drawn into the illusion of the play? We then find ourselves in the neighbourhood of such questions as: does the audience go to see the play or to be in the vicinity (the transmission) of the actor? These are all compelling questions but not particularly germane to the study of experiential transmission in a coaching context.

Auto-ethnography in practice

An example concerning the contradictory nature of the value of immediacy in schools today happened recently when I was asked, as I sometimes am, to sit on a headship panel. At the end of the day it was narrowed down to two candidates: the first knew all the jargon, had been a head teacher twice before, but to me was not the best candidate because his approaches were mainly reactive. The second candidate had less experience than the first but had a much fresher more positive approach. Her ideas were exciting, a little risky but very workable. She was able to see beyond the apparent limitations of the role and had what I perceived to be an achievable vision. Her manner was natural and engaging. When asked by the Chair which candidate they preferred the table of governors all chose the first candidate. When I asked them who they would rather be led by, all five said that for them the second candidate would create a more positive environment and that they would look forward to going to work if she was in charge. They would definitely prefer to work with her compared with the first. She was uplifting. When it came to the final choice of candidate for the role all (except me) chose the first candidate, the one with more experience. None chose the one they would like to be led by.

*

Let's pause for a moment to reflect on where my learning journey has taken us. I have made a connection between Otto Scharmer's work and mine, particularly in using auto-ethnography to explore my experience. Scharmer's story about the fire that engulfed his childhood home and my story about my little dog Trix are not worlds apart. Scharmer likens his experience to recognising a part of himself that he didn't know existed. I discovered that my Taoist influenced experiential transmission coaching practice shares his core idea about perspective. He claims that when we shift consciousness, we can reframe societal issues from a root perspective rather than just focusing on the tree. I find myself channelling Scharmer when I ask these simple but vital questions of my practice:

What value do my coachees seek for themselves?

What do I have that could impact on what they care about?

My auto-ethnographic project seeks to go beyond the traditional, familiar, practised and safe approaches often used in schools today (Rowe, 2015). Rather than using 'the systematic process of observing, detailing, describing, documenting and analysing the lifeways or particular patterns of a culture (or subculture) in order to grasp [them]' (Leininger, 1985, p.35), I am focusing on my personal lived experience, and that of my clients, to capture my data. In this way I hope that the auto-ethnographic approach enables me to fully engage with the everyday immediacy of my subject: experiential transmission.

Structure

To structure my research effectively, while still remaining true to the nature of experiential transmission, I will be considering the following instructions posed by Singleton and Straits (2005):

1. To be clear about what I am studying;
2. To be clear where my observations will be taking place;
3. To have easy access to my participants;
4. To be clear about my role(s);
5. To be clear about how I will gather my data.

My responses are:

- i) I will be studying the qualities of experiential transmission;
- ii) my observations will be taking place a) in the privacy of my office while listening to my coaching recordings; b) in the privacy of my office while studying my coaching transcripts; c) in the privacy of my office while listening to and studying the recordings and transcripts of my clients' responses to the findings; d) the original recordings of the coaching sessions will take place in the school's coaching facility; e) the original recordings of my clients' responses to my findings will take place in a private location outside of the school environment.
- iii) my participants will be those I coach – so there is easy access;
- iv) my roles will be twofold: that of coach and researcher;
- v) my first order data will be gathered via the study of the recordings and transcripts of my sessions. My second order data will be gathered via the study of the recordings and transcripts of my clients' responses to the findings. The rest of my data gathering/construction will be as reflection in my journals.

The journals

Schön (1987) describes 'reflection-in-action' being considered through 'reflection-on-action'. Therefore, I will journal from three angles to produce as much rich data as possible: my research journal, my reflexive journal and my creative journal. These will ensure a diverse range of auto-ethnographic data from which to pull.

- i) **The research journal.** This journal will take the form of a personal diary. It will offer me the opportunity to express my initial responses to the research material. In other words, it will contain my preliminary and sometimes detailed thoughts. My thoughts will be recorded in both hard and soft versions and either hand written or typed directly onto the computer. This journal will also take the form of my electronically recorded spoken word.
- ii) **The reflexive journal.** In this journal I will take some of my more resonant ideas from the research journal and to develop them, symbolically and metaphorically.
- iii) **The creative journal.** This journal will offer me the chance to take its most vibrant ideas and examine them in the field of my imagination. The result, I hope, might be that this journal will encourage questions that challenge the initial responses from the research journal and so the cycle can begin again, this time from a perspective that is more informed.

Research journal (personal diary)

Wood (2013) states that keeping a personal diary for the expression of off-grid thoughts and visual ideas is essential to the gathering of 'rich data' (Ricoeur, 1981). This journal offers me the opportunity to explore my initial thoughts and opinions without the censorship of bias, without interruption, and with my ideas being free to develop and to move around uninhibited (Schön, 1987). Essential to the auto-ethnographical model, where the researcher brings herself as the investigator into the centre of the proceedings, the point of the research journal is also to make sure of the development of the element of self in the context of the subject (Freeman, 2015). Ellis and Bochner (2006) state that the personal diary can also be an important dimension for initial thematic gathering and for the first explorations into thematic and theoretical movement, and I intend to use it as such.

Reflexive and creative journals

My reflexive and creative journals offer me the opportunity to further develop the ideas from the research journal. Writing creatively here can offer me the opportunity to explore my sensitivity, even vulnerability surrounding experiential transmission (Ellis, 1999). Similar to the thought experiments by Einstein (1905), this particular form of writing also offers me the opportunity to explore aspects such as me talking to a fictional client in a coaching situation where experiential transmission already exists. In other words, to write about my relationship with something not yet happened. Davies (1999) argues that 'reflexivity expresses researchers' awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it' (Davies, 1999, p.7). In other words, I have the opportunity to reflect upon the nature of my connection to experiential transmission in the context of my research situation. I have the opportunity to use this reflection to deepen and enrich my study.

Conclusion

Husserl (1970) explains research as a duality – the noesis (the interpretation) and the noema (the interpreted) – and states that the two are separate entities. The study of a phenomenon such as experiential transmission, which relies so completely on the immediacy of the felt experience of the researcher and the researched combined, is always going to be difficult to explore in a more traditional sense. I have found an answer with the auto-ethnographic approach, an approach that allows the researcher as an individual to be at the heart of the research rather than on the periphery.

Like Scharmer, I have learned that we need to access the deepest part of our consciousness: our mission (in life and as a coach who practises experiential transmission) is to lift ourselves and others across the threshold: we need to dive deeply into that place where our inner knowledge resides.

In the next chapter I take the reader on a further journey as I demonstrate how auto-ethnography has been enlisted for this specific project. I will also explain the ethical implications that must be addressed before I proceeded with the research. I introduce the reader to the participants and also discuss the pilot research that prepared the way for my research proper.

Chapter four: methods and procedures

Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the challenges, surprises and confirmatory findings surrounding the gathering of my research data.

My research consisted of three interlinking aspects:

- i) My personal response to the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2000): the text that contains clues as to the nature of experiential transmission;
- ii) My search for the experience of experiential transmission in my coaching recordings and transcripts;
- iii) My discussions with the participants on the research findings.

Data were collected on each of the aspects above.

Ricoeur (1981) states that data should be as wide, deep and rich as possible. With such advice in mind I collected data from my three perspectives: the researcher, the coach, and the teacher, to ensure significant depth and breadth. There was also the requirement to ensure that my study was ethically sound. I was mainly influenced by Freeman (2015) who is convinced that the auto-ethnographic researcher has a number of important questions to ask herself regarding the ethics of her data gathering. After studying Freeman's suggested questions (2015) I came to the conclusion that each of the three aspects: the researcher, the coach, and the teacher, needed individual attention and I have therefore given each area its own ethics section.

This chapter also introduces my clients to my reader, those who were eventually selected for the study, and I describe them in some detail. My aim is for my reader to get a feel for who they are as individuals, and to gain an understanding of the coaching relationship I had with each. Experiential transmission is intrinsically both personal and interactive, and knowing my clients well is important for the reader when it concerns understanding the nature of the transmission that passed between us.

Finally, this chapter will draw on the Taoist background to Carl Jung's thinking in order to provide the reader with a well known comparative philosophy to Experiential Transmission. Similar to Jung's being influenced by Eastern thought particularly in his most complex concept of 'The Self', my coaching too has been influenced by the East, most formatively by Taoist thought.

Aspect 1 – The Tao Te Ching

Researcher – Aspect 1

The way I responded to the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) was influenced by my having been immersed in the Taoist culture in China (Wong, 2011).

In China I learned to approach the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2000) as a type of wise and uplifting friend, and I continue to take the same approach today. It is as if the author Lao Tzu exists in the text, and when I read it I feel in many ways connected to him. A few times I have taken each of the eighty-one chapters of the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2000) and studied them one a day – every day for the eighty-one days. I have sat with the words and allowed them to influence my daily life. For me it is an exciting and satisfying way of increasing my awareness of everything around me.

As discussed in Chapter 1, it was clear that clues to the nature of experiential transmission were to be found in the Tao Te Ching (Appendix 1). The real questions were: How should I study the text? and How should I record my findings? After a few days of pondering it occurred to me that I might look to the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2000) itself for my answers.

I opened my copy of the text randomly at ‘A journey of a thousand li (miles) begins with a single step’ (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.182), probably the Tao Te Ching’s most famous line. After sitting with the words for a short while it occurred to me that the answer to this particular problem might come from seeing the process as an adventure (a journey) rather than as a series of technical problems that demanded to be resolved. After more pondering I decided to approach the text as I had done before, a chapter a day, but this time I would study the verses in the context of experiential transmission. For eighty-one days, chapter by chapter, I would once again allow the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) to resonate throughout my day and to educate me (this time in the context of experiential transmission). Every evening I would record my findings in my journals.

Coach – Aspect 1

To begin with, for the first week or so, I found coaching at the same time as considering the messages of the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) disorientating. Reflecting on the Tao Te Ching as I coached seemed to bring a sense of detachment. The task distracted me from focusing on my clients. This effect led me to question the choice of the data gathering process I was using. The Tao Te Ching advises us to keep things simple: ‘Make the country small, make the people few’ (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.218) and I decided to simplify my

data gathering technique. Instead of being as consciously aware as possible during my coaching sessions of the particular chapter of the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2000) I was studying and its association with experiential transmission, I would simply allow the feelings that reading the chapter had brought about in me to naturally infuse my coaching practice – to be in the background. From this platform I hoped I would be freer to coach as naturally and as effectively as I had done before.

With this sense of prioritization in place the fluidity returned to my coaching. Responding to the day in my various journals became a pleasure. I remembered Ellis and Bochner's (2006) advice (that the object of the data gathering exercise at this stage was not to analyze, instead it was more to describe and discuss) and the pressure of writing something of value to the project was replaced by having fun with the responses of the day. From this position there seemed to be little or no restrictions to what could be written and to what was 'right' or 'wrong'. There was simply the day being creatively explored through the different layers of journaling. Through this medium my ideas concerning experiential transmission in coaching really began to take flight.

Howard Coward (1996) has argued (I believe) conclusively that Jung was very much influenced by Eastern thought, especially Taoism which draws on the links between human reality and the world of nature and the divine.

Teacher – Aspect 1

Influenced by my immersion in the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005), I reflected upon my experiences of having been a teacher in the past. The 'in-the-moment' struggle of the teachers I coached would bring about a heightened memory response in me, from when I was a teacher, and this I would reflect upon as I wrote. One such reminder had the unexpected outcome of actually improving my coaching experience with my clients. This particular improvement came from Thurman's (2005) theory of redirecting the energy of anger.

I began by pondering on my clients' anger that often emerged because of their frustrations with the education system. Thurman, (2015) describes this type of anger as coming from a 'tolerant patience' that has been pushed too far (Thurman, 2015, p.67). Thurman (2005) observes that this anger is important because it is a powerful energy that when re-focused can lead to a positive outcome (Thurman, 2005, p.20). With Lao Tzu's daily advice resonating and stimulating my own personal growth, I began to realize that the energy brought about from my past anger at the education system could actually be re-focused

into my present day coaching practice. In other words, my anger from my past as a teacher, when visited as a memory and brought back to life, could be re-directed to help my clients with their own anger issues.

Jung, of course, practised psychotherapy. As a coach, I want to be clear that I am not practising psychotherapy. However, in my struggle to explain experiential transmission, I recognised that the phenomenon shares many striking similarities with Carl Jung's notion of synchronicity. Like me, Jung apparently struggled to express its contours throughout his career.

This technique I put into practice to considerable effect. I described these struggles as well as my growing awareness, and my reflection on my teaching, actually brought about an improved interaction with my clients. My data collection had moved from being a hindrance – one that detached me from the coaching experience – to one that actually nourished it.

Ethics – Aspect 1

In the midst of living the experience of the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) I had to consider my ethical standpoint. The question was: What ethical guidelines would be appropriate to this particular data gathering activity? While the more traditional ethical considerations were applied to the project as a whole, and specifically to Aspects 2 and 3 (see later in this chapter), studying the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) in an immediate and personal way required a more bespoke approach.

I read McNamee et al. (2006), who warn about the dangers of a type of ethical tick box system. McNamee et al. (2006) state that all of the ticks in the right boxes and all the protocols promised do not mean that the project suddenly becomes ethical. I was reminded of the case of Larry Nassar (2018). For many years Nassar was responsible for developing and overseeing the standards of physiotherapy for the USA's female gymnastics team, including being in charge of the child protection protocols that protected the many hundreds of under-aged gymnasts who were training in the facility on a regular basis. In 2018 Nassar was jailed for over a hundred years for thousands of cases of child abuse on his physiotherapy table. On paper every box was ticked by Nassar, to the extent that for many years nobody believed the gymnasts when they reported their concerns. He is clearly an unethical person, but sadly the tick box 'ethical' system that USA gymnastics had implemented actually enabled his malpractice rather than stopped it (Nassar, 2018).

When it concerns my coaching, as stated, important to me ethically is to be the best coach I can be at all times, and I did not want the collection of my data to impede my relationship with my clients. As mentioned earlier, I was happy that I had found a way to collect my data that did not interrupt my coaching. Regarding my personal responses to the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2000), in my journals I made the decision that it would be ethically unsound not to write freely and in an inhibited fashion. I had to write freely in order to create valuable data. Therefore in order to feel able to write spontaneously I had to protect my journals. I had to make sure that these journals in their original states would never be seen by anybody. By taking this action I would ensure that no part of what I had written could possibly be misinterpreted or judged. I would then decide afterwards which parts of the writing should be used and which should not. The journals were stored under lock and key, and various levels of password security and encryption were employed, the protocols of which are covered later in this chapter.

Another ethical question for me was: Should I be discussing the secrets of the Tao Te Ching at all? (Appendix 1.1). I decided to contact Damo Mitchell for some advice. Mitchell reminded me that there are many layers of masking techniques within the Tao Te Ching (Appendix 1.1). The example he gave was the use of metaphor. He explained to me that from the Taoist perspective one can only understand metaphor to the depth of one's life experience. A child may understand the same metaphor differently to an adult. The information is naturally clouded for those not ready or able to see it. Mitchell said that although I had been given a type of key (knowing that the text contained clues as to the qualities of experiential transmission) my interpretation was still only that – my interpretation – and providing that fact was mentioned in the project (as it is being now) ethically all that was being revealed was my point of view (Appendix 1.1).

Mitchell also reminded me of what our teacher in China had said. During our training he had told us very clearly that there was no ethical boundary when it came to sharing a little of the knowledge generically. He also said that it would be ethically wrong not to share what we 'know' at the 'right' time providing respect was paid to the form, and that the knowledge was presented as an up-to-date and personal interpretation – an expansion of the ideas. Remembering the Master's words I became confident that my process of data collection and recording was ethically sound.

Aspect 2 – The coaching recordings

Researcher – Aspect 2

As a researcher I found that the decision concerning sample size became a complicated one that needed to be resolved. I researched the answers to two questions: First, what would be an appropriate sample size? Second, as a coaching professional I might sometimes see as many as a hundred and twenty different clients over a two-week period. How would I select my cohort?

After delving into the research on sample size I began to realize that my project might be best aligned with the approaches of someone such as Ricoeur (1981) who sees large numbers of sample size in research as inhibitory. Approaches such as Creswell's (2007) that suggest up to twenty-five different participants felt unworkable – even daunting – a feeling I did not want to bring to my project. Although I saw many clients, and that experiential transmission played a part in working with all of them, this particular research project needed to be able to explore the personal immediacy of our relationship. I felt that such a high level of personal and intricate study would be difficult to achieve with too many participants.

Ricoeur (1981) warns against a type of over-simplifying that might happen with too many participants being selected. I hypothesized that a smaller number of participants was more likely to create a study based around what Smith and Osborn (2003) describe as a 'richness of the individual cases' (Smith and Osborn, 2003, p.53). Experiential transmission is by its very nature a personal experience and therefore having to generalize due to too many participants would be inhibiting to the individual nature of the study (Evans, 1999). It would be difficult to establish personal depth and a richness of result.

In later publications Smith et al. (2009) suggest a concentrated homogenous sample of approximately six, which to me felt relevant and doable. I was eventually most influenced by Evans' (1999) argument. Evans (1999) sought even fewer participants to create an even more concentrated study, and emphasized that the ones chosen should be characterized by their closest natural resonance to the material. Evans (1999) gave me a clue as to how to select my cohort: those that most closely resonated with the phenomenon I was studying – experiential transmission. These clients would be first in line. My project might be the first of its kind to study the phenomenon and so I wanted to report the presence of experiential transmission as clearly as I could rather than, for example, studying the effects of its absence.

Eventually, I settled on a sample size of four for the research proper and a sample size of two for the pilot study, as suggested by Pollio (1997). It felt workable. With this choice of fewer participants my feeling about the research moved from trepidation to excitement. Regarding the choice of the individual participants who were being coached, I decided to heed Evans' (1999) advice that they should already be open to the material. The result was a set of participants who were open-minded to new ideas, who had responded well to experiential transmission in the coaching situation (even though they did not know precisely what it was), and when approached were generally excited and open to the project's subject matter. There were still too many viable candidates from which to choose, so for the sake of simplicity and ease, I decided to select all of my clients from the same school.

The recordings of the coaching sessions mainly took place in the school's coaching facility. This was a private space that my clients and I had got to know well over the years. Here, after some initial and awkward stumbling due to the self-consciousness caused by the fact we were actually recording something that had always before been private, we quite quickly felt able to 'be ourselves'.

Coach – Aspect 2

While listening to the coaching recordings repeatedly, and then transcribing them, I realized that I was starting to get know the clients involved in my project differently. I was getting to know them more intimately – more fully. I think this increased knowing of them came partly from my becoming more and more aware, with each listening, of the level of trust they placed in me as a coach – or to be more specific the trust they placed in me as the person behind the coaching mask. Similar to what Hannafey and Vitulano (2013) observe I was witnessing a type of 'agency trust' that 'with specific duties goes beyond the usual standards' Hannafey and Vitulano (2013, p.1). I was pleased to realise that this type of immersion in my clients' recordings, necessary for my auto-ethnographic response (Ellis and Bochner, 2006), was actually emotionally educating me about my clients in an altogether deeper way. And this emotion, my improved link with my clients, seemed to produce more personal responses in our sessions together. These responses were then explored on the pages of my journals.

On a lighter note, the more I studied the recordings the more I noticed that there often seemed to be an underlying sense of enjoyment to the sessions. Similar to what Machin (2010) says this experience was not friendship, rather a sense of being in a 'special relationship' (Machin, 2010, p.5). For me, revisiting the recordings time and time again,

listening to sessions that contained such an inherent sense of fun, often laughter, meant that I was uplifted too as I conducted my research. I even found myself looking forward to certain moments in specific recordings where I could laugh along. Bluckert's (2005) paper 'Critical factors in executive coaching – the coaching relationship' warns that coaching training needs to be more focused on the relationship with the client than on the technique the coach might be using. After listening to the recordings I would have to say that I agree. I write about the importance of natural momentum in coaching (Rowe, 2015) and it was gratifying to feel it so obviously in action in the recordings, often created through this sense of enjoyment.

Before meeting my coachees or clients, I want to remind the reader about my use of experiential transmission in coaching which I believe can be effectively approached by contrasting it with both Otto Scharmer's ideas and also those of Carl Jung. Like Scharmer's Concept U being formed from the seeds of his boyhood home being enveloped in flames, Carl Jung's thinking on synchronicity was triggered by a conversation he had with Albert Einstein in the early part of the twentieth century. From Einstein's surmising a Theory of Relativity, Jung started to visualise a connection between inner and outer events in the universe. This idea of synchronicity or 'psychic parallelisms' (Coward, 1996, p. 140) was nurtured by Jung's reading of the I Ching.

Meet the clients

Faith

As a teacher Faith would work herself to her physical and mental limits in order to meet the school's excessive targets, and she would attain these targets while still 'being there' for the students she taught. Most teachers would collapse under this sort of pressure but for Faith her open and direct drive, excessive natural stamina, and total energetic focus allowed her to stay on track. There were occasions when she reported that she could not lift her head from her desk, but these were rare. The coaching offered Faith the opportunity to say much of what she could not express in the field and this energetic release meant that she was free to carry on unburdened for a while. There was a similarity between Faith's approach to the students and my own from the past. While this type of student/teacher relationship often produced exciting results I was only too aware of the emotional and physical dangers of living one's teaching career on the edge of exhaustion. Fortunately I was able to guide Faith to work within her physical limits despite her being so naturally and energetically driven.

Faith's background somewhat reflected my own. She was brought up with the inconsistency of an alcoholic father and an absent mother. Unlike her siblings she had escaped this cycle and was aware and appreciative of the improved situation and direction that her decision had enabled. One of her goals was to ensure that she was far enough away from her old patterns for them not to repeat in her. Faith might be the most genuine and unaffected person I have ever coached. During our sessions she was open, charismatic, self-deprecating, brutally honest about herself and others, and had a very earthy sense of humour.

The reasons I selected Faith for this study were many. She worked with, and loved, the creative dimension and at the same time (in common with many creative teachers in schools that I coach) she was grounded, and her ideas were workable. She was incredibly inspiring in the creative arena to her students and would regularly persuade them to put on wonderful dance shows. She was also very open to embracing new ideas. Faith was particularly fascinated by the more esoteric approaches to coaching and would often talk about the 'energy' in the room and how particular people 'felt' to her. The momentum she created towards achieving her goals was extraordinary and she often surpassed them very quickly.

Sessions with Faith often contained no pauses whatsoever from her side of the room – even when she was tired:

John: So, how's tricks?

Faith: Good. Good.

John: Looking at you right now – I'm not sure I believe you.

Faith: (laughs) Well, you know. Good, yeah, all right. Eventful. Just got back from New York. The kids – kids were fantastic. Amazing – really good. Had a fantastic time. Got some lovely emails from parents just saying thank you – which is amazing considering what they are like. The kids – they said the kids had an amazing time ya de ya de yada. That was really good – so that was really positive. Erm. A bit sad.

John: Why's that?

Faith: (laughs).

John: Where did that come from?

Faith: What?

John: (they laugh)

Faith: Sorry – just a bit hysterical.

John: Maybe you might pause – for breath?

(both suddenly laugh loudly)

Faith: Not a chance. John I've got so much to say.

John: (still laughing) Go on.

Faith: Ok. The faculty – I feel like we're moving in the right direction – we're on it with systems and everyone is on the same page – we're definitely going forward and now – now we've been told the head is leaving! He led the change. So it's sad.

John: Ah. So you're approaching a transitional stage. Would you like to discuss strategy?

Faith: (ignoring what John has said) God – I'm knackered. Obviously as group leader I'm the last one to bed and the first one up. Twenty-three kids in Times Square.

John: Why was that? Surely if you were group leader you could have delegated and put structures into place with the team to balance the role out?

Faith: You would think – but because I was so much in control people just let me – get on with it.

John: Hmm. Let's talk about that.

Faith: (laughs) It was just easier to do that for a short period of time.

John: To put a Band Aid on it?

Faith: Actually everything I delegated beforehand they did.

John: (interrupting) But did you genuinely empower people and hold them accountable or just give them jobs to do? In other words were you managing the trip or were you leading the trip?

Faith: I was surviving the trip – survival is very under-rated.

John: (smiling) Pretty essential I'd say.

(Faith 3.3)

In the extract above we witness Faith's irrepressible nature. Her body language is open and welcoming. Her tone, even though exhausted, carries a sense of fun, as if she is taking part in a school play and the show must go on – loving the freedom of the limelight. Our work together always felt naturally fluid and energized to the point where I would sometimes wonder who was actually coaching who. It often felt like a joint effort.

The lightness of touch and humour Faith brought to our coaching sessions encouraged us to move freely towards Faith's goals. Ronglan and Aggerhom, (2013) state that humour in coaching can be seen as a 'balancing act between the inherent intentions of seriousness and fun, distance and closeness, authenticity and performance' (Ronglan and

Aggerholm, 2013, p.1), and this description accurately describes our coaching relationship.

