

Judging the quality of development: the subject of knowing.

by Philip Boxer.

Would any of you think of building a tower without first sitting down and calculating the cost, to see whether he could afford to finish it? Otherwise, if he has laid its foundation and then is not able to complete it, all the onlookers will laugh at him. 'There is the man', they will say, 'who started to build and could not finish.' Or what king will march to battle against another king, without first sitting down to consider whether with ten thousand men he can face an enemy coming to meet him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, long before the enemy approaches, he sends envoys, and asks for terms. So also none of you can be a disciple of mine without parting with all his possessions. (Luke 14: 28:33)

Abstract

This paper traces the origins of the technique of reflective analysis, as supported by CRITIK; and considers its place in relation to different forms of teaching paradigm. It describes the technique in terms of enabling a manager to articulate the paradoxes and dilemmas inherent in his own way of framing his experience. The paper then goes on to discuss the characteristic ways in which managers get 'stuck' in their own development in terms of each of the teaching paradigms, and the ways in which teachers can collude with this to serve their own interests. It concludes that the best teaching practice enables managers to find their own authority in relation to their experience, and to live with the issues of timing that this form of authority inevitably gives rise to.

Introduction

Ten years ago ¹, I embarked on the development of techniques for working with managers which could enable the manager to develop the

¹i.e. 1974. This paper is a revised version of a paper dating from 1984 and appearing as a Chapter in: Boud D., Keogh R. & Walker D. (eds) Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning Kogan Page 1985. This was itself a re-write of an earlier version which was written for the 1981 Personal Construct Psychology Congress at Brock University. This is an edited version of that Chapter - I have changed some of the language to keep it in step with current developments.

quality of his judgment (Boxer, 1978). The focus of this work was on choices which were 'strategic' for the manager. In the beginning I defined 'strategic' in terms of the situations in which the manager found himself: he experienced some ambiguity in the nature of the problems he faced. In retrospect, I was concerned with enabling the manager to *have* a strategy. Over the years this concern became inverted. I was to come to see it as one of enabling the manager to *be* strategic: defining strategic in relation to the manager ². Hence judging the quality of development was something for the manager to do and not me. This chapter seeks to follow the course of this inversion, and to consider where it leaves the manager ³.

The whole view of development which unfolds in this paper speaks from these pages with a voice which is the supposed subject of knowing. "Development" seems to have become something one does to/with another as distinct from being a way of referring to something which just goes on with or without conscious cooperation. An 'other' voice might speak of the end of this paper as a beginning therefore ⁴: but this inversion has something important to say about Development. ⁵

The origins of the project lay in my experience of management education, and the difficulties I had in balancing what I was learning in formal courses with what I was able to learn from my experience. Thanks to funding initially from the National Development Programme in Computer Assisted Learning (NDPCAL) (Hooper, 1977), and later from the Training Services Division of the UK Manpower Services Commission (Boot, 1979), methods of working with managers emerged which became known as reflective analysis (Shaw, 1981), and which had their origins in the repertory grid technique

²This was a first inversion which introduced the manager into the question, but still privileged a one who was strategic. The difference lay in who was taken as master! The problematic surrounding the possibility of a second inversion emerges in the way the Chapter ends on the question of authority and timing. Understanding strategy as transference enables us to read the first inversion as the assumption of the manager's relation as subject in relation to the Real; and the possibility of a second inversion as an encounter with the Other as *lacking*.

³This time (1991) I have added a commentary to explain the major changes since the last re-write (ie a further 6 years after that!). I have also made changes to the main body of the text, expanding and modifying the language to reflect current understandings of the reflective process. The footnotes however are intended to make the links to questions raised in the other two papers on "The economy of discourses" and "Lacan and Maturana: Constructivist origins for a 3⁰ Cybernetics".