Our coaching relationship could also be categorised by Faith's desire for balance. Balance becomes a central idea in Jung's reading of Taoist thought. His idea of synchronicity (or balance) translates to the individual being a participant in and related to the "patterning of events in nature" (Coward, 1996, p. 482). The similarity with experiential transmission with Jung's Taoist inflected synchronicity appears clear to me. What is emphasised is an interdependence of mind and nature: the inner psyche and the outer world come together meaningfully. What does this mean in a coaching dialogue? First of all, just as Jung learned from his own studies of Taoism, there is no linear evolution. The aim is to be in touch with one's internal consciousness, to develop a balanced Self.

Adela

When we first began our coaching sessions, three years ago, it took me a while to get to know Adela and for our relationship to establish itself. In fact, I was surprised to see her sign up for the second set of coaching sessions in year two because there seemed to be a sense of unintentional defensiveness on her part. By the third year we were working much more productively together mainly due to the element of trust that had developed between us. Previous sessions had brought about a great deal of success regarding Adela achieving her professional goals as a school leader and these growing accomplishments slowly encouraged Adela's confidence in the coaching process. Perhaps because of our rather distant start I very much enjoyed the camaraderie of our later coaching situation.

Adela was a teacher who knew herself to be very sensitive to criticism. Sometimes she would be wary of new ways of looking at things, but would quickly recognize this failing and be able to move herself past her self-perceived blockages. Often she would begin our sessions rather defensively only to realize it and to correct herself.

The reason I selected Adela for the project was her interest in the idea that coaching in schools could and should go beyond the norms. Her fields were broad, ranging from psychology to sociology and philosophy, and after initial conflicts between these areas (such as her trying to explain her achieving her goals in psychological terms that contradicted her philosophical ideals) these areas eventually became supportive of each other. Adela was frustrated that the bar was set quite low when it came to what coaching could achieve in schools and was very interested in exploring ways of improving this level of expectation. There was also a strong indication that Adela would appreciate discussions

on alternative dimensional approaches to coaching, such as those surrounding experiential transmission, because of the frequency to which, in years 2 and 3, she would be drawn to discussing the process of achieving her goals in more creative ways.

It seemed to me that Adela was always driven but she did not always realize it:

John: So, how are things going?

Adela: (laughing) Well, I was going to arrange that meeting with Brian.

John: Okay.

Adela: But when I got back to my desk after our last session he'd already sent me an email.

John: That's amazing.

Adela: It is isn't it? (laughs again) He wanted us to meet to discuss something similar, so I decided to commandeer the meeting – by using our technique.

John: Which one? There have been so many.

Adela: Managing upwards by talking to the person not the role they play – who they are with their personality traits rather than being intimidated by the role itself.

John: Ah. That old chestnut. Was it a shrewd move?

Adela: I wasn't sure whether to go. Even after all that – that work – but I did.

John: And what did you want to get out of the conversation?

Adela: And as you said – talk to him as a head rather than *my* head. To be honest I couldn't see that working but as I did it – it was so easy – the shift was subtle. I was respecting his expertise rather than putting him on the spot – and it worked – it was easy really.

John: Hmm. That doesn't really answer the question.

Adela: Doesn't it? I thought it did?

John: What was it you wanted from that meeting?

Adela: Well – well – not sure – not really – didn't I? I thought I did.

John: What you described was more that it was successful. That it felt successful. But successful in what context?

Adela: I don't think so – no – it's that I couldn't remember. I did have a clear intension.

John: So in what ways was the meeting successful?

Adela: (laughs). It was successful in many ways.

John: (smiles) Care to elaborate?

Adela: I got the progression and assurances I was looking for – I got the advice I was looking for.

John: And on a scale of one to ten how much did you feel you created a sense of respect for yourself in the role? How well did you address the fundamental?

Adela: During the meeting? I'll give myself an eight.

John: What makes you say that?

(Adela 3.6)

Adela battling herself more or less in every session became a source of wry humour for us both. Observing her fear responses: closed body language, tense and overly considered answers that would eventually move to become more immediate, more light, more open and instinctive, to me typified Ronglan and Aggerhom's, (2013) concept that (similar to Faith's situation) these battles can indeed be productively tackled by the coach from the perspective of humour. So often in our sessions Adela would exclaim 'I'm doing it again aren't I?' and we would chuckle and start afresh.

Adela's battle – her wanting to move from what she saw as the safety of the analytical approach represented by her study of psychology more towards the felt sense became our mission. Bass and Davis (2002) observe that healing doesn't happen until we consciously choose it. With Adela this methodology was not quite the case and I found myself more pondering the nature and value of 'openness' than the nature of 'choice'. Moore (1994, p.4) states: 'We need people in our lives with whom we can be as open as possible' and I found myself wondering if the open and non-compartmentalized qualities of experiential transmission worked as a type of background key to the coach providing this service. Moore (1994, p.7) also points out: 'To have real conversations with people may seem like such a simple, obvious suggestion, but it involves courage and great risk.' With Adela I found myself wondering whether or not experiential transmission constituted the power of 'real conversations' and how the quality of 'real conversations' might be brought about in coaching (Moore, 1994, p.7). The openness and real conversations that Moore refers to recall to my mind how the role of being 'unmasked' and of being real plays in the coaching relationship if we want to develop the self and become balanced. Jung (Coward, 1996) saw that the Taoist model for the development of the self lay in being balanced. Similarly, the aim of experiential transmission is to discover one's sense of balance. This could be in a practical sense perceived as the art of letting things happen, of letting go of oneself. In experiential transmission the necessary unblocking so that a

coachee can become more balanced and in harmony with herself is affected by the coach creating a sense of unity of being. The coach must be without artifice, without a mask.

Hilda

Hilda was a science teacher and therefore tended to take a more scientific stance when it came to her coaching responses. Hilda was extremely enthusiastic about her coaching from the onset. She was dedicated to the coaching experience and we would often meet for our coaching sessions after the school day as this was the only time she could guarantee making on a regular basis. Like Faith, Hilda was full of an open natural drive that underpinned our coaching experience together.

Hilda was very adept at attaining her goals and ambitions. When we met she was 'just a science teacher'; now she writes for magazines and regularly presents her ideas on teaching and learning to senior leaders at national seminars. She is also training to be a coach. Initially her viewpoint tended to come from 'I can't really understand how that would work' to become 'let's try it and see'. This transformation happened when Hilda began to experience her goals being quickly achieved by using strategies new to her, and was happy to recognize this experience as being vital to her progression. From here she became more adventurous. This movement towards greater risk, together with her open and natural drive, momentum, sense of fun and self-awareness, was why I selected Hilda to be part of the final group.

Hilda: Hello.

John: Hello. So how's tricks?

Hilda: Great. Good. Good.

John: Wow. So there's movement?

Hilda: (laughs) only in my brain.

John: That's still movement.

Hilda: As a side note though – you know the conversation we had last time about being genuine?

John: Yeah. Yeah.

Hilda: Literally the next time I was in the classroom with my Year 11s who I see a lot were talking about which were their favourite teachers – who they rated as teachers – and the thing they came out with was basically what we were just talking about – and they went – they were saying – we don't need to know all about their personal lives... (laughs).

John: That's so funny

Hilda: So in terms of my brain.

John: Yes. What's going on in there?

Hilda: Thinking about [my] PhD – I'm still not sure.

John: Not sure of what?

Hilda: Well I know what I don't want to do. But what I do want to do is still a mystery.

John: Well what do you want to achieve by doing it?

Hilda: I have flavours of it.

John: Go on.

Hilda: I want to improve education – the experience – the experience for the teacher but whenever I start thinking about it I get so far and hit a dead end. I don't see how it would get there from here – from that starting point. I'm thinking have we missed a trick here?

John: Could it be along the lines of embracing the genuine rather than the superficial?

Hilda: When I did my research for my Masters I wasn't demonstrating learning I was really learning and showing that.

John: Maybe there's a key there.

Hilda: Maybe. Maybe. I often think step up and look in the mirror.

John: For you or for other teachers who you are training?

Hilda: Other teachers but now you mention it.

John: Okay. This is an interesting conversation. If you did, for yourself – what might you see about yourself? If you didn't compare yourself to others what would you see?

(Hilda 3.3)

Unlike Adela, Hilda's tone and body language usually remained open and relaxed whether or not she was expressing herself through the language of a science teacher. There was no retreating or hiding out and seemingly no internal unconscious battle regarding anger or fear. As demonstrated in the session above, when she could not express herself in terms of science she would effortlessly move to more creative language to find a way of saying what she meant.

Despite this underlying certainty in body language and tone Hilda did present a contradiction. Although her transmission was open, relaxed and positive she tended to doubt herself verbally. In other words elements of her behaviour exuded confidence other than sometimes the content of what she was actually saying. Hilda mainly questioned her ability to see workable pathways towards her goals. When I would point out that she was actually developing her pathways and achieving her goals she would shrug or laugh.

Because of her successes I eventually decided not to continue to draw her attention to the impression of self-doubt she was demonstrating, as it appeared to make little difference to the outcome of our sessions.

Alice

Alice would describe herself as sensitive and I would agree. Her goal was to 'be' more often and she was certainly spiritually aware: 'whatever truth is – I don't know – It's about being – being in the moment – as real as possible' (3.3). During our sessions she realized that she was getting lost in a type of spiritual indulgence that made her feel as if she was consistently on the back foot. She realized that she had all the words and expressions of someone spiritually balanced but was not really actively living what she believed within this arena. This contradiction was affecting her sense of connection with herself and others at home, and at work, causing a type of distancing effect. Alice was someone who would be inspired enough by our coaching conversations to totally apply what was discussed to her daily practice. Her level of commitment made her an obvious choice for my project:

John: Well – in comparison I would say – sitting here now that there is a difference. The person I met two years ago was a little more – erm – ethereal – than the one sitting opposite me now. I suppose I might describe her then as – I think I would say passive – as if this was the way that 'good' spiritual people are – sitting back – be – kind of overly 'understanding' of everyone and somehow from my perspective I saw – I experienced – a type of detachment from self – someone thinking that spirituality was a kind of spaced out thing. Nowadays all of the spirituality is still here – you definitely care as much – but it is as if you have come into yourself – caught up with yourself – what do you think?

Alice: I'm happier that's for sure. Feel a bit like – as you would say – I've grown a pair (laughs). Things are easier and more – happy – I'm in the groove – not such... not a puppet – no more excuses. I think – I – well, (laughs) I'm more on it. Yes. Yes. Yes. There's also, also that I now recognise when I'm doing it and I'm able to re-centre – be able to put my feet on the ground – I think that my centring is a more – a more actual experience now than before. Before I was (melodramatically) 'centring' now I just do it for real – centre that is (laughs).

John: What for you is the value of centring?

Alice: Oh it's just about being able to see things so much more clearly – much more clearly – less – well none – no emotional clutter in the way – and doing that without holding back – it's liberating – I can make clear choices.

John: Example?

Alice: Oh. Here's one – I'm leaving.

John: Really? So it's really happening?

Alice: As we've talked about – intimated – no actually talked about (laughs) I've been considering it for some time and then suddenly the opportunity has happened from nowhere. A phone call from nowhere – back to industry – I can't say anything about it at the moment. I'll know by next week.

John: You seem very excited about it – liberated I'd say.

Alice: If it comes off – I will be valued again – as a professional.

John: Hmm. What would you say if I reminded you that it's you who creates your sense of value?

Alice: I would say – that I know that – I love the fact that I can affect my environment by permeating it with who I am underneath – and I love that I value myself so much that I'm going to – hopefully – a place that values me more than here – I think – I think – what I mean is that there won't be so much of a battle to do it. I can nourish an already healthy – healthy ish – environment rather than using the technique to survive a very sick one.

John: Alice you seem to have come alive at the prospect of moving on.

Alice: There's – I feel it – it sounds dramatic, but life has possibility again.

John: It feels like – like rather than running away from school – from the difficulties and battles – you are walking away head held high to something better.

Alice: Agreed.

John: Okay. Here comes a typical coaching question.

Alice: (laughs) They are always fun – go ahead.

John: On a scale of one to ten.

Alice: (laughs out loud)

John: On a scale of one to ten – how much might you be idealising how perfect this new role is going to be for you?

(Alice 3.2)

Alice's sessions were always steady and tranquil. She had a calm, pensive, gentleness about her. Stanislavski (2013) has written that we all have our own pace as individuals and that no two paces are exactly alike. Alice's pacing stood out as it was almost completely contrasting to the loud, busy and frenetic environment of the school. Alice cared very deeply about the students she taught and her wanting to care, but not having the time or resources to be able to do so properly, permeated our sessions together. Eventually she came to the conclusion that it was time to find another vocation, to find a job that more respected her caring nature and her considerable industry experience. The conversation above was one of many where Alice's conscience played a role in making leaving school a struggle. Eventually, as intimated by our dialogue above, she did move

to a different job. When I saw her again for our final interview she was truly a changed person. It was as if a huge weight had been lifted. She looked ten years younger and had the energy of a much younger person.

Reflecting on all four coachees, I see Jung's Taoist influenced ideas on the importance of recognising how vital it is to become reconciled with whom we are. He understood the Taoist preoccupation with how the individual needs to be reconciled with herself and with what is happening in the world. Experiential transmission aims to effect this reconciliation, to find one's balance in the world.

Teacher – Aspect 2

From the perspective of the teacher I realized that all four participants very much personified their different subject areas. It was almost as if they had internalized the qualities of their subject and this had influenced what each brought into the coaching room. Faith as a dance specialist brought with her a sense of openness, creativity, natural flow and irrepressible energy; Adela, the psychology and sociology teacher, brought into the room a sense of grounding and a focus on social systems; Hilda, a science teacher, tended to be very factual, linear and interested in cause and effect; and Alice who specialized in special educational needs brought with her a sense of kind openness and a type of new age spirituality.

All of my selected clients were subject specialists away from my own. What on the surface might have been beneficial to the project (Evans, 1999) – a wide range of client approaches to teaching within a small sample number – for a short while brought about a slight feeling of trepidation because I felt I might be working out of my depth. But gathering the data turned out to be without worry. Listening to each session felt like a type of springboard into something new, something I could develop further, and the particular subjects my clients' taught was not an issue. I realized that my confidence came from a firm belief in the solution-focused approach (Connell, 1998), and that this belief underpinned my coaching practice. To know that the client has the answer, and to be able to give them the confidence to access it, means that I can coach into subject areas for which I have little or no expertise. I think for my coaching in schools, and for this project, more important was that I had been a teacher for a long time and so knew the lay of the land when it came to the teaching and coaching environment.

Ethics – Aspect 2

From the Aspect 2 perspective (that of collecting and analyzing the recordings of the coaching sessions) my ethical responsibilities were to ensure the protection of the rights and the wellbeing of my clients, and to ensure a high level of personal and social responsibility (Wiles et al., 2007).

Needing to be considered was specifically targeted participant consent. I looked to Ramos (1989) for advice because his approach seemed to align with the various levels of my project. Ramos (1989) states that informed consent can be required on more than one level. The first level concerns clarity. It is about the clearness of what the research will entail for the participant, together with reassurances of confidentiality and security of the information gathered. The second level concerns personal transparency. It is the safety net supporting the personal responses of the participants of the study. Included are the depths to which subject matter might resonate with the participants' personal insecurities and possible disturbances of their pasts. To avoid any confusion I made sure that both levels were considered in line with Middlesex University's strict and thorough guidelines on the subject.

Satisfying my ethical obligations for this area of the study was not straightforward. During the process Middlesex University brought to light that a higher level of consent needed to be in place before the project could begin. Improvements had to be made under the bracket of clarifying possible areas of harm. Although Wiles et al. (2007) explain that there is no generic formula to the construction of consent and personal risk paperwork (as each project is essentially individual) Diener and Crandall (1978) advise all researchers to be aware of the harm associated with lack of informed consent. I structured an improved Participant Information and Consent Sheet (Appendix 5a). This form included more detailed information on the project and more clearly stated the possible elements of risk in line with what Diener and Crandall (1978) suggest.

Another area that I wanted to be sure of, for the protection of my clients, was anonymity (Myers and Newman, 2006). I was acutely aware that a coach's reputation concerning anonymity and trust was an important one, and that one minor slip up from the coach in this area might destroy a client's trust in him forever. I had coached my clients for three years and they had grown to have faith in my professionalism. I did not want to risk losing their trust now. Written permission was of course obtained from these clients regarding anonymity and the use of our recordings and transcripts. After the project began all protocols were adhered to and the information was safely stored anonymously.

Electronically, there were three levels of security, and my laptop itself along with any hard paperwork was stored securely in a heavy filing cabinet under lock and key. The candidates had the opportunity to check the final thesis and its appendices to be certain that the agreement had been maintained. None complained.

All audio recordings of the coaching sessions and the interviews are to be destroyed once the thesis has been passed, in line with privacy agreements. Voices can be identifiable no matter how anonymously they are labeled (Myers and Newman, 2006) and so there is no choice other than to delete them. These are recordings that have only been listened to by me. The transcripts of the recordings were made only by me and have only been read by me. Names, events and situations have been changed in the transcripts in order to maintain a high level of privacy. They are coded and held securely under lock and key in a locked room. Again, these will be destroyed once the project has been completed.

*

Aspect 3 – discussions with candidates on the findings

Researcher, coach and teacher – Aspect 3

Due to the esoteric nature of experiential transmission I expected this discussion phase to raise issues regarding quality. (Here I have used the word ‘quality’ to represent the generation of data that is meaningful to the nature of my study (Bryman et al., 2007)).

Schutz (1962) describes the data collection for this part of my project as second order. (First order would be the gathering of the initial data, from which the second order data is constructed.) For second order data collection Schutz (1962) encourages the researcher’s technique to be thorough, as it is the second order data collection that often triangulates the findings. With this in mind, I undertook two pilot interviews in order to practise my technique. I was very pleased I did because my approach was initially clumsy and required considerable refinement.

In the first pilot what was meant to be a natural discussion became quite stilted for my client and me. During the conversation I felt a little uneasy and not quite myself. I seemed to take on the role of the stereotypical interviewer rather than the active participant in the discussion. In other words, I ceased to become my natural relaxed self and for some reason took on a more artificial stance. The conversation seemed skewed and outside of our usual personal, natural and fluid states as coach and client. Quickly the conversation ceased to be personal. My superficial state had produced a superficial outcome. On reflection I realized that I was prioritizing the importance of my data collection over that of

my natural conversation with my client. The contradiction was, of course, that it would be the element of natural, fluid and energized conversation about experiential transmission that would create the personal 'quality' data in the first place (Byrman et al., 2007).

Generally my lack of ease meant that the first pilot interview did not reveal the type of energetic in-the-moment discussion that I hoped would produce the quality second-order data for which I was searching. The positive aspect was that although this experience might be described as not producing meaningful data it offered me the opportunity for further journaling that expounded the importance of natural conversation to coaching outcomes in general. This particular exploration led me to the conclusion that when it comes to experiential transmission artificial conversation is likely to produce artificial outcomes and genuine and immediate interactions are likely to produce genuine and immediate outcomes.

The answer to my research dilemma was to re-prioritize. In other words, I recognized that I should simply be myself in the discussion, rather than pretend to be someone else. I needed to be John Rowe the person talking about his findings rather than John Rowe the doctoral interviewer. I certainly needed to be less concerned about creating an outcome and more concerned about the quality of the natural transmission that was happening during the conversation itself. I was very pleased that I had had the foresight to organize a second pilot. I had realized that for this particular project 'quality data' and 'natural connection with the client' were intrinsically linked and I wanted to insure that the latter (natural connection with the client) was in place to produce the former (my quality data).

During the second pilot I was less concerned with outcome. Paradoxically not being concerned with outcome, and instead focusing on allowing the natural process of conversation to unfold, produced more valuable data. For the first pilot I had slipped into the role of a type of semi-structured interviewer with the questions and diagrams presented in a linear fashion. For the second pilot, it occurred to me that the conversation might be more productive if the findings were discussed or presented in line with what seemed to be of interest to the client. In other words, similar to our coaching sessions the client would be the direction finder – the driving force.

Employing this strategy I was expecting to be led in various different directions and was therefore surprised when this particular client (and all of the clients in the research proper) took themselves through the diagrams in exactly the same order. Without my superficial 'interviewer' impeding the way, the diagrams instigated the discussions and naturally

drove the conversations forwards. The diagrams provided a creative catalyst that resulted in the conversations being fluid and exciting. From this point I found that a wide variety of in-the-moment experiences were developing as a type of 'connected knowing' (Belenky et al. (1997) between the candidates and me, and this event was producing the quality data for which I was searching. Heshusius (1994, p.20) describes this type of event as essentially 'co-evolving' and I felt I was more sensing and guiding our discussions than objectively considering what I was asking.

Once the research interviews were over with the four selected clients, van Manen's (1990) approach combined with Smith et al.'s (2009) ideas produced a structured yet organically fluid starting point for me to consider the data within the recordings and transcripts of these interviews. Smith et al.'s (2009) six-stage approach, the first of which was reading and re-reading, listening and re-listening, meant I could now take my time – spend time in thought. Here van Manen (1990) too very much values time and pondering. Pondering at times felt similar to meditation and produced a sense of calm and uplift that in turn produced some more interesting and unusual thematic links and ideas. I began to feel a little as if I was the custodian of the material and I needed to give it space to have a life of its own (van Manen, 1990). Sitting with the recordings and transcripts became immensely enjoyable.

Stage two of Smith et al.'s (2009) structure is similar to the way I had already been working in my research journal but required adaptation. It is the initial noting phase, something that for me turned out to be a more creative experience than Smith et al. (2009) suggest it might. I thought that constructing a creative response so early on would link more easily to Stage three where the emerging themes were explored, and this hunch certainly turned out to be the case. Stages two, three and four that search for connections were for me darted between to and fro rather than them being developed via the more linear process that Smith et al. (2009) describe.

Erickson (1982) cites variety in types of evidence as being important to the validity of a project so I also explored more traditional analytical approaches to the transcripts to see what might be produced. This approach turned out to be a fruitful addition to the exploration of the themes. Highlighting text then recording thoughts and ideas in the margin, then re-writing certainly gave a more classically analytical viewpoint from which to explore commonality (Erickson, 1982).

van Manen (1990) explores the importance of stepping away from the material in order to come back to it afresh. I gave myself this space for both my ideas and the felt sense

response to develop, from one sitting to another. The Tao Te Ching is designed to be pondered over again and again (Hu, 2005) and to be understood on different levels as we develop as individuals. I felt very much at ease using a similar type of approach to my responses to the client interviews. Casey's (1973) dimensional approaches (where the participant transcripts are explored through different levels of sensing) were very helpful. They gave me an added sense of confidence in the fact that sensing and creative exploration were valid ways of interpreting my material. Casey's *felt-sense* was especially powerful because here themes are connected simply by the feel of their emotional relevance to the phenomenon rather than through any of the more objective stances. Casey's (1973) *aesthetic aspects of language* seemed to give permission for my themes to be explored in an aesthetic dimension, and the value he gives to *visual imagery* gave me confidence to develop the visual images I used to finally express some of my findings.

Ethics – Aspect 3

Freeman (2015) asks whether it is achievable 'to make any watertight distinctions between autobiography, auto-ethnography and story, and whether different forms carry different ethical responsibility' (Freeman, 2015, p.93). To answer Freeman's (2015) question I can see that from the Aspect 3 point of view there are two distinct layers of ethical responsibility. The first, already mentioned, is the more traditional ethical protocol – Middlesex University's extremely thorough online ethical procedures system (that for me ran to well over ten thousand words of response) designed to ensure the protection of all concerned. The second layer of ethical responsibility, altogether more immediate, is what I might describe as my moment-to-moment responsibility to my clients in the discussion situation. This type of consideration means that I must be consistently engaged in my natural and centred state with the client as we are discussing my findings. Knowing the positive power of experiential transmission (from the perspective of transmitting a centred coach rather than a superficial one) means that if I am not in a centred state then I am knowingly restricting the outcome. I am not facilitating a centred, liberated and free response from the client to the extent that I know I can.

For Jung (Coward, 1996), there is always a tension between inner knowledge and the outer world. He learned from his study of Taoism, as I have, that the inner is forever in tension with the outer. Jung recognised that 'the evolving self is not something that can be described' (p.490). Even though experiential transmission can appear a concept cloaked in ambiguity, I trust that by drawing on Jung's Taoist ideas, I was able to provide the reader with more fully drawn and explicit accounts of my coaching aims.

Summary

My belief concerning the process of gathering my research data was that I was developing a growing sense of confidence. By the time it came to the recorded discussions I was able to feel that the two potentially contradictory sides of the coin: yin (the creative and esoteric aspect of experiential transmission), and yang (the technical aspect of reporting my findings in a doctoral format), could co-exist in my research project.

My next chapter presents my research findings. I pull together my interviews, my journal entries and my responses to the Tao Te Ching in order to produce a thematic blueprint for how a better understanding of experiential transmission might help improve coaching in schools today.

Chapter five: findings

Introduction

This chapter begins by describing the themes I have identified from my source material (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I then analyse these themes in the context of educational coaching. I draw on my experience through the lens of auto-ethnography to ensure that my reporting aligns with the personal and experiential nature of my phenomenon (Ellis, 1999), experiential transmission. Entries from my journals are also included to add what I intend to produce: a rich and layered texture (Ricoeur, 1981; Ellis and Bochner, 2006).

Aims and objectives

My primary aim is to improve coaching by introducing an awareness of a relatively unexplored element to coaching – experiential transmission. I explore experiential transmission in the context of my main role as a coach in schools working with the teaching profession. In this chapter I want the depth of experiential transmission to be expressed in such a way that the phenomenon can be better understood by coaches in schools. To this end I will be using a heuristic model to amplify my ideas. A further aim is to convince educators that experiential transmission, either wholesale or facets of which, can be implemented into student learning.

Perspectives

I will be analysing experiential transmission from three perspectives in order to paint as full a picture as possible (Schutz, 1962): i) the perspective of the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005); ii) the perspective of my clients' coaching recordings; and iii) the perspective of my discussions with my clients on the research findings.

Stages

I have carried out my analysis in three stages:

Stage 1 – I have analysed the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005), along with my clients' coaching recordings, to produce my initial themes.

Stage 2 – I have discussed the Stage 1 findings with each client/participant and analysed my findings.

Stage 3 – I have analysed Stage 1 and Stage 2 together to triangulate my findings.

The thematic approach

Guided by auto-ethnographical methodology, I have explored my findings thematically (Ellis and Bochner, 2006). With Braun and Clarke (2006) as authors on whom I draw extensively I have used thematic analysis (TA) as an organisational tool throughout. According to Braun and Clarke (2006):

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in detail (2006, p.77).

With Braun and Clarke's (2006) description TA represents a structure able to support my multi-dimensional phenomenon of experiential transmission. Auto-ethnography requires depth and breadth to be of value (Ellis, 1999) and TA offers the potential to explore the many layers of experiential transmission in action.

This is an auto-ethnographic account of my coaching practice especially focussing on my life experiences to demonstrate why I coach as I do. I have always been concerned with what lies behind the mask. I never wanted to practise a surface or therapeutic approach to coaching because my life experiences, many of which I have drawn on in this work, have taught me that an interpersonal approach to most things is invariably the most effective. Experiential transmission has developed within my own coaching strategy, and could be conceived of as a fusion of Taoist thinking and my own deeply felt beliefs about behaviour that emerges from authenticity, from a ripping off of the mask we tend to adopt in professional life.

The very exercise of adopting an auto-ethnographic approach to relating how I use experiential transmission has helped me to reflect on the healthy, positive relationships I have built with my coaching clients over the years and also on how I have unmasked myself (or experienced the path to unveiling) to reveal an authentic human being so that I can create that all important shift in consciousness, those moments of epiphany in my coachees. These shifts have become themes for the purpose of analysing how my coachees experience my 'in the moment' coaching practice. Therefore, my choice of analysing my coachees' experiences with me thematically makes sense to me.

My hope is that these themes should resonate with coaches looking for a more developmental model of coaching rooted in a process of rich interpersonal communication. The themes encompass troubling, painful and difficult issues, issues that, if left to fester, may impact adversely on the individual and her organisation. Thematic analysis appears the ideal way to highlight and structure my findings.

Boyatzis (1998) perceives TA (thematic analysis) as an encoding process. Inspired by his approach, I have therefore organised my encoding to take the form of:

- a list of themes
- a complex model with themes
- indicators, and qualifications that are causally related
- something in between these two forms (Boyatzis' 1998, p.4)

The above bullet points form the structure around which I have reported Stages 1, 2 and 3 of my findings.

Germane to this project is Boyatzis' (1998) explanation of how themes might emerge: 'directly observable' or 'underlying the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998, p.5). I use both explanations to structure my responses. Boyatzis (1998, p.6) also describes themes as either directly 'inductive' – observable in the data, or 'deductive' – themes that emerge from the secondary exploration of the findings. Stage 1 of my research can be described as 'inductive' and Stages 2 and 3 as 'deductive'.

Researcher/Coach/Teacher

In previous chapters I have reported from three distinct viewpoints: the researcher, the coach, and the teacher, and have used these angles to express my ideas. For this particular chapter these angles have been modified to enable a fuller and richer exploration. Ellis (1999) stresses the importance of following the direction the phenomenon seems to want to take rather than enforcing one that is overly rigid. Hence, I have still used the researcher, coach and teacher perspectives, but the movement between them is now more fluid. To force an artificial structure would have felt contrived and inhibiting rather than supportive of my exploration.

The relationships detailed in this chapter centre on the coach and the client. The experience of experiential transmission is between me as the coach and my four coachees. It would be a fascinating research exercise to observe how coaching could then be adopted by teachers with students in the classroom, but this present study focuses on teachers as coachees.

Stage 1 – The construction of the themes

After analysing the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) and my clients' coaching recordings, I found four themes emerging as the most common. These were:

Theme 1 – ‘The experience of moving towards nothing’

Theme 2 – ‘The experience of nothing’

Theme 3 – ‘The experience of moving from nothing to something’

Theme 4 – ‘The experience of everything together’

Each theme has one or two subordinates:

Theme 1 – ‘Unveiling’ and ‘Undoing’

Theme 2 – ‘The Mysterious Pass’

Theme 3 – ‘Magic’

Theme 4 – ‘Non-linear evolution’ and ‘The nature of inspiration’

Overview of my themes



Figure 1 – Overview of themes

Theme 1 – The experience of moving towards nothing

The Tao Te Ching

In the Tao Te Ching (Trans, Hu, 2005) ‘the experience of moving towards nothing’ presents itself as the coach or teacher heading on a journey of self-improvement. The nature of this self-improvement is very specific. It is the coach or teacher identifying and removing any artificial beliefs they may be holding to reveal the more authentic self

underneath (Hu, 2005). These artificial beliefs, according to Lao Tzu, negatively impact our wellbeing together with our coaching and teaching practice. As coaches, if we personify artificial beliefs then, via experiential transmission (which contains the unadulterated quality of who we are), we will transmit them to the client – and harm them:

The world is a divine vase that cannot be
handled with any artificiality.

Those who act artificially will harm it
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.102).

Lao Tzu places great emphasis on the importance of the removal of the artificial nature of the coach and teacher. This removal he explains in terms of the identification and release of (what he terms) 'acquired action' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.156):

The only dreadful thing is taking much acquired action,
which always alarms me to discern what I should properly
do (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.156).

In a social context one might describe 'acquired action' as representing Giroux's (1983) many layers of social conditioning that, when peeled away (as Lao Tzu suggests), reveal the more unaffected self underneath (Appendix 1.8). From the Lao Tzu perspective (Trans. Hu, 2005), if the hold these 'acquired' layers have on us is not addressed then we remain in a cycle of 'acquired action' driven by our 'acquired learning' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.156). For example, a coach trained to adopt a superficial front is likely to develop a superficial relationship with the client (Jones et al., 2010). This type of relationship will then become the norm. If the nature of the relationship persists, it becomes the base from which the coach develops his or her expertise, a base which then becomes a way of being for perhaps for an entire career.

As with my example above, the issue with this 'acquired cycle' ('acquired learning' leading to 'acquired action') is that it generates more of itself. 'Acquired learning' leads to 'acquired action' and this 'acquired action' encourages more 'acquired learning'. This pattern of learning, and the transmission it produces in the coach and teacher, is what Lao Tzu warns us against. It might be described as the antithesis of the quality of the 'experience of moving towards nothing' because, as we will see in this chapter, 'nothing' represents the non-artificial self. In fact, being caught up in one's 'acquired cycle' might be described as the 'experience of moving away from nothing' because we are moving further away from a state of non-artificiality.

Lao Tzu advises us about 'acquired action' in the following way:

Those who want to gain the world by artificial ways shall not succeed, I assert (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.102).

The above quotation can be related to the Zen proverb:

You are like this cup — so full of ideas that nothing more will fit in. Come back to me with an empty cup (Chu, 2018).

When the proverb above is related to Lao Tzu's words we find the idea of the cup needing to be emptied before it can be filled. In other words, our 'acquired action' (in this case represented by the dirty water) needs to be addressed (removed) before 'non-acquired action' (represented by clean fresh water) can take its place. This process is covered in some detail later in the chapter.

There is a concern with addressing artifice and the vital role of presenting oneself unmasked in coaching literature. In particular Luthans and Avolio (2003) have written about authentic leadership and the role learning from experience plays in exemplary management education. Luthans and Avolio may be writing about management executives – behind the mask of the executive is a genuine human being – but the insistence on being more self-aware and on resolving inner conflict and tensions through emotional expression has direct implications for coaching learning professionals. If executives are the driving force for many of their employees within an organisation, teachers too are the driving force for their students in a school. The influence of a top executive impacts on the health of employees just as the influence of the head teacher and other teachers impacts on the climate and morale of a school.

To summarise so far: my first theme 'the experience of moving towards nothing' represents the idea that any artificial beliefs we may hold as coaches or teachers are likely to negatively impact our coaching/teaching environment. Artificial beliefs produce artificial actions which is a pattern that, if not addressed, escalates. To resolve the issue Lao Tzu suggests that as coaches and teachers we focus on the removal of our artificial beliefs. In the Tao Te Ching this removal is explained in terms of the gradual release of our 'acquired learning' (artificial learning acquired throughout our lifetime so far) so that we can see and feel more clearly, simply and authentically. Engaging in the shedding of our 'acquired learning' is what Lao Tzu defines as us becoming more genuine. From this improved state our transmission (that reflects the whole of who we are) becomes more genuine as well.

The participants' recordings

The participants make sense of 'the experience of moving towards nothing' differently from Lao Tzu, although they still describe the experience as producing a positive outcome. Hilda speaks very bluntly about the removal of the superficial:

Hilda: I sometimes think like without considering this Eastern approach it's about getting things off your chest. Seriously when I look to all the teachers that are flaking around today – they don't have time to get rid of the crap.

John: Right. By crap – what might you mean?

Hilda: Superficial. Definitely yes. For me. Part of my process with you was to keep coming back to my values – where what's really important to me lies. When I look back over the last years. I think that's what the sessions over the years did for me. (2.4f)

Here, 'getting things off my chest' (the removal of the artificial demands of the school environment) is accompanied by the implication that an actual physical release occurs. The image of the removal of something heavy and restrictive to reveal a sense of improved wellbeing underneath is quite apparent. Hilda also says that this type of approach enables her to come 'back to my values' which implies her returning to a more authentic point of view once the artificial has been lifted. I will be returning to this theme later in the chapter.

Towards the end of the conversation with Hilda she explains more about the feeling of the release of the artificial:

John: (laughs) You just said – Okay. You said initially that something was different – then you described it as being a relief. How does that work? What happened in between ['different' and 'relief']?

Hilda: Not being as I was – usually – for a moment – stopped holding on and let go – just a bit.

John: So – You said it was a relief. What do you mean by 'relief'?

Hilda: That you don't have to do things – to collect things – to prove yourself all the bloody time – you just have to become yourself – I'm probably talking shit, but you get my drift.

John: Go on.

Hilda: It's a – difficult to describe – yes relief. Life's a mess – can be a mess... and to know that there's some sort of value... It's completely the opposite to what we do as teachers. Isn't it? Imagine an exam that asks what things are not rather than what they are. 'Write an essay on what the atom is not' (laughs). (2.4gi)

Here the physical and emotional side of letting go is described (and re-lived by Hilda) as a welcome relief. This relief then causes a tangible sense of release in her as she imagines

a situation where she is not required to continuously 'build upon' in order to 'improve' (2.4gi). The discussion itself seems to create a releasing effect in Hilda.

Faith introduces another aspect of the artificial:

Faith: Okay. So if I use as an example one of our first coaching sessions where I was a new leader – I came in wanting to do everything for everybody.

John: I remember.

Faith: And I was just running round. I knew myself that wasn't the right thing to do – so I had the kind of knowledge behind – you know – but what you did was question – through questioning – you never told me anything outright – I discarded the idea of me having to run around and please everybody and look after them – because that wasn't working, and it wasn't sustainable – so that would disappear... (2.1pi)

Here Faith explores the idea that if 'the experience of moving towards nothing' is to be valuable then similar to solution focused coaching (Connell, 1998) she must already know the answers to her problems underneath the confusion. According to Lao Tzu (Trans, Hu, 2005, p.144) when we move towards 'nothing' and drop our 'acquired action' our truer nature is revealed. Therefore, this nature must have existed under the surface in the first place. In Faith's case, it is just that her 'acquired action' (wanting to 'look after' everybody) masks what she already 'knows' (that initially hers was not a healthy, inspiring or sustainable model of working in such a highly pressured situation). Like Lao Tzu (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.38) she describes this situation in slightly enigmatic terms: 'So I had the kind of knowledge behind...' implying that 'true' knowledge (that she finds difficult to explain) exists behind her 'learnt' (artificial) actions (2.1pi).

Adela too explores the value of the removal of 'acquired learning', this time from the perspective of the teacher:

Adela: If I think about the students I've worked with – the ones that started off as Ds and got A stars in the end – the starting point with all of those students was to let go of their impressions of themselves – you are not a D grade student – that does not define who you are. (2.2hi).

The removal of 'acquired learning' in this instance is related directly to improved academic achievement. Adela implies that once we 'let go' (2.2hi) we are much freer to learn. Adela also implies that, via her experience as a teacher, this removal (that might be described in terms of Giroux's (1983) social labelling) inspires confidence in the student. With Adela's help the students 'let go' of their learnt and limiting artificial 'impressions of themselves' (2.2hi). What is then revealed is the confidence and potential that already

exists underneath. Adela implies that this initial 'impression of themselves' has come about by the school negatively labelling the student and the student believing what they have been told (the 'acquired cycle'). The solution she has found is that 'the student has to stop seeing themselves as a D grade student' (2.2hi), something they can do with the help of their teacher by releasing their negative ('acquired') impressions of themselves.

To summarise: my clients suggest that the effects of releasing the artificial ('acquired learning') can be beneficial to both themselves and to the students they teach. These effects are tangible. For my clients this release can create significant emotional relief. For the students, the removal of the 'acquired cycle' can be part of them building an improved sense of confidence leading to improved academic achievement.

For the purpose of the thematic analyses, my concern is with my clients. Adela makes a crucial point about letting go of those 'impressions' of yourself – those impressions that could easily become a mask you wear, a mask that eats into you, a mask that separates you from making deep, personal connections with others as well as preventing you from accessing the authentic you.

Theme 2 – the experience of nothing

The Tao Te Ching

From the perspective of the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) 'the experience of nothing' represents the moment in which the coach and/or client is (often momentarily) free of their 'acquired cycle', and this freedom invites the 'non-acquired cycle' ('non-acquired' learning leading to 'non-acquired' action) to begin. It presents as a possible transformative moment for them both. In the context of experiential transmission this moment enables the type of personal growth that enhances the coach's ability to positively impact the client from behind the coaching mask.

Lao Tzu tells us that:

though being of infinite emptiness in contents,
it endlessly gives rise to all the myriad things
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.47).

'Nothing', rather enigmatically, represents the very moment before the new learning occurs. To expand on our 'empty cup' metaphor introduced in Theme 1: when there is 'nothing' (when 'acquired learning' has been lifted) the cup is momentarily empty. This moment of 'nothing' creates a type of vacuum, a space, that offers the opportunity for the

clean water to naturally rush in to fill the void (Hu, 2005, p.144). It is a moment of potential transition.

For Lao Tzu 'nothing' is a pivotal moment. It is central:

Thirty spokes are united, sharing one hub, forming one wheel.
Depending upon the hole of the hub, the usefulness of the cart comes into being.
Clay is mixed with water to make a vessel.
It is within the empty space that the use of utensils depends.
Doors and windows are cut to make a house;
it is the empty space within that the use of the house depends upon.
Therefore, something existent can be taken advantage of,
and something non-existent can be made use of.
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.63).

For my project 'nothing' is a moment that connects Theme 1 ('The experience of moving towards nothing'), with Theme 3 ('The experience of moving from nothing to something'). It enables the progression from one to the other. It enables the transition. Lao Tzu says that: '[it] serves as a communing doorway' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.51).

Within the Tao Te Ching 'nothing' is also linked directly to 'stillness' and 'emptiness' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.60) and within the Taoist culture all these terms have extremely positive connotations for transformation. The concepts are often interchangeable (Appendix 1.16). Regarding 'nothing' we are told that it is during stillness (nothingness) that the transformative 'ultimate motion' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.60) comes about:

When the heart is involved in ultimate motion and stillness, can you keep the heart still, falling into deep emptiness? (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.60).

Here, from a position of 'deep emptiness' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.60), we are now free to move forward. This experience can be difficult to identify and to grasp:

It exists as if sometimes in reality, and disappears completely every now and then (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.47).

In many Taoist writings this moment of 'nothingness' is referred to as the Mysterious Pass, as Lao Tzu describes:

The magical function of infinite emptiness is endless without limits (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.51).

Even more enigmatic, it is as if the Mysterious Pass, the moment of 'nothing', happens in 'no time' – in the 'space' where paradoxically 'nothing' exists. It might be described as a type of multi-dimensional void (Appendix 1.14). In the Taoist culture the Mysterious Pass is even said to be magical – a magical doorway (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.51).

The participants' recordings

'Nothing' from the participants introduces a potential lexical sticking point, that of a basic misinterpretation of the terminology. With my clients 'nothing' often implies *having nothing*, *hitting rock bottom*, and *doing nothing of value*:

Faith: But I've been given no extra budget. Nothing. (3.1iii)

Alice: I've hit a wall. There's nothing I can do. (3.3ii)

This interpretation is very different from the 'nothing' perspective of Lao Tzu. As discussed, 'nothing' represents a potential, a vehicle, an opportunity to head towards being more enlightened – a doorway. It is a vital transformative 'moment'. It is not a complaint. Indeed, the descriptions my coaches give of their situations seem to be the polar opposite of Lao Tzu's: lack of hope, being mired in inertia, as compared to possessing a seed for energetic growth.

Part of my work with my clients sometimes involves encouraging them to sit quietly for a short period of time each day to give space for ideas to emerge. But when 'stillness' and 'nothingness' are discussed in this context, as demonstrated by Hilda below, there is a rejection of their value:

Hilda: I know you talk about sitting doing nothing and allowing ideas to come but I tried it and just felt embarrassed. It's just not really who I am. (3.4ii)

I am reminded of the many people who on hearing that I meditate feel drawn to tell me that it is a waste of time. They say I am lucky to have the time in the first place (to waste) and perhaps I should think about using it more productively. Yet millions of people meditate in various ways every day and receive benefit from doing so. Regarding my critics, it feels to me, most of the time, that meditation is something they think they understand but don't. From their perspective (of never having meditated) their understanding of its potential is limited. Hilda typifies this stance perfectly. She states (about the process) rather ironically, 'It's just not really who I am' (3.4ii) yet just such a process, when better understood, (according to Lao Tzu) can be a way of us getting closer to our truer nature. This issue raises the point that when it comes to explaining experiential transmission, a way needs to be found to circumnavigate these types of lexical and experiential differences. Stages 2 and 3 of this chapter suggest the answer may lie in developing new terminology and to work more diagrammatically.

With Adela 'stillness' does better equate to Lao Tzu's interpretation of 'nothingness'. Adela's experience with 'stillness' (in this case associated with 'calmness') suggests a level of potential transformation:

Adela: I'm not complaining. It's exactly what I asked for just not in the way I expected it. I was calm and then I was I don't know – strong I think – but still really calm. I just sat there as nobody, someone invited to the meeting, but I knew it would happen I was certain and somehow it did. It swung it my way. I was so certain it would...(3.2vi)

From a position of stillness (instead of her usual trepidation) Adela sees her situation much more clearly and calmly and from this position she finds a new type of strength and an improved outcome. Her tone demonstrates a strength that she has not experienced before.

When it comes to the experience of 'stillness', with Alice one might expect that (because she enjoys a spiritual outlook) she may be more aligned with Lao Tzu's interpretation of 'nothingness'. In this instance this alignment is not quite the case:

Alice: It [meditation] sounded lovely. [What her friend had reported to her] To escape the problems and worries of work for a whole weekend. Oh goodness: She learnt to find that quiet place in her that after a busy day she could go to and recover to release any stress and worries. Loads of stuff about how to use protective bubbles. Protective energies. Could do with them here. Then she had to come back to school. (3.3iii)

Alice's explanation of her friend's meditation very much resembles the idea of an escape. The use of stillness is described as an activity in which one can, for a while, find solace – away from one's daily stresses and troubles. This interpretation does not sit easily with Lao Tzu's explanation of 'nothing'. With Lao Tzu 'nothing' is a vehicle that moves us naturally onwards. It is a device for us to evolve from a good place to one even better. According to Mitchell (Appendix 1.16), this '*nothing*' is accessed in order for *something* better to arrive. My teacher in China would not agree in any way that meditation should be used as a form of escape from the stresses of the world. He would tell us to sort out our personal problems in the environment in which they were created and then, when we felt at peace, to meditate. We were told that to bring one's problems to meditation would be incredibly disrespectful to the art form.

On one hand, within the coaching recordings there is evidence to suggest that my clients see the theme of 'nothing' as a form of laziness, recovery or even embarrassment. On the other hand, (similar to 'nothing' being transformative), I have observed my clients in their sessions having 'aha' moments, moments of sudden realisation, after which they become

instantly more energised. For a short time at least they seem transformed. As implied by Hilda these moments seem to appear suddenly and from nowhere:

Hilda: (laughs) What if the light switch went on and there was a type of connection and the magic appeared – started to happen? If you remember it happened repeatedly for me – at one point in almost every session and I always felt – lifted afterwards.... I always felt re-motivated and re-energised and it happened to me frequently. Through that doorway that we talked about earlier. I always used to say that it re-framed my mind.

John: That's so interesting – so is what you are saying...?

Hilda: (interrupting) that it is the feeling of it that puts you onto a different level (2.4hi)

There are many questions that arise from this situation such as the following: Could these 'aha' moments be more important to us as coaches than previously thought? Could these moments be a result of the temporary lifting of the client's 'acquired cycle'? Could they create a window of clarity, of opportunity? Could this temporary clarity create a transformative 'moment' that might put the client on a clearer path? Could the coach's transmission inspire these moments? The answers to these questions are addressed in Stage 3, where I triangulate my findings.

Hilda discusses a 'feeling that puts you onto a different level.' I posit here that this exemplifies her struggle to develop a deeper understanding of her complex emotional life. She is becoming connected to something valuable through the process of quiet introspection (as I do so with my own meditation).

Theme 3 – the experience of moving from nothing to something

The Tao Te Ching

'The experience of moving from nothing to something' represents growth. It is the growth represented by the fresh unpolluted water taking the place of the old, fetid water. It is healthy clear thinking – the filling of the cup anew (Trans. Hu, 2005; Chu, 2008). It is the experience of working from the position of the more authentic self. In Taoism this interpretation of the authentic self is known as 'Te' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.185). When the coach works from the position of Te their transmission is naturally uninhibited.

According to Hoff (1994) in *The Te of Piglet*, Te is our own individual natural irrepressible way. It is not the way we have been taught to be. Rather it is our natural personality devoid of artificiality. According to the Tao Te Ching, Te is the natural personality that emerges when the 'acquired cycle' has diminished:

No artificial action whatsoever is taken to qualify for Te.
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.120).

Lao Tzu does not state the quality of Te for what it is, rather he states what Te is not – what Te is the *absence* of. Here by describing Te as an *absence of artificiality* Lao Tzu leaves the reader free to decide what the phrase means to them personally – to imagine what it would be like to live (to be) without artificiality. He does not state what it is to be genuine.

Lao Tzu also states:

How deep and far-reaching the Magical Te is!
It stays far away opposite to all universal things,
thus, accomplishing the great harmony
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.185).

With his phrase ‘stays far away opposite to all universal things’ (Hu, 2005, p.185) Lao Tzu suggests that Te is a quality that is entirely of the individual. It cannot be generalised (‘universal’). It is from this individual state that one is able to move forwards free of contrivance. Te is so important that when it comes to transformation it is called ‘Magical Te’. The word ‘Magical’ is capitalised, so Te is not just described by the adjective ‘magical’ rather it is named as Magical so implying a closer conjunction between the two: Te and Magic.