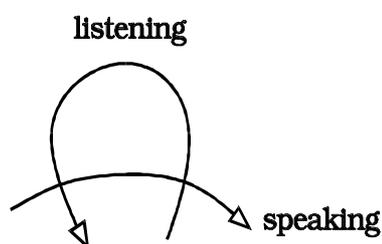
⁴ I am here equating this voice which is the supposed subject of knowing with the 'I' speaking through this text; and by an 'other' voice I was implying that there were also different ways of listening to this speaking. For example, Carol Gilligan describes the ways in which male conceptions of Development are rooted in a paradigm of context independency which excludes or marginalises female conceptions rooted as they are in context (otherness). Carol Gilligan (1982) In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development Harvard University Press. This Chapter raises this whole problematic of speaking and listening and where it leads 'one' .

⁵More specifically, it points towards the problematic of what it is to be a 'subject' - who it is being developed. The papers on the economy of discourses and Lacan and Maturana go into this question of the invention of the subject and the implications this has for who we take ourselves to be.

(Fransella and Bannister, 1977). Reflective analysis was intended to enable the manager to involve, engage with and develop his experience-based knowledge.

Teaching Paradigms

Everything said is said by someone to someone else - even when speaking to myself there is a listener⁶. If 'stream of consciousness' is understood as an endless chain of speaking behaviours, then any listening to this chaining will involve punctuating the chain. This can be thought of as a backward movement which makes sense out of the forward movement of speaking; and the listening is a framing of the reality brought forth by the speaking through the punctuating of the speaking chain by the listening.



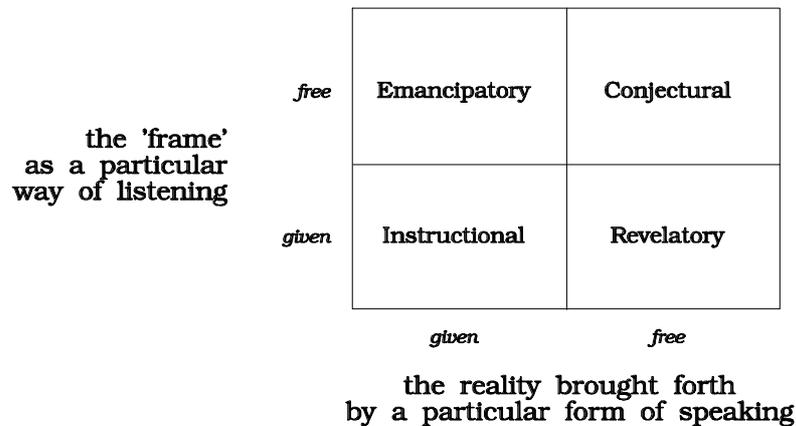
The manager can make sense through doing two things: defining reality through the speaking 'I' position he takes in relation to which reality is brought-forth⁷; and framing through the paradigmatic/aesthetic choices he makes in the way he constructs the reality he 'sees' - through the ways he listens to his speaking. The evaluators of the NDPCAL project described reflective analysis as belonging within the 'conjectural' paradigm which could be distinguished from an 'instructional', 'revelatory' or 'emancipatory' paradigm⁸. Using these two concepts - (i) the reality brought forth by a

⁶ I have tried to articulate the distinction on which reflective analysis is based in terms of 'speaking' and 'listening'. In practice there are a number of ways in which a distinction can be brought forth. The original one which I started with was 'constructs' and 'elements'. This distinction was rooted in Kelly's use of the terms in Personal Construct Psychology. The emphasis on "Personal" was predicated on an assumption of a Person with an 'inside' and an 'outside'; and that any elaboration of constructs and elements on the 'outside' was necessarily an elaboration of the 'inside'. This use of 'speaking' and 'listening' goes a further step in this progression in proposing that any 'speaking', whether of 'inside' or 'outside', is itself predicated upon a 'listening'. Later in the paper I argue that in listening to this listening (listening²) questions of authority are necessarily raised for the supposed subject-of-speaking.

⁷Taking this speaking 'I' position as the subject-position means referring to the set of speaking 'I' positions imagined to be a particular person - an identification to a mirror image which stands in the place of the subject.