As the verse develops, so does the description of the potential of ‘Magical Te’: the implication here is that Te is called ‘Magical’ because it transcends ‘things’ to create ‘great harmony’ within those ‘things’:

Lao Tzu observes:

To give birth to the myriad things and let them grow...
this is the most magical Te!
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.45)

Te enables the being of them...
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.151)

What springs to mind for me is the concept of the stage magician or prestidigitator who can seem to make something emerge from ‘nothing’ or from ‘nowhere’. Might Te be something seeming to appear out of thin air but in reality it is something that was always there but was hidden from sight? Might it be that it is not until we become the stage magician, until an understanding of how the illusion of stage magic really works, (the removal of our ‘acquired learning’) that we understand how to produce it? In this example the metaphorical magician is the one with Te, and the metaphorical audience

(those without access to Te) is impressed, excited and perplexed. They try to work out how it is done but are not able to understand the trick because they are only able to search for an answer from within their own perspective rather than the perspective of the magician. Perhaps they are aware that it is an illusion and that it only seems like magic, but they are still thrilled by the entertainment: the dimension of illusion. They come to watch the skill of the magician. It is something that seems like magic although deep down they know it is not. Indeed it is a process – just a process they do not understand.

The participants' recordings

Faith's coaching sessions reveal a type of newfound clarity, somewhat resembling a newfound sense of Te:

Faith: (laughs) I agree. I agree. I'm just so much – well – relaxed isn't the word – more feeling – I'm just – in the zone – in the groove of where I'm going. I see things – I – so, so, so, so, differently from before. It's like I've been set free (laughs again). (3.1vii)

In the conversation below, Faith compares herself with her sister who has had the same upbringing as she but has not moved on as much as Faith. There is a sense of personal development in Faith when compared to her sister. We get the impression that there has been quite profound growth for her. In stepping away from the old environment Faith has been able to find a clearer sense of self (Te):

Faith: ...I look at who I was – back when I lived in – when I was at uni or when I lived in Newcastle – and I look at the kind of person I was – the values that I had – very different to what I am now – and I can see that now – totally – crystal clear – but then I look at my sister who moved away a long time ago as well but she still holds similar values to before – similar – I would say – a little bit closed minded and things like that – but she – and then I look at what separates us both – like how I compare my journey with hers – we both had a close relationship with our mum – we both didn't have a great start in life – both of us came from a very poor background – and then it's just really interesting – and there's my brother as well – he's more like me – I'd say – but just the way we view life in general and the world around us – I feel like especially this last year – maybe two years I feel like I have had – probably gone through that doorway again and again and again and again – I don't eat meat anymore – I've got really strong opinions on things – kindness – being mindful – mindfulness is like this big thing for me – and so totally I can see that – and I feel like those doorways I've gone through have been quite drastic – past five or six years. (2.1u)

With Faith there is a strong implication that hers is a progression connected with the breaking of old patterns (which can be interpreted as being released from her 'acquired cycle') from her past. This detachment has enabled her to move more freely forwards. Lao

Tzu introduces his concept of how to change and to evolve somewhat along the same lines:

Persist in reducing the False Heart little by little
till all the acquired learning is dropped.
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.144).

In the quotation above Lao Tzu introduces us to the personification of the transformative journey. He describes our personal transformation as a movement from being driven by the 'False Heart' (led by our 'acquired learning') to being driven by the 'True Heart' (led by our 'non-acquired learning' – led by our natural personality – Te). Similarly, Faith (above) discusses the negativity of the 'acquired learning' of her past that she still sees personified in her sister. Faith might be described as having developed a 'True Heart' (Te) while her sister's in this context remains 'False' (the absence of Te). In the case of the extract above Faith could be said to be describing her observations of her sister from the perspective of Te: 'and I look at the kind of person I was – the values that I had – very different to what I am now – and I can see that now – total – crystal clear...' (2.1u).

Adela introduces us to a different way of looking at the lived experience of Te when she associates it with her personal development:

Adela: I suppose after talking to you today – the stuff that's within you? Like – a bit like the genuine and the fakeness – you could say 'I want to do this' and if that is a goal you don't really want – you just know you should want or is the next logical progression for you or for whatever it is you've been told is right – then healthy evolution doesn't really happen – it's distorted – like you might get the thing you want but you don't evolve – you don't get those holistic moments where you become a fuller or better person. Actually if you hoop jump I think you get I am now a better person rather than I am now a genuinely fuller person. (2.2q)

From Adela, we have the implication that for her personal development to be of value it has to derive from a place of authenticity. This description can be interpreted as Adela's development needing to come from the True Heart (Te). According to Adela, if a coaching goal is just something we think we want but it doesn't make us a 'fuller or better person' (2.2q), then although we might progress, we certainly don't grow to our fullest extent.

Within the coaching recordings there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the absence of Te in others (others caught up in their 'acquired cycles') causes problems for my clients. Alice, for example, describes the antithesis of Te in terms of people *playing* the role of how they feel they *should* be acting:

Alice: ... and therefore instead they put on a persona because they think it's how they should be – should be acting – and that they give in to all those

pulls and pushes in life that take over the fundamental of – of – of why you are doing something – and also making sure those people who are coaching have that. (2.3ci)

With Alice's quotation above we find ourselves once again in the presence of the Taoist device of explaining the importance of a phenomenon by describing the absence of its qualities. Within this device Alice explains, in her own terms, the value of a coach working from the position of Te, instead of acting as they feel they 'should be acting'. We are also introduced to the concept that if the Te of the coach can inspire (via experiential transmission) the Te of the client to emerge, then this situation would be beneficial for all concerned.

Both Adela and Alice indirectly refer to masks in their expressions 'genuine', 'fakeness', 'persona', 'acting.' Coaching such as experiential transmission that draws on deep interpersonal communications examines how our roles become masks that prevent us from accessing the kind of behaviours and attitudes rooted in our hearts. The process of working together as coach and coachee in experiential transmission helps the coachee to integrate her real self into what she thinks and does. The coach who is authentic and therefore free from wearing a mask can foster this deep, interpersonal relationship and nurture self-awareness (those 'aha' experiences) in her clients.

Theme 4 – The experience of everything together

The Tao Te Ching

'The experience of everything together' is represented by the personification of our previous learning experiences. This learning is personified in who we are – who we have become. It is the learning and the person combined as one. For example, a client who has had an abusive start in life may, as a result, personify this previous abuse in the form of current volatility and defensiveness. On the other hand, the coach who has developed (or is in the process of developing) the True Heart will be personifying this learning in the form of Te. In both instances, via experiential transmission, the people around them are affected either positively or negatively.

Throughout the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) there are forty references to indicate the qualities of 'the Sage':

For a perfect doing, Sages just get rid of excess, extravagance, and indifference. (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.102)

All of these references, including the one above expounding the virtues of Te, represent the importance of the teacher/coach/Sage learning to become a person free of contrivance – working without interfering – inspiring by who they are:

Thus Sages always act:

Letting all people live a life of freedom, never interfering, taking no credit for their deeds when things are achieved due to their 'efforts' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.41)

If taken literally Lao Tzu's words (above) might seem confusing. How can a coach work without interfering? However, if we look at the phrase from the point of view of experiential transmission, we find that Lao Tzu is saying that the transmission of the coach can inspire a life of freedom in the client because she, the coach, is free herself. There is no need for the coach to be interfering. Instead she is leading naturally by example. She inspires by who she is – the natural personification of what she has achieved, by what she has learnt.

Lao Tzu also seems to be suggesting that if the Sage/coach is not the personification of what she wants to inspire in the student/client then she will not be as successful a coach as those that are:

The perfect administration is free from any artificiality
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.100).

If the Sage/coach has developed a True Heart (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.66) only then is she able to inspire a True Heart in others:

Sages have no False Heart (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.147).

From the coach's position of 'the experience of everything together' (Te) Lao Tzu says:

They have faith in those who are faithful; they also have faith in those who are not faithful, thus, accomplishing the Sage's faith needed in Te. (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.147)

From the position of Te the coach develops an understanding for the human condition, for human nature, and is therefore able to 'have faith' in the client whether or not the client has faith in her (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.147). Also implied is the power of Te in the coach to naturally inspire coaches to overcome their issues.

The participants' recordings

To explore this theme from the perspective of the coaching sessions I have analysed how my clients felt on leaving the coaching room compared with how they felt when entering it. In other words: were my clients emotionally affected by being with me, within the field of my transmission, on a regular basis, regardless of the nature of the issues discussed?

Each client had a total of thirty sessions with me. These were spread over a period of three years, a block of ten sessions per year. I analysed whether or not the individual clients showed a rise in wellbeing during each session regardless of the problems we were addressing and whether or not they were reaching their goals. I defined improved wellbeing as the individual client's improved ability to 'generate the emotions that lead to good feelings' (Davis, 2019, p.1).

Beforehand I generated a hypothesis. I questioned twenty-five coaches, twenty-four of which said that it was likely that the subject content of the individual coaching session would affect the mood of the client. The following was discovered:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Adela	1/10	9/10	9/10
Alice	6/10	10/10	9/10
Faith	5/10	10/10	10/10
Hilda	5/10	10/10	10/10

From Year 1, a pattern emerged. All clients, once experiencing a rise in wellbeing during a session, had a similar rise in feeling in almost all of their subsequent sessions. It was as if it became an expectation. So Adela's tenth session of Year 1 was the only one that showed a rise in wellbeing, and after that the sessions that followed almost always showed a rise from when she entered the room until she left; for Faith and Hilda it took five sessions in Year 1 before the consistency came about; for Alice it was after her first six sessions.

Brause (2004) discusses the benefits of encouraging her clients to reward themselves when they have achieved their goals, but here it seems that there is no particular need to do so. While my clients report joy in achieving what they set out to do, there also seems to be an underlying sense of happiness after being in the session for five minutes or so. In other words, there is no need for specific rewards because the ease and uplift created within the sessions supersedes this need.

Of course these results also suggest something very ordinary: that my clients took a little while to get to know me, and to trust me, and to feel at ease with me. There were certainly present what Sheepers (2015) identifies as survival, escape and avoidance emotions: fear, anger, disgust, shame, and sadness throughout our time together. But when these emotions were triggered in the early sessions they took precedence over any sense of improved mood my clients had developed, and my clients would leave deflated. However, when they appeared in the later sessions these emotions were dealt with more effectively,

and as a result my clients almost always left the session more buoyant than when they came into the room.

My clients, at times, also felt relief at simply using our coaching to off-load, and after having done so would feel better (Faith 3.1). Others at times appreciated the fact that I was an outside agency and so they felt that they could be more open than talking to somebody from within the school (Hilda, 3.4iii). Yet, this does not explain the emotional lift experienced by my clients in the many sessions that were difficult for them, where they hit resistance to their ideas, had personal issues, or the times came into the room ill or overwhelmed. They still showed improved wellbeing during the session itself. It also does not explain why my clients would remember our sessions so fondly:

Hilda: (Warmly) Well I'm thinking about our coaching.
You and me in our little room. (2.4ci)

Due to the nature of the school in which these sessions took place the décor of coaching room did not create a particularly client-friendly environment: sparsely decorated, florescent lighting, often cold (or overly hot), chairs were hard plastic and the carpet was dirty. Often the students outside were very noisy when moving between their lessons. At one point when the school was being refurbished I was literally moved to coach in a large empty store cupboard. And yet, while listening to those recorded sessions, the store cupboard weeks, clients' tones still brightened as they relaxed and felt at ease in the space, despite the lingering smell of wet mop and disinfectant.

To summarise briefly: these findings suggest 'the experience of everything together' is a way of explaining the coach as a singularity. What the coach has learnt has been personified, and it is this personification (the singularity) that presents to the client, that via experiential transmission influences the client. It could be said that if the natural personality of the coach is free from artificiality (in the position of Te), then this state inspires the clients' natural personalities (Te) to emerge. This idea is further explored in Stage 3.

Stage 2 – The client interviews on the findings

Introduction

My report for Stage 2 is structured around my clients' reactions to a series of diagrams. These diagrams represented my developing thoughts (Boyatzis' 1998) on experiential transmission formulated in my creative journal.

The diagrams are heuristic tools that are an ‘essential element of the inferential process’ (Patuzzo, 2017, p. 1). A heuristic diagram can be seen as a graphic organiser in which large amounts of information can be synthesised and displayed, but for me and my coachees, my heuristic diagrams had more of an analogical significance. In other words, I use the heuristic model of analogy to communicate to my coachees and to my reader.

The interviews

My aims for this interview stage were as follows:

- i) to explore how experiential transmission might be able to explained effectively to teachers and coaches in schools
- ii) to find clues as to how experiential transmission might be taught and implemented

I began with Figure 2.

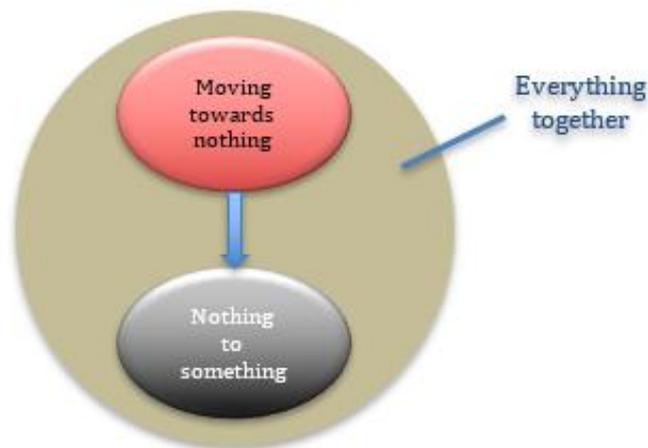


Figure 2 – Experiential transmission

I used the following explanation to accompany the diagram: ‘The experience of moving towards nothing’ (Theme 1) leads via ‘the experience of nothing’ (Theme 2) to ‘the experience of moving from nothing to something’ (Theme 3). This sequence happens in the environment of ‘the experience of everything together’. ‘Everything together’ (Theme 4) represents the experiential transmission of the coach. Therefore there is the incorporation of both the feeling of a linear journey (Themes 1 to 3) and a depiction of the importance of experiential transmission (Theme 4) to that journey.

Conversations on Figure 2

Initially each of my clients responded to Figure 2 according to their particular field of expertise. Adela's initial response was to try to make sense of the diagram from a psychological viewpoint:

Adela: I suppose from a personal perspective the linear movement represents goal setting – in our coaching. All of 4 ('everything together') is impacting you. I teach reciprocal determinism where you are both determined by and become a determining factor in. (2.2bi)

Biggs and Tang (2011) state that the teacher-centred approach leads to practitioners who only consider it their responsibility to be experts in their academic fields, and that this approach leads to limited responses in other areas. Adela's scramble for solid ground in relation to Figure 2 seemed to reflect the type of narrowing that Biggs and Tang (2011) observe. Indeed, Figure 2 seemed to represent the same type of challenge for all my clients.

Figure 2 demonstrates how the creative process of interacting with a diagram can help us communicate (Patuzzo, 2017). Adela was able to identify goal setting in coaching and related the picture to reciprocal determinism. Patuzzo believes that analogy is the foundation of inferential movement: 'Analogical thinking could be translated into an algorithm that optimises the effort to tackle the daily obstacles' (p. 9). My diagrams are therefore employed as a model of how my clients interpret their experiences.

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From the journal:

Question. Might this type of reaction be a stage that I need to address when I am explaining experiential transmission?

*

The main discussion point for my clients was the paradox evident in the diagram. (The paradox occurs because Theme 1 (the experience of moving towards nothing) leads to Theme 2 (the experience of nothing) and to Theme 3 (the experience of moving from nothing to something). Themes 1 to 3 seem to represent a linear structure. Theme 4 on the other hand explains the same experience as being non-linear – 'everything together'.) In the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005) Lao Tzu advises us to approach issues such as paradoxes with humour. My teacher in China believed the same. With him paradoxes were not seen as puzzles that required solving, instead they were appreciated as contradictions

that were enjoyable to observe. These situations were greeted with laughter at the two supposed opposites existing so fully together. There was no tension surrounding them – in fact it felt more like one had been told a joke.

The viewpoint of my clients was initially the opposite. The paradoxical situation was one that they took very seriously, a problem they *must* try to resolve. There was a distinct lack of humour or celebration: ‘My brain’s just going’ (Faith, 2.1ei). For example, the paradox in the diagram caused Adela to become tense, a tension that encouraged in her a defensive reaction rather than a creative one (Adela, 2.2b). There was a rush to try to resolve the ‘problem’.

*

From the journal:

To many teachers I coach, problem solving is very often associated with an element of tension – something we know through neuroscientists such as Kahneman (2011) to be the enemy of the more creative type of solution-focused thinking. Blair (2014) goes so far as to state that tension actually ‘assassinates’ creative thought (Blair, 2014, p.1).

*

From the drama teacher’s perspective, tension is used to cause characters in a play to act differently to how they might usually. They become more reactive and narrow, aggressive or defensive (Saunders, 2017). This type of dramatic tension can be exciting for the young actor to play, but from the audience’s perspective, as they watch the scene unfold, there is a clear indication of how destructive this type of tense energy can be. It almost always causes somebody’s downfall. In dramatic writing tension can be created by three vehicles: ‘task’ (being expected to do something outside of your comfort zone), ‘mystery’ (not understanding quite what you are meant to do or the environment you find yourself in) and ‘surprise’ (a sudden shock), (Saunders, 2017, p.1). For Adela Figure 2 tension is created by all of the above: ‘task’, ‘surprise’ and ‘mystery’. She feels that she needs to work out the paradox (task); she is taken aback by the diagram (surprise); and the general feel of the diagram and the language used to explain the themes is unusual to her (mystery). This panic certainly seems to narrow her initial responses.

*

Saunders (2017) states that tension is caused by an unbalanced relationship: If an ‘unbalanced relationship’ causes tension could a balanced relationship undo this tension?

Could the 'balanced relationship' instigated in the coaching room by the coach serve to remove the tension in the client? In terms of experiential transmission: with the balanced coach would the tension in the client dissipate of its own accord simply because the coach does not hold tension themselves? If the coach is tension free could this state, via experiential transmission, actually encourage all the benefits of a tension-free approach in the client including clear thinking and a healthy sense of humour and perspective about their situation? I remembered the pilot study and the limited responses I received from my clients when I held the significant tension created by my uncertainty about what I was saying.

*

Adela used a textbook description when explaining her reaction to the diagram. She interpreted the paradoxical situation 'the experience of everything together' using psychological terminology: 'both determined by and become a determining factor in' (2.2bi). The diction Adela selected was technical. Her tone held tension and her body language a sense of unease. Even though Adela was essentially describing a sense of organic influence and movement in Figure 2 the feeling was that the true paradox was not being addressed – more sidestepped, denied or blocked. There was a type of 'hiding behind' the language of sociology and psychology to feign understanding. Essentially, Adela's response contained elements of the defensive.

This type of reaction typified the initial responses of the four participants, all of who began their sense making in a similarly defensive style. They were interested but somewhat thrown, and made tense by their confusion. The interest was accompanied by a sense of panic at first. They seemed to be visited by the immediacy of the panicked ego state of the child (Berne, 1964). The feeling was as if the diagram represented the first question of an examination that they did not understand, and were clutching at straws to pull something passable and plausible out of the hat.

*

From the journal:

Giroux (1983) states that the student is experientially 'educated' by the levels of social understanding of those people surrounding them. The question is: when it comes to being influenced by the transmission of others in schools, who is educating who? Is the student educating the teacher or vice versa? After all, so much of my leadership coaching in

schools begins with my encouraging the client to take a fresh look at their environment – and most clients find this extremely helpful – most realise how much they have been working from within the ego state of the child (Berne, 1964) and how much this stance is impacting all that they do. In fact many are surprised at how far the students' attitudes have permeated their own. In one primary school there was real anger, some of the staff even complained they were being victimised, when I suggested taking down the 'gold star' poster in the staffroom (designed to inspire the students) that represented 100% teacher, yes teacher attendance. Much of my coaching in schools suggests that successful leadership needs to come from the perspective (transmission) of the balanced adult ego state (Berne, 1964). In this way the teacher personifies (and transmits) the adult and sets an example to the staff and to the growing children around them.

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As the conversations on Figure 2 moved on, the tension began to dissipate and the clients' more creative sides began to win out. These creative responses appeared sporadically from under the surface (Faith 2.1di, Adela 2.2bii, Alice 2.3ci, Hilda 2.4b). It was as if, with a more tension free approach, their more creative sides could not help but burst through in one way or another. A lighter approach was emerging through the cracks in the seriousness and bringing with it the creative response.

In the case of Adela her dialogue became mixed with playful memories of the experience of our coaching: 'the moment that changed everything changed' (2.2ci) and 'it was much more fun – sort of alive and different' (2.2cii). She relived the experience as she recounted it, and the immediacy of this memory experience lifted her tension surrounding the diagram. Hilda's initial response reflected her role as a science teacher: 'well I think it's logical' (2.4bi), but now, more relaxed, she (like Adela) was more playful in her responses: 'well I'm thinking about our coaching (laughs). You and me in our little room' (2.4ci) and 'it looks like a science – GCSE scientific project – I like the shape of it though' (2.4cii). Faith's reaction as a dance teacher was to interpret the situation as the staging of a dance: 'doing a bit of a dance in a spotlight' (2.1fi). With Faith's statement above the creative might be said to be symbolically winning out over the narrow. With the introduction of the visual image of a 'spotlight' (that both limits and illuminates the environment) we find the creativity of a dance, intensely lit (2.1fi).

In all, despite the initial scramble for something known to latch on to, each client's interest seemed to have been piqued. McGuinness is a creative coach who tends to reject the

more standard creative techniques such as mind mapping and reframing in favour of encouraging a natural 'creative flow' (McGuinness, 2010, p.1), and with my clients this 'creative flow' seemed to be starting to come about. As the conversations developed there was more immediacy and less caution. This increasing confidence in my clients brought about a more free-flowing energy that according to Machin (2010) is important because it is this energy that can be refocused to become the energy that helps us head towards our solutions. The energy created by the initial panic of my clients seemed to be becoming redirected, more to their creative sides, and with this panic, freer explorations of experiential transmission occurred.

*

From the journal:

Is this lack of being withheld in my clients an example of experiential transmission being directly linked to wellbeing? We are discussing experiential transmission in the interview and my clients' wellbeing seems to have improved by doing so. Are the two things linked: discussing experiential transmission and wellbeing? By pushing through the initial phase of confusion they seem to now be lifted. My feeling is that if the coach is in any way pretending to be 'well' then this level of artificiality, no matter how small, means that their transmission to the client contains this pretence. Experiential transmission transmits the whole picture, so any contradiction in the coach has to reach the client. On the other hand, if the coach's wellbeing is genuine then the immediacy of this fullness is transmitted to the client. The second approach is more likely to inspire genuine wellbeing than the first because it is more completely and genuinely felt and transmitted. If this were coaching training might it then be said that simply by discussing experiential transmission in this way, a way that seems to raise wellbeing, that the student's wellbeing would be raised and therefore their transmission improved?

*

As the conversations developed all clients interpreted Theme 4 ('everything together') as the external environment. 'Everything together' became a description of the environment within which Themes 1 to 3 existed in their linear states. Both Faith and Adela assumed the Theme 4 environment to be oppressive and inhibiting:

Faith: ... your desire – the object of what you need to achieve and that linear pathway (points to 1 leading to 3) is you working effectively – it's teaching and learning – that's what you strive for – you've got a goal in front of you and you've worked tirelessly to achieve it but what you don't take

into consideration is the outside factors (points to 4) that are literally going to just get in your way all of the time. (2.1f)

And

Adela: So 4 negatively impacts 1 to 3 – negatively impacts the journey – they are impeding factors. (2.2ciii)

Faith and Adela both implied that the linear movement associated with Themes 1 to 3 was the *right* path and that the generic environment represented by Theme 4 was the inhibitor. But as Faith became more relaxed she began to invite a more open interpretation of the diagram. There was still somewhat of an internal battle, signified by an abrupt ‘no’ when asked if she would like to express her creative viewpoints on paper, but there was movement towards acceptance of Theme 4 as something positive:

Faith: Okay – (long pause) I’m a visual person – I’m visualising (inviting a creative response from herself).

John: Would you like to draw something or write something down? (Inviting a creative response from the participant.)

Faith: (quite abruptly) No (blocking the creative response from herself and the interviewer).

John: So what is it you see? What do you see? (inviting a creative response)

Faith: (pause) I visualise (inviting a creative response from herself) (long pause) so I don’t know (blocking the creative response) maybe if 1 to 3 is the idealistic – linear – you’re getting there in the most direct way and number 4 is the reality of (pause) is the reality of the situation – the reality of the journey. I don’t know. (2.1h)

As Faith’s tension dissipated still further and her creative side triumphed, she began to see the linear movement (Themes 1 to 3) as ‘idealistic’. The wider viewpoint (Theme 4) she now equated more to ‘the reality’ of the journey. Originally, the linear state was described as ‘a true pathway’ (2.1ji) and now there was a shift. ‘Everything together’ (Theme 4) was now seen as a positive influencer rather than as a negative one.

The participants now seemed genuinely interested in the puzzle and Faith, Adela and Alice became more open to investigating it further and to enjoying the process. The perceived threat of not understanding, which narrowed and naturally restricted their willingness to experimenting with ideas (Kahneman, 2011), had subsided for these three. It was as if they had previously adopted the role of what society might interpret as the ‘perfect student’, approaching the problem in the ‘right’ way, and now they were being more ‘themselves’ with their creative and individual flair taking the lead.

José A Chamizo (2012) has demonstrated that heuristic diagrams can help teachers understand their own practice better: ‘heuristic diagrams are a tool that helps to develop historical research and learning in the classroom not only in chemistry, but also in other science.’ (p. 759). Chamizo’s study is based on chemistry teachers, but I believe that heuristic devices could be used far more in coaching conversations because, by their nature, they encourage the observer to be successful problem solvers. As we can see from my coachees’ responses, the diagrams appear to support their sense making processes and aid their conceptual understanding.

Conversations on Figure 3

Faith’s coaching session (below) inspired the original construction of Figure 3:

Faith: Well – it’s just – I know it’s silly – I feel stupid – It’s just I’m sick at how complex everything is. You know me, John, I like things straightforward – and all of this now – all of this mystery about why people are leaving and what’s going to happen. Why don’t people just – just say what they really think – are they just – I dunno afraid? Are they? Honestly – it makes things – things so difficult. If Fred – he’s so annoying as a person – to be with – by the way – I have to really concentrate before I go into meetings where he’s there – just made a clear and honest decision for a change this would mean that we could all do our jobs and the school would be a better place.

(3.1.)

The experience of Faith is represented by the following:



Figure 3 – Linear creation

Simply put: Theme 1 leads (via Theme 2) to Theme 3, and this process creates Theme 4.

The experiential transmission being emitted by Fred in Faith’s extract seems far from a healthy experience ‘he’s so annoying as a person – to be with’. Her suggested resolution to the conundrum of Fred is: ‘If Fred just made a clear and honest decision for a change’ (Theme 1: moving towards nothing; in this case Fred making a strong and clear decision) ‘this would mean that we could all do our jobs’ (Theme 3: moving from nothing to something; a clear decision would mean that we could do our jobs better) ‘and the school

would be a better place' (Theme 4: experiencing everything together; the whole school environment would be improved). In other words, Theme 1 leads to Theme 3 and this process then creates Theme 4. So 'the experience of moving towards nothing' leads to 'the experience of nothing to something' and this results in the development of the general environment 'everything together.'

In the discussion all four participants when presented with this more linear diagram became slightly and instantly crestfallen. If it had been a coaching session, I would have instantly changed tack. It was as if (despite their initial searches for grounding) the previous diagram offered the promise and excitement of something different, but with Figure 3 this promise was not being delivered upon. This situation moved Hilda, Adela and Alice immediately away from their creative sides back to giving logical objective responses to the linearity of Figure 3. Hilda retreated once again into science teacher mode and Alice (slightly resigned) altered her positive and excited stance to become rather dulled. It was as if the linear diagram had caused them to narrow energetically as people. Faith was inspired to take on the fight to maintain the openness that was beginning to be found towards the end of her interpretation of Figure 2. This response was shown with a rejection of the linear aspect: 'I don't think that this is realistic – not realistic – I don't think it's real' (2.1j). She then continued on to offer advice as to how Figure 3 might be improved upon: 'If I were to change that diagram I'd make it more of a cycle' (2.1jii), and a little later she developed her idea further 'So my circle isn't appropriate because it doesn't imply growth' (2.1kii).

Conversations on Figure 4

With Figure 4 my clients once again become open and creative. The idea of 'undoing' being the answer rather than 'doing' inspired them to become more animated again.



Figure 4 – Linear undoing

Lao Tzu's position on linearity concerns a movement from duality towards a singularity. In each case the singularity represents an improved situation: 'Heaven gained the One and became clear, Earth gained the One and became tranquil' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.123). As mentioned in Stage 1, In the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.201) Lao Tzu expounds

the virtues of letting go of our 'acquired learning' in order to reveal our true natures. This movement is represented by our 'False Heart' being replaced by our 'True Heart' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.72). The singularity might be described as coming about through a type of linear 'undoing' movement – the 'undoing' of the artificial. This idea encouraged the construction of Figure 4 (above).

*

From the journal:

The implication is that the process of moving towards nothing is more to do with 'undoing' than 'doing'. In other words, the client takes responsibility for the releasing of their 'acquired learning' – they 'undo'. In fact the client 'does' the 'undoing' process. Then (via Theme 2 – 'the experience of nothing') Theme 3 ('the experience of moving from nothing to something') is enabled because they have 'undone'. They have 'undone' their 'acquired learning' and this action has broken the 'acquired cycle'.

*

When responding to Figure 4, Faith, Alice and Adela dropped their guards and became once again animated about discussing the 'new' idea. All three began talking about previous experiences that resembled the diagram. They were once again inspired. Hilda too continued to develop her more experimental outlook with a personal example of her experience with one of her managers: 'If he just let go of the artificial crap then everything would be fine' (2.4fi). This statement was accompanied by laughter.

*

From the journal:

Has Hilda introduced a type of cross-dimensional aspect to her experience of the diagram? Has she recreated the diagram in action? i) Hilda recalls a previous problem with her manager, ii) Hilda is relieved at being able to talk so bluntly about the issue to me in the interview, iii) due to this release she is left in a lighter state. It is as if a memory of a past event (Hilda's problem with her manager) has recreated the potential for improved wellbeing in the present (her feeling lighter in the interview).

*

As Figure 4 was revealed, all clients reacted in a way that released the held energy seemingly imposed on them by the previous diagram. There was a definite feel of happy relief. (It was as if something was 'undone' and they felt better.) All seemed much more

spontaneous. Alice clapped her hands. The re-energised situation freed Hilda to describe her response to Figure 4 as another memory:

Hilda: There are two things going on. The getting things off your chest urrrgh then the next things happen. That's what I got from your sessions. So with what you are saying – so I'm saying I agree – I would come in in a bad mood – I would vent – and then I would feel better – and this represents everything together. (2.4fii)

Hilda related the diagram to our coaching sessions in school. She described arriving to the coaching room in a bad mood (1), the bad mood being released (minus 3) and feeling better for it (equals 4). Worthy of note was the tone of the description. It was as if (similar to her mood in my previous journal extract) she was reliving the relief she had felt in the past. Hilda seemed genuinely happy at the memory of getting things off her chest.

Adela jumped quite forcefully into her creative approach: '[h]ow can something experiential be truly mathematical? Or have I got the wrong end of the stick?' (2.2di). Alice's response was:

Alice: (claps and laughs) Yes. Yes. Yes. It's lovely to think that we can take something off of ourselves and be free – freer. It's like – well – what I said previously what is happening to me now – since our coaching – personally at the moment. (2.3kii)

Like the other participants, Alice experienced a rise in energy. Like Hilda and Faith, she felt instantly drawn to talk about herself and her experience in the context of the diagram.

To summarise: Adela made sense of the diagram by posing a question to herself, and in answering her question her mood was lifted; Hilda referred back to her coaching experience of the previous year and her mood was lifted; Alice related the diagram to a past experience and her mood was lifted.

*

From the journal:

From a coaching perspective, to witness such a rise in client wellbeing in relation to 'undoing' is thrilling. All of them begin talking about themselves more energetically in a far more animated way than before. They are much freer – much less inhibited. Perhaps 'undoing' is a valuable area for further research. Worthy of note is that both Figure 3 and Figure 4 contain linearity but the idea of 'adding' to oneself (Figure 3) to produce the end result seems to have caused a type of retreat in my clients. On the other hand, the idea of 'taking away' in the form of releasing causes all of my clients to be energetically raised.

My clients' reactions do seem to reflect Lao Tzu's direction as to how to attain a healthy transmission as a coach (Trans. Hu, 2005). In Chapter 18, Lao Tzu states, 'when wisdom and knowledge arise, something hypocritical will emerge' (Hu, 2005, p.73). Could this represent the negative impact of the previous figure, Figure 3? Perhaps the 'adding' of 'acquired wisdom' and 'acquired knowledge' that he says will produce artificial or contrived results has actually been represented in Figure 3. After all, in chapter 19 of the Tao Te Ching (Trans. Hu, 2005), Lao Tzu tells us: 'Get rid of wisdom and knowledge, people will benefit a hundred times better'. Does this then represent Figure 4 – the taking away of 'acquired wisdom' and 'acquired knowledge'?

*

Conversations on Figure 5

The next diagrammatic stage was inspired once again from the Tao Te Ching. Here I am exploring the sense of duality moving to oneness in a different way: 'All things gained the One and came into being' (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.123):

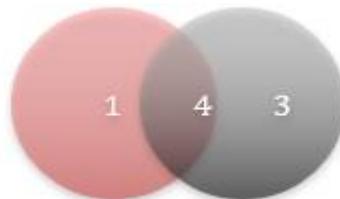


Figure 5 – Mergence

As Figure 5 suggests, 1 combined with 3 can bring about 4; the two can combine to actually become/create the one. An example might be a sperm and an egg combining to stimulate cell division that creates a single human being. Another example might be as Faith suggests: 'vodka and vermouth to make a martini' (2.1m).

My clients' reactions once again converged as negative in response to Figure 5. Similar to Figure 3, all reacted instinctively against its significance to the importance of experiential transmission. Although the participants agreed that the diagram seemed natural, they were driven to reject it, and were once again resolved to try to find the 'correct' comments to say about it. Alice stated 'how do you solve a conundrum? – you overlay it somehow – that's too normal and it's not worked before – not really' (2.3hi) before returning to talk about Figure 2 in a more excited tone. Adela said: '[i]t looks more organic, but it doesn't sit particularly well with me' (2.2ei) and referred back to Figure 4 to more accurately explain her developing point of view. Hilda returned to her more scientific

approach with: 'well I have the most logical pragmatic brain' (2.4fiii) before moments later literally turning the page of the book to look at the next diagram.

*

From the journal:

It is as if the participants do not want to return to discussing what they perceive to be 'normal' (Alice, 2.3hi) educational ideas at this stage of the conversation. Instead they want to explore the new realms represented by the more unusual diagrams. They want to run with their newfound creative energy. They seem to be expressing that Figure 5 is interrupting their momentum towards this goal.

Conversations on Figure 6

Figure 6 (below) depicts my next level of dimensional thinking. The diagram represents all three themes existing together without contradiction.

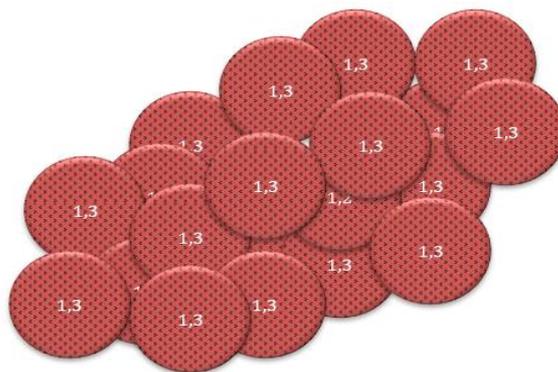


Figure 6 – The experience of everything together

Here the movement from Theme 1 ('the experience of moving from something to nothing') to Theme 3 ('the experience of moving from nothing to something') exists in each individual, and this environment is described as Theme 4: 'the experience of everything together.' 'The experience of everything together' is the community.

*

From the journal:

This idea is similar to a coach taking on the responsibility of the development of all of their clients, whilst still appreciating them as individuals. The singularity is the coach accepting them as a group. It is the teacher talking about the progress of their class as a whole knowing it contains thirty individual students. Rather than the sperm meeting the egg, or

vodka and vermouth making a martini, it is the womb or the cocktail glass that supports the linear action.

*

Similar to my clients' responses to Figure 4, Figure 6 encouraged energised reactions from the participants. Adela stated:

Adela: (laughs) Yeah. And have you got the idea there that that's like lots of different people?

John: What does it mean to you?

Adela: Cos I suppose that's just my attitude to it. It's like my classroom – all of the students are 1 to 3 and I'm looking at it – I guess that all of the diagrams would be constantly ebbing and flowing. (2.2eii)

*

From the journal:

Of particular note is that Adela puts herself into the position of a type of participant observer. She (the teacher) is experiencing 'everything together' (being with her class) and at the same time she is discussing the situation from the observer viewpoint. Could this 'participant observer' be a quality of experiential transmission? In the coaching situation are we, the coach, coaching our client but at the same time being the person taking responsibility for the quality of the coaching environment via our transmission?

Is the excerpt below from Alice an example of how this observer viewpoint can be interpreted in the context of one's personal growth?

John: ... you mentioned that for you it's all about being in the moment.

Alice: But how can you be in the moment and take a step back simultaneously? You can't.

John: Can't you?

Alice: I don't think you can (pause).

Alice: The way I see it is this -

John: Go on.

Alice: It's a bit like taking a step backwards but not backwards. What I mean is a type of step outwards – an expansion. A bit like I am an expanded person. Because I am expanded – therefore I am still able to be entirely myself. I just become the expanded version of it.

John: Go on.

Alice: I know that there is movement – progression within me. But what if this represents expansion rather than regular knowledge? We tend to see

knowledge as linear, but expansion surely is an experience and is total at every stage – if there are even stages and it's not continuous – can only come from experiences of one kind or another. Maybe then the client can be inspired into this type of experiential expansion by experiencing – by being with the coach who is being the same way? (Appendix 3.3i)

Alice observes her progression from a type of singular viewpoint: she is both the observer and the participant simultaneously. Alice (below) also implies that to take the position of the overview of one's journey is a healthy position and states that it is the reason for her currently improved wellbeing, 'That improved everything':

Alice: (laughs) Yeah. Yeah. I think this is the experience that most people would have.

John: Okay. Why's that?

Alice: That you are going – because life is that journey of moments where you re-visit so you're – you're – because life is layered there are different aspects to each of us – different levels to each of us – there are dimensions we don't yet understand. Nevertheless, these might still be affected – there are different expectations for each of us – how I have to behave at work or how I have to be perceived by clients if different from the parenting of my child. So actually these are different parts of that where – I see myself as that person trying to get above – the journey – what a cliché – it describes the journey – the constant visiting of 1 and 3. And we can see this from the perspective of 4. Funnily enough with all of that that happened last year that was a sense of – broadness – that meant I had an idea of what I was doing. That improved everything. (2.3mi)

*

My clients showed a level of congruence in the way they described the movement involved in the perspective of 'everything together' (Theme 4). They used a more profound almost philosophical tone: Alice spoke of observing life's journey, Adela described events as 'ebbing and flowing' and 'fluid' (2.2eiii) and Hilda emphasised 'a more fluid experience' (2.4g). Faith ended her reaction by describing the experience as a series of expanding circles resembling a dartboard (2.1yi). All introduced a wider dimensional aspect when talking from the position of Theme 4. Hilda explained things as 'more holistic' (2.4g), Alice 'a sense of – broadness' (2.3mii), and Adela spoke from the perspective of the animator 'because for me for all of these – it's almost as if they have to be animations' (2.2fi). There was also a general feeling from my clients that they were observing life – people – from the perspective of having empathy for the human condition.

Conversations on Figure 7

The Tao Te Ching implies that experiential transmission is an inherent quality of the Sage (Appendix 1). It is this quality that permeates the coaching/teaching environment and

influences the student (Appendix 1.4a). In this case the Sage (teacher or coach) might be said to become the personification of Theme 4, and from here they permeate the environment. It is then within this environment (created by the Sage) that their students move on their linear journeys supported by the Sage's, coach's or teacher's transmission.

I decided to revisit the participants' concluding moments in my journal:

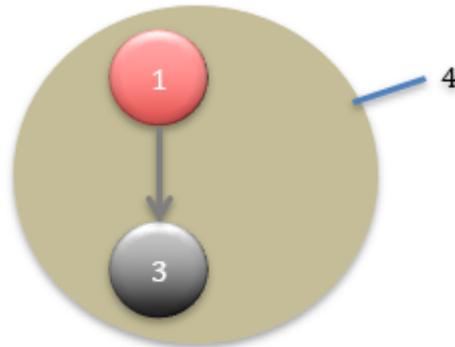


Figure 7 – Returning to the source

From the journal:

With Figure 7 I return to the beginning (Figure 7 is identical to Figure 2), this time with the perspective of having had the conversations with my clients.

Now I am able to observe 'the experience of everything together' as something more than before. It is all encompassing: a viewpoint where one can see more clearly. Theme 4 is not just the environment within which the process of 1 to 3 happens, it is a viewpoint from which the process can be instigated or even heightened for each individual, supported by the experiential transmission of the coach or the teacher.

I have developed a new descriptor to embrace the nature of what I have observed: 'hyperordinate'. The 'hyperordinate' position is that of the personification of Theme 4. The 'hyperordinate' position is the place from which a healthy transmission in the coach or teacher can occur.

The four participants seem to have, in different ways, by the end of our interview taken on a type of 'hyperordinate' position. Faith's movement here is perhaps the most noticeable:

Faith: So I have that experience and I feel more enlightened I suppose – and if I allow that feeling to permeate – to be around all the time – then each time I become more and more enlightened as a being rather than an intellectual – I think that makes sense – it does to me'. (2.1ki)

Compared with her initial reaction:

Faith: This is confusing. (2.1ei)

In the participants' 'hyperordinate' states they begin to see things from what I might describe as a naturally easier perspective. Explanations seem to become naturally more fluidly expressed. Alice's descriptions, for example, become entirely experience based and move freely into the felt sense:

Alice: And if you wanted to quantify that feeling of breadth of centeredness or happiness that's what it would feel like. The feeling is the big circle – or everything together. It's where we are at the moment. I can see in my partner a desire to go out every day. Career wise this (points to the broader circle) has created a new reality for us. If that makes sense? (2.3hii)

As the description develops, she is brought close to tears:

Alice: Being the whole but being multifaceted at the same time. It's really really interesting – I feel slightly emotional about it actually – it can be quite lonely thinking the way I do.

John: In what way?

Alice: I think because it almost describes being aware of – aware of – and I thought – it describes what I'm feeling quite a lot of the time. It's like being aware of yourself – like being inside of yourself and outside of yourself at the same time. It's like have something that's not fully opaque – a net curtain – at the same time I am happy in where I am. (2.3p)

Alice also explores how the 'hyperordinate' position might impact coaching:

Alice: People hold onto the physical so much – that's why it can sometimes be difficult to talk about. Coaching can be all about boxes and what we are describing here isn't that. (2.3r)

Hilda's response is now far from being compartmentalised and, like Alice's, is much more feeling-based. She makes sense of what seems to be the 'hyperordinate' position when towards the end of the conversation she revisits the initial paradox:

Hilda: I've just had a thought. It's not like the feeling of removing yourself from the situation – you are still in the situation it's just the feeling of being different within the situation. The feeling of being freer but somehow more in control at the same time. That might be what you are saying. This is a type of emotional answer to the paradox of movement and all at once at the same time. This makes sense – it really makes sense – the fact that you want to control something to sort it out, but it is actually when you are released that you see the problem and the solution more clearly. This also brings about the feeling of everything being great too. Everything's good because you feel good – feel released in the moment. Also if I relate this to your diagrams what we are talking about is actually the nothing to something feeling.

John: Can you describe what this feeling is not?

Hilda: Oh my God – it's not superficial – can you believe it? And it's entirely real – there's no sense of being mindful of it – or pretending – it's actually real. (2.4n)

With Hilda (above) we have her opinion from the 'hyperordinate' point of view: almost from an evolutionary stance. She also associates experiential transmission and the 'hyperordinate' position with genuine wellbeing:

Hilda: This also brings about the feeling of everything being great too. Everything's good because you feel good (2.4n)

Adela's reaction contains similar ideas:

Adela: Yeah. Well after our discussion I understand it hugely more. I think I would add a word in I suppose.

John: What would you say?

Adela: Possibilities.

John: Why's that?

Adela: Because if you take this bit here – you are not narrow minded – you are more focused on this one thing. Once the revelation happens you realise oh I didn't know those other things existed – you've expanded.

John: Oh I see. So more possibilities are introduced.

Adela: That's what the revelation would be to me. (2.2mi/2.2n)

Adela uses the word 'possibilities'. Through this word choice, one that she finds through the 'hyperordinate' perspective, she brings into the conversation the sense of animation that she previously perceives to be missing. It is as if the word 'possibilities' (2.2mi) brings about the actual feeling of 'possibility' within her. She then moves on to describe a sense of personal expansion. Her explanation is now entirely different in tone from the beginning of our discussion:

Adela: ...you've expanded – the possibilities arise. (2.2ni)

I am excited by Adela's description of 'possibilities', especially as the word sits alongside the concept of being 'expanded'. Could this description be a clue as to what experiential transmission creates – expanded possibilities?

*

Expanded possibilities? The heuristic device of diagrams facilitates our coaching conversations. If deep communication is crucial to building healthy and positive relations in the workplace, my diagrams support my coachees to understand not only what they are

feeling (Hilda: 'This is a type of emotional answer to the paradox of movement.')

but also how to problem solve better (Hilda: 'It is actually when you are released that you see the problem and the solution more clearly.'). Chamizo (2012) reminds us that 'successful problem solvers have among other characteristics a good command of basic facts and principles; have general reasoning strategies; construct appropriate representations; and apply a number of verification strategies' (p. 747).

To summarise: my clients' conversations revealed the following:

- i) in order to explore the phenomenon effectively they needed to be in a position to explore it creatively
- ii) that experiential transmission needed to be explained in terms of simplicity rather than complexity
- iii) that the concept of 'undoing' when related to experiential transmission was an extremely attractive way of studying the phenomenon

Stage 3 – Further analysis

In this section I pull together my findings from Stages 1 and 2 and analyse them in the context of my subordinate themes.

Theme 1: The experience of moving towards nothing

My theorising about 'the experience of moving towards nothing' explores the experiential quality of what this movement might feel like. The Tao Te Ching, the coaching recordings, and the participant interviews commonly reveal the answer to be: relief, release and excitement. 'The experience of moving towards nothing' contains two subordinate themes: 'undoing' and 'unveiling'. I have used these themes as a platform to explore the nuances of these 'relief', 'release' and 'excitement' reactions.

Undoing

As mentioned in Stage 1, from the Tao Te Ching, the coaching recordings, and the conversations with the participants, this subordinate theme of 'undoing' presents itself, in various guises, as the conscious effort to remove the artificial ('acquired learning') from one's life:

The only dreadful thing is taking much acquired action,
which always alarms me to discern what I should properly do
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.156).

Unusually for Lao Tzu (above) there is the use of dramatic diction with 'dreadful' and the hyperbolic phrase 'which always alarms me'. This choice of language may be a device to draw the reader or listener towards the importance, emotional immediacy, and urgency associated with the removal of 'acquired action'. This device might even be designed to have the effect of 'alarming' the reader/listener into immediate action.

Hilda expresses the importance of 'undoing' from an experiential perspective:

Hilda: It's a – difficult to describe – yes relief – life's a mess – can be a mess... and to know that there's some sort of value... the undoing rather than the doing. It's completely the opposite to what we do as teachers. Isn't it? (2.4gi)

Here 'undoing' is described as a reaction to the sorting out of her life. As she discusses the theme, her demeanour, initially tense, becomes freer and more relaxed. It is as if she is beginning to embody the effects of the 'undoing' process.

*

From the journal:

As intimated in Stage 2, discussing 'undoing' seems to bring about 'undoing' in my clients. It might of course be expected that when someone hears something new to them it can take time for the understanding to permeate and to take effect – for the client to relax into the subject being discussed. But rather than dismissing the importance of this type of increasing engagement as a reasonably common event, could it be that there is a possibility that whenever this level of completely engaged, lifted, playful, engagement appears (that seems to be without the judgement by the observer self that was previously limiting the expression) it might still be seen to be of great value despite being a common occurrence? Because it is common does this fact make it less valuable? In fact, might the fact it is a phenomenon around us all the time mean that there is huge potential for a reinterpretation of its value? Might it be that we are just not realising its importance? Might coaches with an understanding of experiential transmission in action be able to take this as a clue that their own experiential transmission is healthy and on track when they witness these moments in their clients?

*

In discussion with Hilda once the doubt ('acquired learning') has been lifted, her tone suggests a sense of herself immersing in the conversation more freely (2.4). There is more of a sense of play to her exploration of the topic (2.4). In fact, from this viewpoint when discussing the theme of 'undoing' all participants seem to 'undo'. They move in various

ways from a space of either relative confusion or doubt (a more narrow and constrained demeanour) to one of relief (more open demeanour). For Hilda, the change is one of her altering what could be described as a learnt ('acquired') pattern of response (led by her scientific background) to what is a more open series of replies (2.4gi). For Alice, the change presents as a slight reluctance to believe in the possibility that what she is sensing is actually true for her, before allowing her unfiltered opinions to emerge (2.3j). Adela initially tries to interpret the experience in psychological terms before realising 'it just doesn't fit' (2.2).

Lao Tzu draws our attention to something similar by continuing to use the dramatic tone that accompanies the 'undoing' theme:

It is best for one to stop knowing what they know;
to pretend to know when one does not know is sickness
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.199).