⁸These paradigms can be thought of as four forms of speaking/listening. My difficulty came through realising that there are a large number of speaking positions ('I' positions) which can be taken, not all of which belong to the same listening position/aesthetic, and vice versa....

particular form of speaking, and (ii) the 'frame' as a particular way of listening to this speaking - we can distinguish between these four paradigms⁹ in terms of the diagram shown below:



- Within the instructional paradigm, the primary concern is in the learning of particular ways of listening to speaking about problems - this paradigm best characterises traditional classroom teaching in which the knowledge needed is specified and transmitted to the manager in such a way that both the ways of speaking and listening are given.
- The revelatory paradigm, presenting a given way of listening within which a number of things can be said about a particular problem, and in the context of which the manager is encouraged to develop his own particular ways of speaking, even though this freedom is limited by the nature of the frame. Skills-based teaching is characteristic of this paradigm. The given way of listening may be a particular behavioural skill, or even mathematical algorithm, which invokes a particular way of making sense of/listening to what is said.
- The emancipatory paradigm, providing the manager with a particular reality which can be used within the context of all sorts of ways of listening. Case teaching is characteristic of this paradigm because it permits freedom in how the manager listens to/makes sense of what is going on in the case, but on the basis of the particular formulation of the 'reality' of the case.

(in earlier versions of the paper, I had used "point of view" as another way of saying listening position, which I was (wrongly) identifying with this assemblage of speaking/'I' positions... the problem which the paper raises is in understanding not only what happens to the 'subject' if this equation between speaking and listening can no longer be made, but also if the 'subject' cannot be identified with the listening position either.)

⁹In this speaking and listening where it is *as if* both understands each other, there is a *coordination* of speaking/listening. This coordination takes place in a network of conversations in which a particular structuring of (social) relations is taking place between speaking/listening positions (a discourse). The ways in which these discourses operate are developed in later papers on "The Economy of Discourses: a third order cybernetics?" by Philip Boxer and Vincent Kenny published in Human Systems Management 1990; and "Lacan and Maturana: Constructivist Origins for a 3⁰ Cybernetics", also by Philip Boxer and Vincent kenny to be published in 1991.

- The conjectural paradigm, which differs from the other paradigms in that it seeks to leave the manager free both to formulate the reality he brings forth through his speaking, and also in how he listens to his speaking. Project work and action learning both offer managers a way of working within this paradigm¹⁰.

Reflective analysis is a technique which is content-free and open-ended in the ways in which it enables the manager to interpret his experience. As a technique, therefore, it demands that the manager works within the conjectural paradigm, as he would have to with action research and action learning. Even though the manager is expected to be conjectural, however, it does not follow that the teacher will be¹¹. In practice, the teacher tends not to be conjectural, but tends rather to use reflective analysis in an emancipatory way.

The following comment, made by a manager following his experience of reflective analysis, was characteristic:

"The main problem in describing our work together is one of labels. What happened was not a 'course', nor was it psychoanalysis. I suppose, if I have to attach a label to it, it was a process of increasing awareness of the emotional culture in which I operate; that culture being one of the most important limiting factors to my performance as an individual and, more important, as a member of a number of groups of people."

Working reflectively, then, enabled the manager to be aware of how he framed his own experience as he had defined it to himself. What then is involved in reflective analysis?

Working Reflectively

Reflective analysis is a technique through which the manager can examine the way in which he frames his experience. In the first instance, the tendency is to do this in terms of the current situation the manager faces by reflecting on the choices open to him - *option analysis*. This process shows

¹⁰This paradigm is therefore a special case, in that it demands that the teacher must be conscious of his own part, otherwise he will necessarily collapse into one of the other paradigms. By 'conscious' I mean that he must have an awareness of his own way of speaking/listening as one out of many possible other ways... It is this awareness which is brought forth by the activity of reflective analysis through a process of self-referencing, which therefore surfaces the issue of the listening. It is a 'parenthesising'.