For Lao Tzu, 'undoing' seems to be concerned with moment-to-moment conscious effort to clear one's 'acquired learning'. He appears to believe that it is his responsibility to stimulate this 'undoing' in his students.

*

From the journal:

Is this an example of Lao Tzu leading by example? Is he suggesting that all teachers/coaches should consider taking on such a purpose as 'undoing' their acquired learning and encouraging their students/clients to do the same? After all, if the teacher/coach is in the process of 'undoing' then their students/clients are likely to be, via the coach's transmission, inspired to do the same.

*

Lao Tzu develops his voice even further to one of warning, panic, anger – even threat – to spur the reader into action. He implies that there is danger if one does not undergo this type of releasing. There is even the implication of an early death if one does not embark on this 'undoing' process:

Who can make the chaotic False Heart quiet down gradually to assume
lucidity again?
Who can live contentedly for long, to make the heart stay constantly still...?
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.72).

We are also told that:

Sages have no False Heart
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.146).

According to Lao Tzu 'Sages' or 'teachers' or 'coaches' cannot really teach or coach fully if they have not addressed the artificial aspects of their lives (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.146). Lao Tzu passionately expounds the virtue of the conscious effort needed for each individual to 'undo' their own artificial learning. He speaks dramatically about one's 'False Heart' that is developed by the absorption of 'acquired learning' to reinforce his point. He makes no disguise of the fact that removing 'acquired learning' is the individual's responsibility, focusing on the importance of taking this journey for one's Self (Trans. Hu, 2005).

Perhaps the extract below from Adela (from a very early coaching session) also represents the same kind of journey:

John: What's the goal then? The real goal?

Adela: If I'm being honest it's hard to put into words.

John: So it's a feeling?

Adela: A type of feeling of moving.

John: Moving where?

Adela: I have no idea.

(Pause)

Adela: Maybe away from something.

John: So running away – escaping?

Adela: You would think – but – moving towards something – wholesome...
(3.21)

Adela's dialogue states her need for movement. Her voice is tired and her tone heavy. It is as if her momentum has been weighed down by her problem and she is searching for a lift. Adela wants to move away from 'something' towards 'something [more] 'wholesome' (3.21). The implication is that this movement will lift her currently heavy mood. Later in the same coaching session Adela expresses that the wholeness she seeks can be found only if the people in her working environment stop forcing her into acting superficially at school (that they allow her to 'undo'):

Adela: It's so oppressive – it's such an oppressive environment for staff and kids – being forced to jump through hoops all the time – bad for the health – both of us. (3.2i)

Here the implication is that a superficial environment is 'bad for the health' and there is a suggestion that the removal of the superficial might well be better for the health of the

entire community. This point of view seems to complement Lao Tzu's explanation that 'acquired learning' leads to 'acquired action' – and 'acquired action' leads to early death (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.199). It may be why he so forcibly suggests that one's artificial learning should be addressed.

There is support from more traditional coaching to suggest that not being able to connect with one another on a deep, interpersonal level is dangerous for one's health. Frost (2002) makes the point that executives must deal with the emotional toxins that build up when one is unable to resolve inner conflict and tension. Being authentic is good for your health. Not being authentic is dangerous.

Faith's coaching session below seems to reveal a frustration about her environment too. She expresses this attitude quite emotionally during one of her coaching sessions when discussing how superficiality can lead to contradiction:

Faith: Yes. But it's just not fair. Surely –

John: Nobody is saying the school environment is fair – this is just the working environment you have. Your role... as we have discussed – many times (both laugh) – is to understand it for what it is and to manage and lead within it. The moment you start to judge it in this way – that you get frustrated by what's not there you well – might become more frustrated.

Faith: Like I am now?

John: (laughing) you said it.

Faith: But -

John: (joking) Are we really going here – again? Really?

Faith: Yep absolutely.

John: Okay – but let's progress the – what can I call it? The rant?

Faith: I'll take rant

John: And add a context – okay – what is 'wrong' let's put in the context of what you most care about – the students?

Faith: Simple. We say we value the individual when we are always telling them how to be. How can we sit by and not make a fuss about that?

John: So how might we rectify this? We discussed possibilities a while ago...

Faith: No idea. Forgotten. (2.1i)

The frustration from Faith revolves around schools being artificial places and that this superficiality is destructive to her own teaching practice. This environment is also Alice's reason for taking the decision to leave the profession entirely. How to alleviate education's

artificiality (that mostly presents itself in the form of contradiction – the school saying one thing but doing another – or as Adela puts it: ‘being’ another way (3.2)), is a discussion point with all of my clients on a regular basis.

Figure 8 explains the problem with this issue diagrammatically:

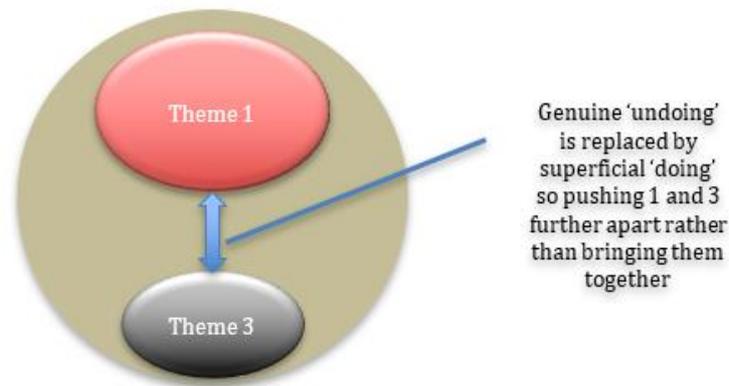


Figure 8 – Acquired action

‘The experience of moving from something to nothing’ – the process of ‘undoing’ – is not able to happen. There is no movement towards Theme 2 ‘the experience of nothing’ and therefore Theme 3 – ‘the experience of moving from nothing to something’ does not happen. It is as if the superficiality blocks and then reverses the process. It is as if two magnets rather than attracting are the wrong way round and are repelling. Healthy development (that is without artificiality) is blocked by the superficiality coming from the pressure of the school environment.

*

From the journal:

Experiential transmission in coaching can be both a help and a hindrance. If the coach has succumbed to the negativity of their environment then their transmission, the person behind the coaching mask, will be reflecting how they feel – negative. This feeling will then create a negative environment around them in the coaching room. A healthier example would be if the coach or teacher has not ‘bought in’ to the contrivance and feels positive about this fact. In this case they will be transmitting an altogether healthier feel.

Imagine two coaches applying the same GROW model (Connell, 1998). Imagine the first is filled with the tension of the day. This tense coach applies the GROW coaching technique to her clients. No matter how technically good the coach is, because of experiential transmission, she will radiate ‘not having dealt well with the tension of the day

well' or 'pretending to be tension-free when she is not' and this will permeate all she does or says. This event cannot *not* happen because experiential transmission is a consistently occurring phenomenon. It always exposes the full picture of the coach. Now imagine the second coach in the same working environment. This coach has grown to genuinely understand the superficial and destructive nature of tension. Despite her superficial environment, she has learnt to exist more or less without tension and in doing so feels continuously tension-free despite the intensity and nature of the environment. In the coaching room this second coach uses the same GROW model as the coach before. The difference between this coach and the first is that underpinning this particular coaching experience for the client is, via experiential transmission, the coach's tension free nature. Therefore, via the healthy transmission from the coach the client is encouraged to be the same: healthy and tension free. The coach's unfiltered nature permeates the environment in which the client is sitting.

*

In my coaching conversations with Alice I saw her as an individual taking more and more responsibility for attempting to 'undo' in school. This action, although not entirely successful, created a much improved classroom environment (2.3). This 'undoing' manifested in the form of her overcoming her anger towards the school's artificiality that she felt blocked her genuine intentions for her students. According to Thurman (2005):

[Anger] has been long been understood as a 'deadly sin' in the Christian and Islamic West. In the Buddhist East, anger (*dvesha*) is called an addiction (*klesha*), or a poison. (Thurman, 2005, p.11)

Emotional authenticity was something that she was seeking to impart to her special needs students and she felt the power of her anger against the school to be corrosive. Even when it became obvious to Alice that her best option was to leave education and to take up a job that seemed to offer the environment she wanted, a type of conscience that had developed from her 'acquired learning' seemed to kick in. The idea that it was wrong for a 'good' person to leave a situation simply because of its stressful and superficial nature was apparent to the last day of her leaving. But during the eight-month gap between her finishing at school and the conversation stage of this project, Alice had taken up her new job and had become a more connected and liberated individual. As mentioned in Chapter 4 she looked ten years younger. Her life was much more 'on track', and in her own words: 'I am infinitely happier' (2.3qi). Alice had searched for an environment that wasn't so superficial and found the strength within it to thrive. This upturn had inspired a lift in her

life (2.3q). Alice's process of removing the artificial might be considered similar to the power of 'undoing' – an indication of how releasing or even lessening the artificial can radically increase one's personal wellbeing.

Summary of 'undoing'

The experience of 'undoing' seems to be a conscious individual effort to realise and release the artificial. Releasing it allows one to experience the increased wellbeing seated underneath. The participants' sense making seems to converge to agree that for them 'undoing' is *always* accompanied by wellbeing. Experiential transmission dictates that the totality of who we are is transmitted, therefore as Lao Tzu suggests, a coach having 'undone' will produce a clear and healthy transmission and therefore a clear and healthy environment from within which their clients are able to 'undo'. Even if the coach is only beginning her journey of 'undoing' she will inevitably create an environment that inspires her students to do (and be) the same. The problems emerge when the coach or teacher is caught up in the 'acquired cycle'. Via experiential transmission this 'acquired' state in the teacher or coach will permeate the environment and impact negatively on the student or client.

Unveiling

'Unveiling' is a moment where everything becomes clear. It is a light bulb moment. The conversation below happens after this 'unveiling' moment reveals a type of feeling of liberation in Faith. Her 'unveiling' is immediate and seems very different to the effort of 'undoing':

Faith: Well – okay – this week has been like – it's been like – just because I saw things clearly it was like something... a thing – was lifted.

John: What did it feel like – I mean – sorry – what did it physically feel like?

Faith: If I had to describe it – I suppose (brrrrr) loose – like I can move.

John: Out of curiosity – move where?

Faith: Anywhere – everything's well easier physically that is.

John: – and mentally?

Faith: Yer – that too.

John: And emotionally?

Faith: Okay – you're gonna like this – ready?

John: Always.

Faith: (laughing). The best way to describe it was like being a cat stuck in the mud and then getting out and being free – thing is I didn't realise quite how stuck in the mud I was. (3.1ii)

In this instance, seeing things clearly might be said to be an indication of the sudden lifting of the veil. Once the veil is lifted Faith sees and feels things more openly and freely.

*

From the journal:

Could it be that 'unveiling' is actually the result of 'undoing'? Could 'undoing' create the personal environment containing the potential for 'unveiling'?

*

Faith uses the metaphor of being a cat stuck in the mud. She says she was stuck physically, mentally and emotionally, and that clarity (the veil lifted) instantly encouraged in her a sense of liberation on all these levels. She also describes the feeling of not being aware that she was stuck in the mud before the 'unveiling': 'I didn't realise quite how stuck I was' (3.1ii). Afterwards she is able to see her situation much more clearly than she could before. This experience of 'unveiling' for Faith is not described as a linear process. The effect is instantaneous. She feels freer and it is then only from this improved perspective she realises her previous level of entrapment. There is no escape *process*. It is akin to a sudden rise in personal awareness.

Adela offers an insight too:

Adela: It was similar to the pressing of like a button. Knowing – knowing what I wanted – finally.

John: Well it has been – (laughing) a while coming.

Adela: I know. All right (joking).

John: So what's the difference between a goal that you think you really want and a goal that you do really want?

Adela: I know it has taken a while for me to get this – no comment please – it's entirely different – it's actually really nice... (3.2ii)

In this instance with Adela there is a type of build up of 'undoing': 'Well it has been – (laughing) a while coming' that has then led to her moment of 'unveiling': 'it's entirely different – it's actually really nice'. In this case the 'undoing' is her understanding that her previous association with the goal contained elements of 'acquired learning'. Because of this realisation she worked to find a more genuine goal (worked to 'undo'). When this goal was achieved she felt 'entirely different'. Like Faith, the actual experience of 'unveiling' for

Adela, when it actually happened, is instantaneous. Adela describes it as the pressing of the button. The general tone of her sessions, after the button is pressed, tends to be more energised, relaxed and happy than before. She has far fewer conversations that are connected with a personal lack of confidence and doubt, and these seem to be replaced by a more fluid sense of positivity and wellbeing. And the recordings reveal that, despite the occasional 'bad' days, she is much more often lifted. In the example below, Adela and I are looking at how to encourage specific outcomes from her meetings.

Before the unveiling:

Adela: Well I think it's linked with Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

John: In what sense?

Adela: Well because it's not high enough up the scale of importance – my importance – it's not something I am able to focus on quite yet. (3.2iii)

After the unveiling:

Adela: It was so much more enjoyable going into a meeting like that – in that way. Honestly, I just wanted to smile. Everything was easy. By the end I even had the governors on my side – which was good (laughs). I was seen as important – my role was important. (3.2iv)

Before the 'unveiling' Adela's tone is tense. After the 'unveiling' the tone is lighter. She is happier in the quest for her goal, and her energy is more naturally fluid.

Alice's experience after an 'unveiling' is similar:

John: So how's that going?

Alice: Better. Much better. Gone. Entirely gone. Dissipated into the air. Entirely. It's so nice to be myself again (laughs). You don't know – I must take ownership – okay. Starting again. Okay. Right. I didn't know how much I wasn't being myself – and when I suddenly realised how far I had gone the other way – it creeps up on you – and was able to laugh about it – I was good again, great, despite what would have been stressful before dealing with – everything – everything was easy. When I'm in the groove of being myself – I just I think need – sorry want to know – how to rectify the situation – how not to start to go that way again...

John: You look much happier.

Alice: There is no comparison. None. (3.3)

Although Alice does not actually state that the effect of the 'unveiling' (in this instance caused by her realising that she 'was not being herself') produces an instantaneous release, it is certainly implied in her lighter tone. Like Faith, there is a retrospective sense of not being aware of the full nature of her previous situation – in this case her not being

herself at school – before the moment of ‘unveiling’ happens. After the ‘unveiling’ there seems to be a sense of clarity. Alice (like Adela and Faith) also embodies the happiness of the release; it permeates the session. In all three clients the ‘unveiling’ experience causes a type of instant happier self that brings a new level of lucidity to their situations.

From Bourdieu’s theory of practice there is a correlation between a conscious attitude and a state of mind. My habit of composing my mind in these coaching sessions using experiential transmission is a purposeful act (note the ‘unveiling’). The habit becomes second nature to the skilled practitioner (Anderson, 2004).

As discussed Hilda’s perspective is that of the scientist. Initially a reductive stance is often taken by Hilda to explain situations from her side of the coaching room. As her sessions progress this approach becomes a more creative one:

Hilda: (laughs) But re-reading this bit – unlocked something.

John: What was that?

Hilda: Not sure really – but I know I liked it – it was like I realised something that affected how I was.

John: Well. Let’s start with this. What is the feeling of ‘unlocked’?

Hilda: Like a door opening from one room to another.

John: And where are you in this metaphor of compartments (laughs)?

Hilda: I’m not sure what you mean.

John: Well – I – there is a door opening from one room to another – where are you standing? In your imagination where are you standing in relation to these two rooms and the door having been opened?

Hilda: I’m watching the whole event – it feels normal.

John: If you had to place yourself in the situation with the new door having been unlocked where are you watching from?

Hilda: But I’m not. I’m above it. I’m describing it – But I’m in it – sort of everywhere. (3.4)

In this instance, it might be said that Hilda has read something that has been the cause of her ‘unveiling’. She reads a passage from the book and something has suddenly become ‘unlocked’. Again, the unlocking is not described as gradual or linear; rather the tonal implication is that it happens in a moment. The reading of that particular book (that might be described as looking to ‘undo’) at some point caused an instant ‘unlocking’ within her (an ‘unveiling’).

Hilda uses a clear visual metaphor: she describes the experience as being like a doorway from one room to another. As she explains the process, her tone lifts as if reliving the event. The tonal change implies that the new room is better than the old one. Like the other participants, the experience of the change is instantaneous. Here too we have an indication that, although Hilda doesn't place herself in either of the metaphoric rooms, her tone and pace and increasing sense of liberation implies that she has suddenly been able to see herself from a new and improved perspective.

When compared with my initial diagram of experiential transmission, Hilda's experience seems similar:

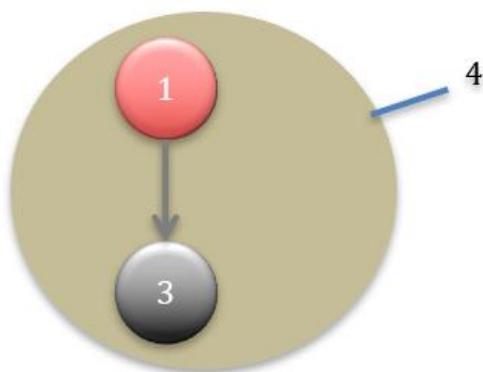


Figure 9 – The original diagram

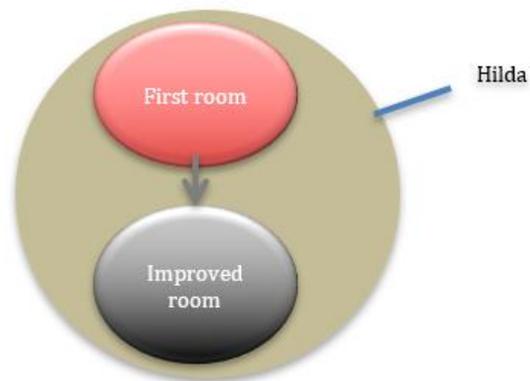


Figure 10 – Hilda's diagram

What I suggest is that Hilda observes the 'two' (the old room and the new room) from the perspective of her improved perspective, what I have previously labelled as the 'hyperordinate' position, and in doing so she instantly feels raised. She is able to see her previous situation (the first room) much more fully and clearly, and is also able to experience the feeling of the new room. It might be said that she is experientially present in all areas simultaneously. In a sense she personifies the 'hyperordinate' position ('the experience of everything together'):

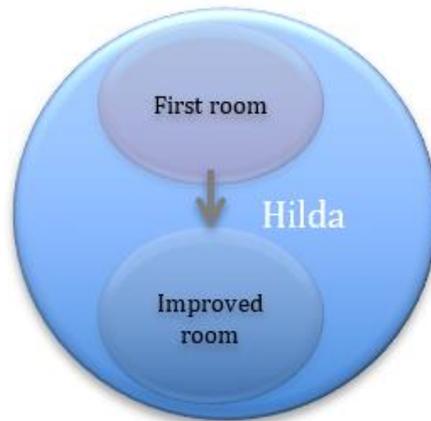


Figure 11 – Hilda's diagram – 2

Alice shares her experience of a similar situation with a similar outcome. After the 'unveiling', from her new 'hyperordinate' perspective, she sees her past situation more clearly than before:

Alice: I feel I've explored a situation in school when I was there that was horrendous. Looking back now it was horrendous. What a difference a year makes. Looking back now I was almost (laughs) self-harming – not that but you know what I mean. Now I'm enjoying my experiences. New job – new perspective – entirely different... (2.3di)

Alice's language in sentences 2 and 3 reveals a type of retrospective improved viewpoint: 'Looking back...' and 'What a difference a year makes. Looking back now...' Her word choice implies that she is now in a wiser position. Indeed, sentences 4 and 5 include 'now' and 'new perspective' reiterating that her improved position is the current one. The final sentence of the section is found a few lines later 'Well I feel absolutely younger and I feel my attitude has changed since leaving school' (2.3ei). This statement implies her improved sense of wellbeing caused by her fresh perspective.

Regarding the subject of this type of 'unveiling', the Tao Te Ching contains a few specific pointers similar to what Mitchell describes as the suddenness of the Inner Door 'unveiling' experience of experiential transmission, and experience that happened to him (1.6). Like Hilda's diagram (Figure 11), there is the experience of what I might now describe as 'transdimensional' awareness. This awareness might be said to come about when one is in a 'hyperordinate' position. The experience of 'unveiling' puts one into the 'hyperordinate' position and from here one has more 'transdimensional' awareness – one can see things more plainly than before.

Summary of ‘unveiling’

‘Unveiling’ is what might be described as ‘a light bulb moment’. The actual moment itself seems unfelt because it cannot be remembered, but the effects seem instantaneous, direct and full. From this new perspective, my clients are able to appreciate their previous and current situations more clearly.

What is also implied is that the experience of ‘unveiling’ might be a reasonably common occurrence. Many teachers, for example, may have seen this occurrence several times in their pupils. It is as if the student suddenly understands what they previously could not and because of this understanding other elements of the subject fall into place too. It is an indication of learning – or someone ‘getting it’. From my perspective as a researcher such an occurrence, although not usually seen as being extraordinary, is perhaps more important than I had previously thought. It could be said to be a jump in understanding of ‘transdimensional’ proportions and an indication of the student now understanding the subject matter from a raised perspective. It might be an opportunity for further growth in the student currently being missed.

In terms of Bourdieu’s ideas on habitus (Anderson, 2004), I am always cognisant that my coachees and I inhabit a social space: we conform to the habitus. My aim is to create a privileged habitus by being entirely present to my coachees. Through experiential transmission, I am forever extending the special horizons of what I see as our privileged habitat (or coaching session). The unveiling or light bulb moments are testament to such an extension or expansion.

When it concerns experiential transmission and coaching in schools the implications are considerable. If the transmission from the coach can create the type of environment where ‘unveiling’ is a common occurrence then this event is tantamount to suggesting a recipe for existential growth in the client. This concept is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Theme 2: The experience of nothing

As explored in Stage 1, there is a difference between what my clients tend to mean by ‘nothing’ and that which is expressed by Lao Tzu (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.100). For Lao Tzu, emptiness (‘nothingness’) is the cup able to hold precious water from which we can drink – it has potential. However when my clients reveal something of their lived experience of doing ‘nothing’ the potential is very different:

Faith: When I’m at home after the first few days I’m completely bored.
There’s only so much red wine you can drink. (3.1iv)

Adela: Doing nothing... at school? Really? How is that productive? (3.2v)

In contrast, Lao Tzu equates 'nothing' to the final dropping of our acquired learning.

Lao Tzu:

The pursuit of learning is to increase knowledge day after day.
The pursuit of Tao is to decrease knowledge day after day.
Persist in reducing the False Heart little by little
till all the acquired learning is dropped.
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.144)

The implication is that 'nothing', achieved by dropping our acquired learning, eliminates our False Heart. The now empty cup enables the space for the True Heart to come in. Nothingness is both the turning point and the facilitator.

*

From the journal:

Are 'nothingness' and the 'unveiling' moment the same thing?

*

The Mysterious Pass

From the Taoist perspective I have noticed a common reaction in the coaching recordings concerning a particular 'moment' of 'nothingness'. This convergence is such that it seems to happen one hundred per cent of the time. It is that the participants have no memory of the actual moment of the 'unveiling' happening. They remember moments before and moments afterwards but the moment itself cannot be described. Nothing. It is as if a 'moment of nothingness' is what the phrase suggests: a paradox, an actual 'moment' of 'nothingness'. These moments in Taoism are closely related to personal transformation and are known collectively as the Mysterious Pass.

Lao Tzu observes:

The ability of transformation between the two is a most mysterious thing, or the door to all mysteries.
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.38).

In Taoist practices, the Mysterious Pass is synonymous with the 'moment' of transformation. From Lao Tzu's perspective, and echoing Hilda's description of her 'doorway' transformation event (2.4e), it is often represented as the doorway from one thing to another (Trans. Hu, 2005). This 'other' is always an improved way of being (Appendix 1.15a).

When associated with the theme of 'unveiling', the moment of walking through the metaphorical doorway for my clients seems so instantaneous that it is unable to be remembered, unable to be felt, only known that it must have happened for them to now be in the new room or to be viewing their situation from an improved 'transdimensional' perspective. This sense of improved wellbeing seems to have come about somewhat ironically from the 'moment' of 'nothing'. The experience of 'nothing' or 'no time' that is somehow vital to the 'hyperordinate' leap. The implication is that in the 'moment' that the leap is happening, the transitional 'moment', *is* nothing. It is only 'something' that can be pondered over afterwards with stories made up about what it must have been. One way of describing it is the light switch going on, so my clients can see what was always there in the room, but they have no recollection of the actual moment the switch was flicked – or even of being in the vicinity of the switch. They know it must have happened because of their elevated and clearer states.

I found that this type of 'hyperordinate' repositioning happens many more times during my coaching sessions than I would have previously imagined. Out of the 120 coaching sessions provided, this lift seemed to happen (or have happened in the time between the sessions and to be reported in the session) 72 times in total. It seems that it is a relatively common event.

Diagrammatically perhaps this diagram might be representative of 'nothing' or 'the Mysterious Pass' within the subordinate themes of 'undoing' and 'unveiling':

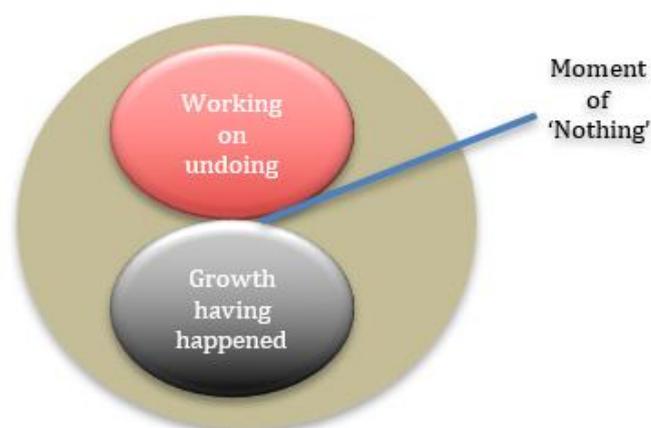


Figure 12 – The mysterious pass

The 'nothing' (Theme 2) might be described as the 'moment' where Theme 1 touches Theme 3 – or as Lao Tzu states:

The thing free of existence comes into that in which there is not space whatsoever.
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.133)

Summary of 'the experience of nothing'

The moment of the Mysterious Pass is a 'moment' of 'nothingness'. Although there is preparation for the 'moment' with my clients 'undoing', the moment itself seems to be of such a paradoxical quality that it cannot be remembered. The paradox is that the moment seems to have not existed – although it must have done. From a non-Taoist perspective this situation might present itself as something that needs to be 'worked out', with questions such as 'how can we isolate this 'moment' of 'nothing' to assess its qualities? But from the Taoist perspective there is a simple acceptance and sense of humour around the idea that some things are indeed paradoxical and that this is a description of a particular enigmatic 'moment' rather than of a fault. The Mysterious Pass seems to me similar to the experience of a great actor who does not question her acting technique for fear of distorting or even destroying it.

*

From the journal:

Maybe The Mysterious Pass should simply be left alone to do its 'mysterious' job – to transform.

Theme 3: the experience of moving from nothing to something

Once Lao Tzu is through the doorway he describes what this particular form of growth feels like. It feels like Te. Lao Tzu (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.60) explains that Te is one's natural personality free of 'acquired learning'.

*

From the journal:

Are Te and the 'hyperordinate perspective' the same thing?

*

Because Te comes about as a result of the release of one's 'acquired learning' it is seen as being a key to personal expansion. Te is a way of being that can inspire natural healthy growth in oneself as a coach, and via experiential transmission this energy then reaches the client. The concept of the movement from 'nothing' to 'something' in schools often implies a struggle. It is about focus, effort and commitment. The Taoist concept is different. Once we have Te, similar to very young children before they become socially aware, it is

more about evolving experientially and naturally. Everything is supported by the concept of simple natural uninhibited growth.

Magic

From Hilda there is a sense that after the 'unveiling' has happened rapid and easy growth might be possible:

Hilda: Works like magic I'd say.

John: What do you mean by magic?

Hilda: I think there are things that we don't understand. Patterns of things. Cause and effect. This happened too many times to be a coincidence. Therefore it's a type of pattern I think. (2.4hi)

What Hilda describes here might be the 'magic' of Te (the arrival of our natural personality): '...it is the feeling of it that puts you onto a different level. Works like magic I'd say'. She gives the impression that something is activated or 'switched on' and this causes a type of 'connection':

Hilda: (laughs) What if the light switch went on and there was a type of connection and the magic appeared – started to happen? (2.4hi)

This response also implies the magic (in this case sudden growth) is instigated or inspired by a type of cause and effect scenario. The first element ('the light switch went on') enables the second element ('a type of connection') that enables the 'magic' (Te) to appear. Hilda says that '... the light switch *went* on...' which suggests that it is something that happens outside of her control rather than something she consciously does. It is not switched on by anyone – the implication is that it 'went on' by itself. Perhaps Hilda is describing a type of magical force here too.

In relation to the subordinate theme of magic or things seeming to emerge from nothing, I have observed a surprising and rather extraordinary convergence relating to a type of 'magical' cause and effect situation with my clients. I have reported it here because of its direct association with the theme but it is an area that will require further research to substantiate my findings. What I have observed is the following: that all four participants, especially in their later coaching sessions, have experienced sets of quite extreme 'coincidences' mostly related to their goals. These occurrences manifest as phone calls out of the blue inviting them to the job interview they have only been thinking about and have not yet applied, or important leadership meetings that fall entirely and unexpectedly their way. There was even the surprise arrival of much needed money for a project that seemed to appear entirely unexpectedly out of 'nowhere' – as if by magic. These

occurrences always meant that my clients' goals were achieved considerably more quickly than one might expect. I was aware of this phenomenon happening during the coaching sessions but had not really considered its possible importance until analysing it more closely for this project. The clients encountered this type of experience on many more occasions than I had previously suspected. For Adela, this type of coincidence happened 8 times; for Hilda, 15; for Faith, 12; and for Alice, 7. The most surprising observation for me was that these occurrences always (one hundred per cent of the time) followed an individual moment of what I would now describe as the client being in the position of Te – after a particularly strong moment of 'unveiling'. These coincidences never (zero per cent of the time) happened without the client embodying the Te perspective.

These coincidences could happen very quickly. For example:

Faith: It happened again. I dunno what's happening John. It's like – for me – it's – I'd describe it as happening out of the blue but not out of the blue if you see what I mean. It's like if you're a certain way – like – a certain way it happens – if you're not it doesn't. (3.1v)

Faith is very excited. Clearly what is implied by the conversation is that she feels she has been caught in a type of cause and effect situation. This process involves knowing what she wants and how to get it (that was worked upon through a typical coaching process), but also being part of a mysterious system. To put it in the language of Alice, '[i]t's just like the universe shifts in your favour' (2.3qii). Although the element of surprise is evident in the tone of Faith, it is more an excited playful surprise than one of shock and awe.

Lao Tzu says:

To give birth to the myriad things and let them grow...
this is the most magical Te!
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.45)

Te enables the being of them...
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.151)

Lao Tzu appears to be suggesting that 'Magical Te' enables the 'being' of people. I am not making any suggestion here of prestidigitation or something outer-worldly occurring. Te, as Bourdieu observes about habitus, is beyond 'consciousness or language' (Anderson, 2004, p. 265).

Summary of 'magic'

Te might be described as our personality when we are free from 'acquired learning'. Te inevitably comes from the True Heart. When the coach is working from the 'True Heart'

the client, via experiential transmission, is inspired to do the same. It would seem that, although Te is worked towards by removing 'acquired learning', it arrives suddenly and from 'nowhere' and therefore it might be described as 'magical'.

Theme 4: the experience of everything together

Within the Tao Te Ching 'the experience of everything together' is represented as having experientially grown.

Evolution

In Chapter 26, Lao Tzu uses the image of the tree to enlighten the reader about the importance of considering 'the experience of everything together':

How is it that a person with heart, who is capable of administering all, belittles the root while valuing the branches and leaves...?
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.96).

The growth Lao Tzu is promoting here can be described as a singularity. The healthy tree needs to develop as one unit in order to be healthy.

Later Lao Tzu uses the same image of the tree to encourage us to consider whether or not we are focusing more on the superficial than on the fundamental. Are we focusing more on the branches and leaves of the tree (how the tree appears) or are we focusing more on nourishing the root?

Lao Tzu:

Therefore, the great person dwells in the thick rather than the thin, they dwell in the root rather than the twigs.
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.120).

The advice here is not to focus on the external, instead to make sure that we are strong and healthy internally. It is only a strong root that can develop a strong tree. If the root is nurtured then the tree will live and grow naturally secure, healthy and strong. A strong root enables us to evolve in a healthy manner. An example from coaching might be the coach providing a consistently healthy transmission for the client that serves as the fundamental (root) of every session.

If the evolutionary pathway in terms of my findings so far it can be described as follows: i) 'acquired learning' is dropped by the coach; ii) there are then moments of 'unveiling' for the coach; iii) eventually the 'unveiling' results in the arrival of Te; iv) with Te there is also a coming about of an expansion of the coach's personal 'hyperordinate' perspective; v) by embodying this perspective 'transdimensionally', via experiential transmission, the

coach inspires the same process to begin in the client. This process describes the evolutionary pattern.

If we examine one of Faith's responses we find: 'and I feel like those doorways I've gone through have been quite drastic' (2.1u), and 'I look at the kind of person I was – the values that I had – very different to what I am now – and I can see that now – total – crystal clear...' (2.1u). Faith does not suggest that evolution has a smooth trajectory. Instead she implies that personal evolution happens as a series of sudden energetic bursts that are brought about by 'unveiling':

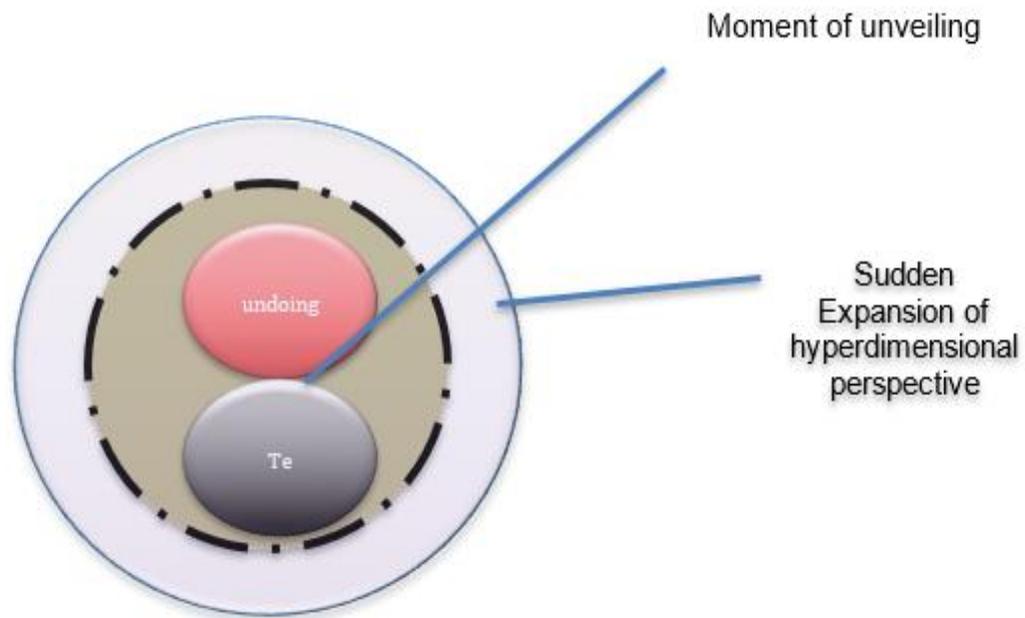


Figure 13 – Unveiling and awareness

For Faith, each time there is a moment of 'unveiling' she becomes clearer about her positioning. From the terminology I have developed this event can be described as her 'hyperordinate' environment expanding and with it her 'transdimensional' perspective. Faith then inhabits her expanded state. This expansion then happens time and time again for her.

'Evolving' therefore can be explained by the following sequence:

'Undoing' leads to a growing of Te, and with the growing of Te our awareness grows too.

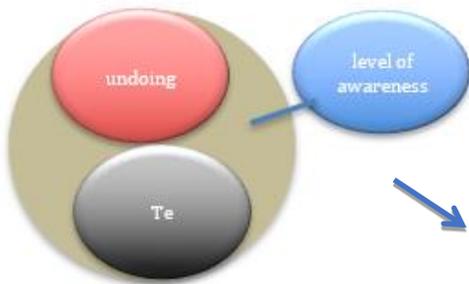


Figure 14 – Level of awareness

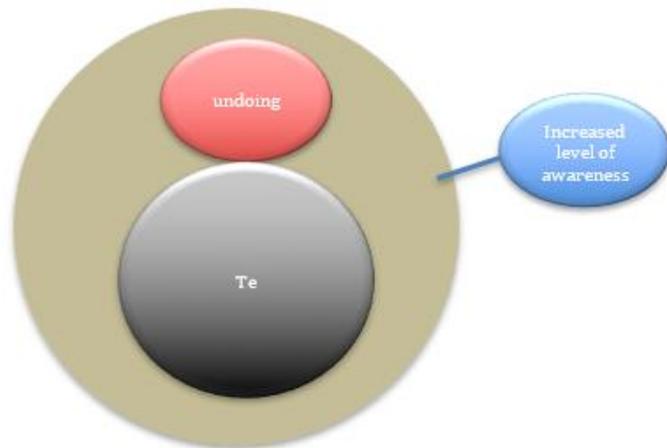


Figure 15 – Increasing levels of awareness

This process will eventually lead to Figure 16:



Figure 16 – Te

Here Te has expanded fully to become who we are. Te is the environment we create moment-to-moment by being our natural selves.

Lao Tzu exhorts us to:

Persist in reducing the False Heart little by little,
till all the acquired is dropped.
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.144).

Alice comments:

I need it to be real for me. It's not a confidence issue it's a beingness issue.
(2.3gii)

The solution Alice suggests is for herself to 'be' in the moment. The implication here is that to 'be' any other way is not to be 'real'.

Faith's sense making raises an observation concerning consistency when describing the nature of this type of personal evolution:

Faith: ... and it's about consistent expansion rather than doing the same thing again and again just to stay in the same place. (2.1ri)

Figure 17 alludes to the dangers of a lack of personal expansion:

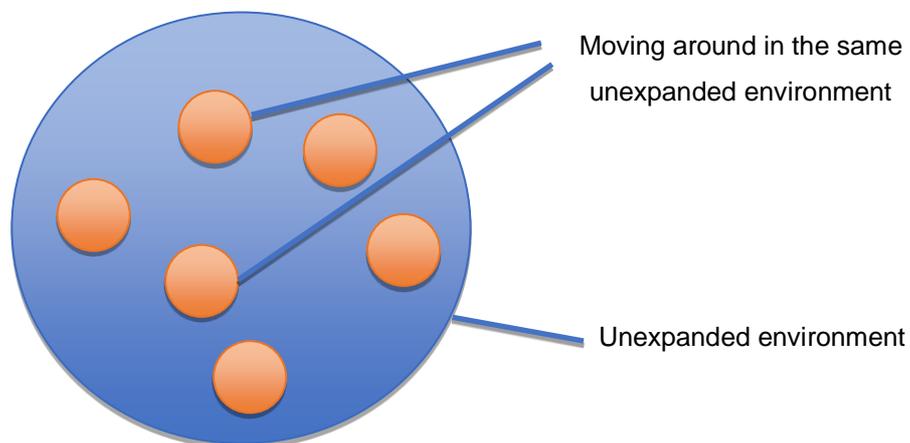


Figure 17 – Lack of the unveiling moment

In this diagram our evolutionary growth ceases to expand and we are simply left to wander within the same unexpanded area. There has been no moment(s) of 'unveiling' in us to expand our awareness (represented by the area) and so it remains the same size. We do not evolve. An example might be holidaymakers going abroad only to tick the box of having been to a certain country. They do not experience moments of 'unveiling' and so will not experience any 'transdimensional' growth in the way that those who genuinely engage in the experience will have.

Faith describes a recent trip in which she *has* grown:

Faith: When I was in Peru the people there were so – are so – their mindset is amazing – so refreshing – so totally – like it's all like nature – they've got this bigger picture... I mean people can do so many different things and like my sister – she's thirty-six and she's done different things but she's still in the same circle and it's never got any bigger. (2.1yii)

As well as explaining the difference between expansion and non-expansion, Faith's tone, pace and excitement all point to an improved sense of wellbeing in her. The experience of the trip seems to have unlocked something in her and a type of improved energy has come about. It seems as if she has experienced the 'transdimensional' growth we have been discussing.

Alice interprets the concept in a different way:

...Also our ability to see that and to use these experiences – to be around them expands'. (2.3pii) 'It's like breathing. (2.3pi)

Here there is the impression that growth is entirely natural: 'it's like breathing'. Hilda describes her growth as having helped her overcome her fear:

Hilda: (pause) I think that sometimes people don't go for things because of fear of failing – well I think that's me actually – with the feeling of wellbeing that we are talking about – ultimate wellbeing – for me the fear still exists but the wellbeing is so powerful that it overcomes it. Maybe what we are describing is wellbeing for real rather than pretending to have it – I don't know. (2.4pi)

Hilda describes the 'transdimensional' experience as a type of wellbeing that permeates us so fully that we can grow despite any personal fear of growth. Here Hilda does not describe an internal battle. Instead she describes 'wellbeing' as 'being so powerful' that it naturally overcomes her fear. Perhaps this event is similar to my experience of the monk on the mountain and overcoming my vertigo?

Summary of 'evolution'

This section reveals an evolutionary aspect to experiential transmission. The 'moment' of transmission, alignment, unveiling, seems to lead to a jump in growth. With each of these jumps, step-by-step our awareness is expanded and we evolve. Then, via our transmission, our improved state affects others.

The nature of inspiration

Lao Tzu introduces us to a specific interpretation of the nature of inspiration:

I take not acquired action and people are transformed by their own course,
I fall into stillness and people change to adhere to central normality by their own course,
I do not interfere and people become rich by their own course,
I get rid of desires and people become rich by their own course
(Trans. Hu, 2005, p.165).

One way of interpreting this segment is that the Sage, the teacher, the coach, simply by being themselves (in their 'beingness' of Te and in their ever-expanding state of

'transdimensional' consciousness) naturally inspires the wellbeing of others around them. Experiential transmission seems to suggest that the more the quality of Te is within the 'beingness' of the Sage, or coach, or teacher the more fully the client will be inspired. Inspiring is therefore not something the coach does, it is something the coach is. It is something the coach has become and continues to become as he or she evolves. The line from the quotation above: 'I take not acquired action and people are transformed by their own course', implies that no action is taken by the Sage in order for people to be inspired to be transformed. It is who the Sage is, the person behind the coaching/teaching mask, that inspires the transformation in the student. From the Outer Door perspective (Appendix 1.7a) one might say that by the Sage or coach is *being* a certain way. This *beingness* permeates and therefore inspires their students or clients to *be* that certain way too. And this way of inspiring happens from behind the coaching mask.

Lao Tzu also implies that those clients who are open to the transmission of the coach will receive it; those clients who are closed to it, will not (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.165). Faith alludes to this concept in her teaching:

Faith: And you look at their personalities and I just think – I was having this conversation with my students yesterday and they were saying how they connect – they do better in subjects where they – not 'like' the teacher exactly – it's about their personality – their whole personality – and they might really love maths for a little while when they've got a certain teacher then they swap teachers and they hate maths now – they can't do it. (2.1bi)

The personality of the teacher is what Faith says guides the students to doing well or not. Interestingly she states that whether they like the teacher or not is not the issue. They just want someone whom they perceive to be genuine. Faith develops this point a little later when discussing what inspires her personally:

Faith: When I'm inspired by someone it's – I don't know – it's – when they are doing their thing – it's watching them doing their thing and then going – so being inspiring is – (points to diagram) when people are in zone 4 ['hyperordinate' perspective]. When they are in that moment. (2.1zi)

Faith is inspired by people being themselves and being 'in the moment', in Te, in the 'hyperordinate' position. In other words, similar to her students, it is not the particular personality trait of the individual that encourages her to be inspired, rather it is the quality of the individual's natural genuineness. There is a further development when she seems to unintentionally put herself in the seat of the person inspiring the class:

Faith: I agree with this a lot. I can totally relate to this in my capacity as a teacher. Going back to what I said about my students 'Oh. I don't like that subject any more' and it's about the person. As a teacher the best moment

ever in the classroom is when you are working through a problem or you're giving them the tools to work through a problem and then they get it themselves and it's almost like (intake of breath) 'Oh'. And then they're on to the next thing with energy and 'Oh yeah – I get this now' and they do it alone. (2.1t)

Faith seems to be describing her excitement as a teacher when she inspires 'transdimensional' bursts in her students.

During our conversation on 'the nature of inspiration' Alice raises the subject of the teacher needing to be centred:

Alice: What's implied? – implied by this – is that – is that it is who we are that fundamentally and holistically inspires others as opposed to the focus being on what we do. Naturally – I would say – say the two are linked – intrinsically linked but what I think – am suggesting – I think – what could be suggested is that as teachers, coaches and therapists we might consider focusing on our core – our 'beingness' – our core – the quality – first and from here what we say and do will be inevitably connected to this balanced and natural state. (2.3qiv)

Similar to Lao Tzu discussing the importance of the root of the tree (Trans. Hu, 2005, p.120), Alice makes sense of the process by describing the importance of nourishment of the core. This visualisation of the personal 'centre' of the teacher then becomes the place from within which she implies we inspire others; so the healthier the core, the healthier the transmission. For Alice, this explanation makes sense because to her everything we do and say is driven from this centralised energetic place. Hilda comes to a similar realisation towards the end of our conversation too. This time 'inspiration' is expressed in the context of the felt sense:

Hilda: Yes. And I think – I think – that the feeling might actually be the solution to the problem – because what comes from the feeling – well for me, what came from the feeling is the ability to see the solution clearly – so the feeling is where the solution derives from. Oh my God. Therefore for me the feeling was really important. That's what's been missing in my day to day stuff. Is that why I can't sort it out? That I'm looking for the solution rather than the feeling that creates the solution? This is so interesting. (2.4p)

In this instance for Hilda our discussion actually creates a 'transdimensional' experience. She suddenly realises: 'I'm looking for the solution rather than the feeling that creates the solution' and she is suddenly emotionally lifted. Alice exemplifies this type of experience too:

Alice: I knew I wanted some kind of change, but I didn't know how to actually make that happen. So my risk adverse nature and the feeling of being spiritually alone – and what I feel now afterwards is a calmness and

a – I can very quickly get excited. And I know when this isn't happening because everything feels tight. We worked a lot on the physical side of releasing tension as a type of key and now I get it – I know that it is... (2.3gi)

In this extract Alice explains that the 'hyperordinate' position (brought about by her tension-free state) allows her to see 'transdimensionally' and this new point of view seems to alleviate her problem of being risk adverse. When Alice experiences 'being tension free' her problems seem more surmountable.

Hilda describes a similar reaction from a 'hyperordinate' perspective. This time the subject is about being non-judgemental:

Hilda: So it's confidence. I think what some of our sessions gave me – looking back – was the confidence to make decisions that I'm not very good at making – outside of work in my own life. Whether it's to do with making decisions about my personal life or work – perhaps – it's to do with my family and friends who are very judgemental and are very stressed and pressured in their own lives – I think our space – that coaching space – that non-judgemental non-pressured feeling – allowed me to make decisions – do you know what I mean? I don't know whether I'm explaining myself well? (2.4mi)

What Hilda seems to be saying is that the coaching 'space' inspires her to be able to make decisions with more confidence. For her this 'space' is an experience: one of 'non-judgement' and a 'non-pressured feeling'. Therefore to Hilda, 'the space' (created by the coach being non-judgemental), permeates the room and this atmosphere inspires her to find her 'real confidence'. Hilda also realises that family and friends have in the past created a narrow environment of 'judgement' around her via their transmissions. When it comes to 'the nature of inspiration' this type of environment cannot be described as inspiring. In fact it is the opposite. It seems to me more about holding people in place (see Figure 17) than it is about inspiring them into action. My research has shown that 'the nature of inspiration' is about the coach inspiring the client into a 'hyperordinate' position. And always the energy the 'hyperordinate' stance brings about is clear, positive and healthy for the client. The process can be described as having a magical quality. It is called magical only because it is a process not fully understood by most coaches in schools. The coach needs to be in the position of Te in order to become the magician that can inspire the 'hyperordinate' position in her clients.

It seems that, via experiential transmission, we have the opportunity to influence both positively and negatively, to be either inspirational, damaging or somewhere in between (Mitchell, Appendix 1.15). It then follows that if as teachers and coaches we want to inspire a sense of personal evolution in our students and our clients we must be truly evolving

ourselves as the people behind the job description or the coaching facade. If we are not then it will be impossible to inspire the ‘transdimensional’ experience for the client.

As Alice points out:

I think this happens a lot. It happens right in front of our noses. We just don’t see it that way – as being that important – it’s just a way of life. Teachers put on acts all the time – it is what we’re taught to do. I think – we – they see it as black and white – you put up a front or you lose control of your class. But that’s not it. What you are saying is that we get good at our technique – I think this is it – so it becomes part of who we are when we teach – we don’t hide behind the technique – more we merge with it. (2.3qiii)

Alice’s sense making may be interpreted as the nature of inspiration being intrinsically connected to something one genuinely *is* (that requires no thought to maintain) as opposed to something one does (that requires conscious thought and planning). As Faith points out:

... the moment you start thinking about it is the moment you stop doing it.
(2.1xi)

Summary of ‘the nature of inspiration’

‘The nature of inspiration’ suggests that via experiential transmission the full and uncompromising nature of who we are is transmitted to others. When it comes to being inspirational, we can choose to be debilitating or to be inspiring to others. It is up to us. This choice does not come about by how we choose to *act* with our clients or students; it comes about by how we choose to *be*. It is from how we *are* that our words and actions emerge. Simply put, if we are ‘being’ genuine then our transmission will be genuine; if we are ‘being’ disingenuous then our transmission will be disingenuous. Our influence comes about by who we choose to be, and who we choose to become.

Coaches and teachers in the UK are extremely likely to have to jump through the hoops of ‘acquired action’. Their roles demand a demonstrative way of teaching and coaching. My research shows that this fact makes no difference to their inspirational qualities. This is because the inspirational quality discussed comes from behind the teaching or the coaching mask. Therefore, one is able to still choose to be a teacher in education, still able to appreciate and use all coaching models, in the knowledge that one’s genuineness will be conveyed through one’s transmission.

Conclusion

I have identified a novel and potentially revolutionary element to educational coaching previously unconsidered, one that is valuable to coaching and to educational coaching

specifically: experiential transmission. Fundamentally, the quality of the person behind the coaching mask radically affects the outcome of the coaching session in ways coaching literature has not previously explored. Who the coach is, in the broadest imaginable sense, permeates the coaching environment which affects the client. This transmission is unavoidable.

Chapter 6 investigates my conclusions further. I analyse how the concept of experiential transmission might benefit coaching in schools today and how it might evolve in the light of my research. I also report my personal learning curve during this project – one that has improved my coaching practice in schools significantly.

Chapter six: discussions, conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter I explain the conclusions I have drawn from my research on experiential transmission. I explore the implications of my study for coaching, how training to be a coach might evolve, the limitations of the study, and the prospect of further research into how experiential transmission might enrich coaching practice today. All of the above are analysed through the lens of my personal growth.

Conclusions

The process of exploring experiential transmission for my project has created an added sense of personal certainty to my professional coaching practice. As my understanding of experiential transmission has evolved so has my professional instinct in this area, and a type of increased awareness of the phenomenon has improved my relationship with my clients. It is as if a raised sense of confidence has permeated my work. My coaching day now feels more lifted and much easier to sustain than before. I enjoy and appreciate more the clarity that experiential transmission brings: it is a supportive dimension to my coaching technique, and enriches any strategies I use.

I have also continued my search for concepts outside of Taoism that might accurately reflect the experience of experiential transmission in practice. The closest I have come so far is the idea of social contagion (Marsden, 1998) but there remains a subtle but important mismatch. While social contagion tends to explore how certain people or groups 'present' to the environment and then how the environment and the individual are affected (Marsden, 1998), experiential transmission involves something different: the quality of how we are 'being present' in the environment and how this affects those around us. From a Dimension I (Nakagawa, 2000) perspective experiential transmission can be explained technically in terms of social contagion and therefore it is of value, but social contagion is described by Marsden (1998) in a mostly reductive way and therefore does not offer the opportunity to explore experiential transmission's immediate and more multi-dimensional qualities.

I have also discovered the potential in other practitioner's work. For example groups and individuals such as Lofthouse et al. (2010), who explore added dimensions to coaching talk, show promise. Here again there tends to be a fundamental difference between Lofthouse et al.'s concept of dimensionality and that surrounding experiential transmission. Lofthouse et al. (2010) tend to resort to technical compartmentalisation for

their explanations whereas experiential transmission, as my project has uncovered, relies on non-compartmentalisation, a type of lived unexplainable 'experience'. Lofthouse et al.'s concept of dimension is described neatly as a type of analytical tool which is markedly different to the expression of, for example, the naturally occurring bursts of growth that my project investigates.

*

I will now move on to some concluding thoughts surrounding my themes.

Undoing

Similar to the experience of my clients Mitchell places much emphasis on the initial 'undoing' phase (Appendix 1). Unlike the experience of my clients Mitchell seeks to 'undo' for a specific purpose: to be ready to receive a set of transmissions from his Master. It is only after this Master to student transmission has occurred that Mitchell can become a coach/teacher, should he choose to be so. From my clients' perspectives they seek to 'undo' so they can be visited by bursts of expanded consciousness but their process is far less targeted.

The difference between the Taoist approach to coaching/teaching training and the expectation of coaching training in schools today is distinct: from Mitchell, to be a coach there is a total life commitment to the craft and to the art – no exceptions. On the other hand, from my experience of coaching in schools, at the extreme, coaching training can now be done quickly online for a fee without even meeting a client. The development of the coach as a person is not included. Many of the coaches I train do not take the easy route but my point is that education in some instances would accept this quick and impersonal training as valid.

My project implies that depth of training is important. For example, with a coach who has learnt to be open and non-judgemental, 'undoing' might be encouraged in the client as a natural process. In this case coach and client work together and there is a feeling of clarity and growth to the sessions. At the other end of the spectrum, with an inexperienced and undertrained coach, judgemental and egotistical, hiding behind the coaching facade, it is likely to be that 'undoing' in the client cannot be facilitated at all by the transmission of the coach because the coach has no intention of 'undoing' themselves. In this instance, via coach to client experiential transmission, 'undoing' is likely to be replaced by a transmission of fear, artificiality and defensiveness.

An example from my journal exemplifies a weakness of mine when it comes to my transmission:

I am a coach. I have not experienced Inner Door experiential transmission (Appendix 1). Therefore I will not be able to inspire it in my clients. It is impossible. My transmission is who I am, what I have experienced, and as I have not experienced Inner Door transmission I cannot authentically transmit it. However, I have experienced sitting with a Taoist Master for a significant amount of time in China when studying Internal Alchemy meditation. Therefore I have experienced a certain amount of the Outer Door healthy passive transmission from a Master. In some ways 'sitting with the Master' transmission-wise is like the coaching situation because Outer Door transmission is about the quality of the person behind the teaching/coaching mask and therefore whether the form is meditation or coaching there is still an element of sitting together – and transmission occurring. Because of this my clients that are open to sharing in my level of experiential learning in the coaching room (in other words my transmission) should naturally be able to do so. It should be a natural occurrence.

*

In the time between our coaching sessions (something that my YouSITT coaching identifies as an important time for progression) my clients seem to progress haphazardly. The levels to which their 'undoing' is sustained seems to depend on the transmissions of those they have met up with that day. Those people encountered by my clients outside of the coaching room (who often have mixed and defensive transmissions) seem to produce defensive reactions in my clients. Whereas inside the coaching room, where the level of transmission is consistent, my clients' 'undoing' is more consistent.

To rectify this inconsistency Mitchell points out that we can utilise humility, humour and simplicity to aid our 'undoing' process (Appendix 1.11a). To Mitchell, these qualities are important because they are designed to allow for personal growth no matter how volatile our environment might be (Appendix 1.11a). He is convinced that the three qualities comprise a type of refractive mechanism designed to prevent negative transmissions from impacting us. For example, if a client experiences a negative transmission from a line manager, but chooses to see it as a humorous event, then their lighter point of view diminishes the transmission's negative power to affect them.

My clients do tend to utilise humour, humility and simplicity in their working environment but it is in a different way from that explained by Mitchell (Appendix 1.11a). Mitchell perceives these three qualities as constituting a type of natural barrier designed to deflect any oncoming negativity (Appendix, 1.11a). They are a form of protection ensuring our sense of 'undoing' is allowed to continue to move uninterrupted. The three qualities are

preventative. On the other hand my clients tend to use humility, humour and simplicity in a way that can be characterised as a type of recovery system. They use these qualities after the negativity has already had an effect on them. For example, something may happen to affect one of my clients and to anger him. It would then be afterwards that they might instinctively use laughter in a coaching session to recover from having been affected. The laughter represents a form of convalescence. This approach is different from Mitchell's who uses the three qualities to deflect the issue before it has a chance to affect him in the first place.

Humour, humility and simplicity make sure that outside negativity is gently and naturally deflected before its transmission can penetrate (Appendix 1.15). What springs to mind here is the idea of medicine being focused on curing the patient rather than effort being placed on preventing the disease from reaching us in the first place. This preventative way of thinking implies that the 'undoing' process need not, and perhaps should not, be a battle either internal or external. Rather it can be seen as a simple non-confrontational way of protecting our 'undoing' that uses humility, humour and simplicity to naturally deflect any negative transmissions – to protect its growth. This very specific type of deflection might be another interesting subject for future study.

*

Mitchell also points out that all coaches are placed in a position of trust:

[In] any education there's always a certain degree of disempowerment when it comes to trust because you're almost always submissive to that person while you are receiving the teaching. This is why abusive teachers or manipulative teachers of anything can be a problem right? (Appendix1.15)

My research suggests, from the perspective of experiential transmission, that there is a very specific element of trust to be considered: the coach needing to be at one with who they present themselves to be in the coaching room. I am implying that a mismatch here (for example a tense coach pretending to be calm) leads to confusing and negative transmissions from coach to client. The coach is put in a position of trust and yet, via their transmission, they are actually confusing, even harming the client. Preventing this type of situation is a strong argument for an awareness of experiential transmission to be introduced into coaching training.

Unveiling

According to Mitchell, there is the Outer Door experience of experiential transmission (Appendix 1.1), and the more secretive Inner Door experience of the same (Appendix 1.1). When it comes to the subordinate theme of ‘unveiling’, there are some similarities between the lived experiences of my clients and those of Mitchell in both these areas.

My clients’ experiences of ‘unveiling’ seem to sit mostly within the description of Mitchell’s Outer Door experience (Appendix 1.1). Their experiences of ‘unveiling’ seem to represent a ‘light bulb’ moment – a personal revelation that comes about unexpectedly and seemingly from nowhere. There is a feeling of being liberated and pulled into the moment. There also seems to be an immediate lift in my clients’ wellbeing.

Mitchell describes the Outer Door experience as being a preparation – as putting oneself in a type of mode to be able to receive the more profound Inner Door transmission from the Master. For my clients it seems different. For them it is more like the Outer Door process, represented by their ‘undoing’, is incorporating moments of ‘unveiling’. With the ‘unveiling’ there is a type of ‘mini Inner Door’ experience – as if the door is ajar for a moment. To amplify this description I might say that the Inner Door, rather than swinging open for my clients to walk through, is open just enough for them to get a glimpse as to what is on the other side. But even this relatively brief experience seems enough to affect them in a positive way and to offer them a significant opportunity for growth.

The Mysterious Pass

In the Taoist culture the Mysterious Pass is traditionally depicted as the passing through of a doorway from one realm to another, or from one level of experiential understanding to another (Appendix 1.6). In my findings the actual moment of passing, the mysterious pass, paradoxically seems not have existed for my clients. Intellectually and diagrammatically it may be described as a transition point but experientially it is not recognised in the moment it happens. Mitchell describes the ‘moment’ differently – as one impossible to be forgotten: ‘...the initial ‘oomph’ that provides a sudden awakening’ (Appendix 1.11). Some of what he describes as personally feeling afterwards might be similar to my clients’ experiences ‘...a feeling of openness or maybe clarity’ (Appendix 1.11) but my clients have certainly not been as profoundly or as permanently affected as Mitchell. Nevertheless Mitchell’s experience might be described as similar to the experience of my clients – a sense of clarity appears to them too.

Magic

As my project has discussed, when we don't understand a mysterious process we might call it 'magical', but the same process is not 'magical' to the person who understands it. It is simply that they know something we do not. My project aims to explain experiential transmission because it is only when the mysterious qualities of the phenomenon are understood by the coach that they can be utilised to positive effect with the client.

From the Taoist perspective, with the Inner Door, there are two more interpretations of 'magic'. The first is similar to a type of magic spell that might be cast on the Taoist student by the Taoist coach. The 'spell' (the transmission from the Master) enables the student to suddenly be so aligned with the particular form they are studying that they comprehend it 'fully' (Appendix 1.11). This understanding includes the meaning of ancient texts not previously intellectually understood by the student (Appendix 1.11a). The second area is the opening up of a psychic ability between teacher and student to the extent that the teacher can 'pass on teachings mentally to you' (Appendix 1.11a). In other words, student and Master are so on the same wavelength that they can now communicate in this unspoken way. Naturally, an inordinate amount of commitment is necessary to establish the Inner Door relationship, perhaps more than would be considered necessary by most coaching standards. However, I persist in my belief that some coaches and clients, if offered the opportunity, would probably relish the chance to train and to work in such a committed way.

Regarding other seemingly 'magical' outcomes from my clients, as mentioned in Chapter 5, one outcome in particular was noticed in the recordings. This phenomenon astounded me. It was that whenever a significant moment of 'unveiling' happened for the client it was followed by a type of 'out of the blue' occurrence for them, something positive and mostly in relation to a personal coaching goal. This 'out of the blue' 'coincidence' never seemed to happen when not in the proximity (of a few days) of a significant 'unveiling' moment. Such a level of cause and effect is so out of the ordinary that, as the researcher, I find it too extreme to comprehend. Could this cause and effect situation actually be a 'magical' event I don't yet understand? Imagine having a situation where the 'unveiling' moment in coaching could guarantee a type of positive out-of-the-blue coincidence for the client. If it proved to be true it would certainly be a valid reason for identifying and consolidating those 'unveiling' experiences.

Evolution

The time after the 'unveiling' is significant for both Mitchell and my clients. For my clients, there seems to be a feeling of completeness and what can best be described as a type of alignment and sense of freedom within themselves. This 'lifted' internal stance then seems to offer a window of opportunity for them to make decisions from a clearer perspective than before, and brings with it the opportunity for them to evolve more quickly than if they had not been in this state. This elevated stance does not seem to last very long and my clients seem to find themselves easily jolted out of alignment by the invasive environment outside of the coaching room. But the more this state is revisited by my clients the longer it seems to last. For both Mitchell and my clients the evolutionary aspect is brought about by what seems to be 'growth spurts' to one's being. It is just that Mitchell's Inner Door experience is more profound and permanent than that of my clients. From a coaching training perspective this 'lift' in client state might be a valid reason to focus on these moments of expansion.

In her interview Faith describes something similar to the permanency of Mitchell's Inner Door experience (Appendix 2.1). She describes a friend of hers who has hit rock bottom and is entirely disconsolate. (Perhaps this might be described as her friend being totally 'undone'.) Her friend is quite literally in the gutter, lying in the dirt of the street. At this point, all of a sudden, there is what might be described as a total emotional realisation. Faith describes her friend as being instantly and permanently 'changed'. From that moment she begins to lift herself out of the mire. Faith's friend is now currently living what Faith describes as an uplifted life. While this event cannot be described as Inner Door because it is not a targeted transmission from Master to student, it might be described as the importance the depth of the 'unveiling' has on the depth of the evolutionary growth that follows: the more profound the experience the greater evolutionary 'space' is created for growth and change. The experience for Faith's friend was strong enough for it to instantly dictate a permanent change in her life for the better.

From my clients' perspectives, the experience after the 'unveiling' also seems to be able to be characterised by what presents as a time without the presence of the observer self. This particular level of psychodynamic duality (us judging ourselves) is replaced by a type of 'in the moment' singularity or 'beingness' (us being ourselves). It is accompanied by a tangible increase in wellbeing. For my clients there is not the transition period described by Mitchell of being initially 'stoned' or in some cases being physically ill or in pain

(Appendix 1.11) but there still seems to be an immediate ‘felt’ benefit in having passed through the ‘eureka’ moment.

To summarise, it seems that the level of personal evolution (and whether it is sustained or not) is directly related to the depth of the ‘unveiling’ experience.

The nature of inspiration

My research suggests that whether we are inspiring (or not) goes beyond what we do or say. There is another layer to be considered: the quality of who we are a person – who we are behind our words and actions – behind the coaching mask. The personal quality of the coach is important because, via experiential transmission, it is this entire quality of who we are that is transmitted, and what we transmit is what we inspire. In other words, who we are is what we fundamentally and unavoidably inspire in those we coach.

The personal quality of us as coaches can also be associated with the experiential transmission we have received from others in the past. If we have received only narrow and defensive transmitted experiences from the people around us and have chosen not to seek out better transmissions from others more centred, then this narrow and defensive quality is likely to form part of who we become. And who we become is what we transmit to others, and what we transmit to others is what they go on to transmit to those around them.

Mitchell recounts a learning situation experienced by him:

I do exercises with this fellow who’s very, very good but he’s not had connection with the transmission – and I do the same practice – the same exercises – spend the same amount of time with this guy who’s very, very close to the transmission – my skill goes a lot higher with this guy. It just exponentially grows like it just goes up and up and up (Appendix 1.19a).

Mitchell is more inspired by someone who has received the transmission (or is closer to it) than by someone who has not. Even though he completes exactly the same sequence of exercises alongside both people the experience for Mitchell is different with each. With one, Mitchell is inspired to go ‘up and up and up’ and with the other he is progressing at a slower pace.

When translated to teaching in the classroom the participants of my project also recount similar experiences to Mitchell. Faith (Appendix 2.1) explains that she has witnessed two classes containing students of the same academic level being taught from exactly the same syllabus, lesson by lesson, by different teachers. The teachers have even discussed their teaching techniques and agreed to unify their approaches. However, one of the

classes learns intrinsically better than the other, much better, and the students pass with much higher grades. The class that does not seem to like their teacher as a person is the one that does not do so well. Faith recounts that, when questioned, the students say that they respond to teachers 'being themselves' in preference to those 'pretending to be someone else' (Appendix 2.1). This particular example is not to deny the importance of the skill of the teacher, rather it is to imply that in this instance those teachers using their skills while 'being themselves' are more likely to be naturally inspiring to the class than those using similar skills who are putting on an act in the classroom. In other words, to use the language of my project, those aligned with Te (coming from a position of the True Heart) according to these students are more naturally inspiring than those who are not.

Implications for the coaching community

The implications for the education coaching community concerning the findings of my project could be far reaching but are wholly dependent on the level of acceptance of this approach. A recent article in *The Guardian* (2017) revealed that 75% of teachers say that their workload is unmanageable, and that 81% report being significantly negatively impacted by cuts in funding. And in my experience coaches in schools almost always have to take on many other supportive roles other than that of coach. With this environment in mind embracing the importance of experiential transmission might not be a priority at the moment – even though it might represent the first step towards a solution to the stresses caused by these issues. It will take a certain type of coaching personality and a certain type of client to prioritise an awareness of experiential transmission over keeping one's head above water.

The issues that tend to work against new, more creative and 'optional' incentives in educational coaching in this case might work in experiential transmission's favour. First and perhaps foremost is the fact that the quality of the coach's experiential transmission is entirely personal. Nobody can demand whether the coach engages in developing this type of awareness or not. It will always remain a free choice. Experiential transmission is likely only to draw to it those coaches who are genuinely interested in the subject. It is as if experiential transmission self-regulates. Those wanting to be *seeming* to follow current trends will not be able to engage. This level of superficiality will prohibit any existential growth because to superficially align can only produce superficial results. Those genuinely interested, who have been searching for another level to their coaching outside of the normal technocratic linear approaches, will receive more genuine results. Perhaps then, what is more likely to come about is a slowly growing group of educational coaches

interested in developing an awareness of experiential transmission to the benefit of the coaching community.

Important too is what my project has revealed about experiential transmission's association with wellbeing. Simply put: the wellbeing of the coach inspires the wellbeing of the client. This explanation does not contain any of the psychological complexities of current wellbeing trends such as mindfulness. And perhaps most vital of all, experiential transmission in coaching is an entirely sustainable model, and one that can be associated with natural and seamless non-confrontational community growth: the coach, through experiential transmission, inspires the individual client. The client then, via their own improved experiential transmission, inspires those around them simply by being who they are – without conscious effort. It seems to me to have tremendous potential.

Coaching training – what it might be like

After spending a considerable amount of time pondering over what coaching training in schools might be like (should experiential transmission begin to be recognised) my main thoughts are two. First, it would be important to develop a training that works effectively within the reality of the school environment. Second, the training must not rely on winning battles with the institutional powers that be, not rely on superficial persuasion or manipulation of head teachers, and not force educational coaching down any sort of avenue that it might be at all resistant to taking.

My conclusion is simple. Leave educational coaching training exactly as it is. Leave all coaching training, in all fields, as it is. No changes whatsoever. The concept of experiential transmission is not for everyone – nor should it be. Then, in a different training environment, offer a coaching training program that embraces experiential transmission – just for those who are interested – those who are looking for an extra sense of dimension to their work. Through this process an awareness of experiential transmission can then be seamlessly incorporated into the individual's coaching practice. Such an approach might be initially promoted and trained by me, and then, via my YouSITT training program, gradually become available to the wider coaching community.

Limitations of the research

Limitations concerning my research are numerous. First, the small sample size limits the potential accuracy of my project because my results may not be representational of the varied responses typical of a larger cohort (Creswell, (2007)). Also the participants were chosen because of their likelihood to align with the subject of experiential transmission

and this choice may have produced biased results. Rather ironically, my project has revealed that it is likely that one needs to be open to the idea of experiential transmission in order to be able to appreciate it in the first place. So I think my choice of clients open to the phenomenon may have turned out to be a valid one, although more research certainly needs to be done in this area.

The issue of gender also raises its head. Despite the auto-ethnographic researcher (me) being male all of my clients were female. Two male clients were intending to be involved, but both were unable to participate due to personal commitments. To a certain extent I think that the gender balance is maintained by the fact that a major source of the information about experiential transmission is male too: Damo Mitchell, and his wisdom permeates my research.

Retrospectively, I think that a second conversation on the findings with my clients might have added depth to my results. With the first set of conversations, even after the pilot studies, it took the participants a little while to relax into the material. It might have been useful for us to have met up again after our initial ideas had settled and without the jeopardy of my clients not knowing at all the content of what was to come. I also seem to have included one of my client's conversations, 'Faith', a little more than the others. This focus on Faith was entirely unintentional. There was so much material from which to choose that I was focusing more on the quality of the conversations than on who I was actually talking to.

Future research

I think my project very much has the feel of being an introduction to the subject of experiential transmission and that there are numerous areas into which further research might be of value. Perhaps a larger sample size exploring one particular element of the phenomenon such as 'undoing' might be helpful to the coaching community. A more diverse sample regarding age range such as the incorporation of younger students who have been coached and perhaps teachers or coaches closer to retirement age might also offer a richer texture to explore.

Perhaps valuable too might be a study of why some teachers and coaches do not seem able to 'own' their life experiences as they work. Why do some teachers and coaches seem to feel they have to push these elements of themselves aside in order to be effective? In my role as a supervisor of educational coaches, I often see a 'front' being put up and an artificial persona being developed, and it is this persona that is presented to

the students and the clients – sometimes for an entire career. It may be useful to discover something further about what it is in the coaching training that encourages this type of 'hiding' to come about and why people might consider it to be beneficial.

Another potential area of further research might be to explore why coaching seems to be so reluctant to incorporate methodologies that can't be compartmentalised into its systems. Why do new approaches, for example those surrounding the existential, still go down the pathway of reduction in order to explain and to justify themselves? Such a study might allow us to begin to explore a more multi-dimensional approach to coaching practice.

I look forward to further considering my project findings, and to further researching the nature of experiential transmission. I have a feeling it may take quite a while.

Chapter seven: reflexive exploration

To raise my academic capability in my late fifties for this doctoral project has been a challenge to say the least. At times the task has felt so far beyond me that I have been unable to write a single word. Nevertheless I seem to have been somehow driven to continue and I find myself having completed my work and feeling extremely pleased to have done so.

Overcoming trepidation has played its part in other ways too. The thought of introducing themes such as 'nothingness' and 'the Mysterious Pass' into a project aimed at mainstream education has felt intimidating. I have wasted time trying to search out more acceptable lexical replacements only to realise that my original choices were clearly the most workable. This worry has escalated to the extent that for an entire year I tried to avoid using the word 'magic', looking instead for viable substitutions. Thankfully, 'magic' is now utilised as a major theme boldly placed within my research findings.

As my confidence has grown, so has the idea that my project has represented a transitional moment in my life. In China, many people begin their search for 'meaning' in their later years, when their families are grown and they have time to do so. In Japan too there is the concept of being visited by a revitalised energy at the age of sixty. It is called *kanreki*. And I feel I have had a similar experience here. The transition for me not only represents a newfound confidence in the direction I want to take my coaching but I am once again genuinely motivated when it comes to improving education for the young people of today.

It is almost as if working on the subject of experiential transmission has brought about a type of personal lift in me. Indeed the most powerful and significant area of my growth has come from having to focus on experiential transmission continuously and for so long. As my understanding of experiential transmission has developed so has my ability to coach. I have more and more felt the correlation between growing as a person and being able to inspire my clients from behind the coaching mask. Coaching has moved from being a pleasure to becoming a joy. There has also been a substantial increase in demand for my work in schools.

I have grown during the process both intellectually and emotionally. I now seem to have more of a sense of grounding – a type of certainty in the knowledge of something I have suspected all along – that there is a way to infiltrate education with a more natural experiential purpose, despite the current climate. I now feel more confident and more able

to take the position of being a respected voice in the community when it comes to the importance of experiential transmission – such an innovative aspect to coaching.

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