¹¹As one reader pointed out, if the manager is conjectural in his use of reflective analysis, then the teacher's role as 'teacher' no longer exists. This creates some new questions for the teacher about the nature of his 'authority' in this new situation. But it also raises questions about what 'reality' is being spoken of.

the structure of the current situation to the manager in terms of the dilemmas or paradoxes he faces. Usually these dilemmas or paradoxes are familiar to the manager.

If the manager comes to reflective analysis with these dilemmas or paradoxes already formulated, then the reflection tends to be in terms of their history - what are the characteristics of the times when the same dilemmas/paradoxes arose before - *past reflection*. This reflection on what it is that repeats itself in the manager's history is what is most characteristic of the way the manager frames his experience ¹².

The shift from the first to the second way of reflecting parallels the shift in this paper: the process of 'option analysis' renders the possibilities of the present situation distinctly present for the manager in the sense of showing his part in formulating them - he shifts from wanting to *have* the answer to *being* part of the answer. The 'past reflection' on the other hand starts from this position of wanting to question the way in which he is/has been part of the answer, and articulates the particular ways in which he is/has been this. This second way of reflecting raises the question of 'by what authority' he vests himself in the situations he faces.

The following example gives some feel for how one Managing Director defined some of his past experience and current options as to how he spent his time:

| <u>Past Experiences</u> | <u>Present Options</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Uncle figure | Pricing issues |
| Moving | Directors' meetings |
| Chartered Accountant | Strategy review |
| John | Monthly staff briefing |
| Computer | Customer contact |
| Exam | Plant visits |

There are no rules as to how the manager arrives at these lists ¹³. Producing these lists, however, involved him in distilling out of his present situation (option analysis) or past experience (past reflection) relevant detail which he wished to reflect upon. This was not always easy for him to do, but I shall

¹²This analysis of repetition brings about an encounter with the fundamental paradoxes/dilemmas which are acted out in the situations which the manager presents. The question of authority arises in the manager's questioning of his relation to this dilemma/paradox; and the question of timing is the question of how the manager works with it.

¹³ Of course there is a sense in which they are already present in his speaking/listening. Thus the process of making the list is in a sense already a reflective one insofar as the manager is being asked to listen to himself speaking. There are a number of ways of doing this: one person can listen to another, and 'feed back' a list of concepts and elements; or a text can be written which can then be deconstructed into concepts and elements. Reflective analysis often goes wrong at this stage if the manager finds himself working with a list brought-forth by the teacher in a way which reflects the teacher's way of speaking instead of a listening to the manager's speaking. More of this later though under 'getting stuck'.

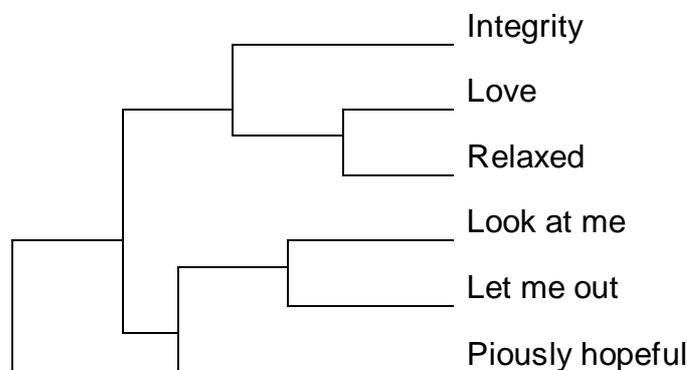
return to the problems inherent in adopting this first position later. Having objectified his experience in terms of these lists of elements, he then began to pattern them in terms of a number of concepts, thus building up a picture. The concepts are labels for particular ways in which he experienced the elements as different. Some examples of concepts from the same manager are:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Integrity | Nailed down |
| I've got to fight | Good for my future |
| Look at me | Not busy-busy |
| Piously hopeful | Developing long term |
| My feelings don't matter | Impact on problems |
| Dropping bricks | Love it |

These concepts are describing the manager's sense of his relationship to his experience - his way of listening to his experience. The patterns are created by arranging letters representing each individual experience or option along a line. The manager in this example actually rated 18 past experiences in terms of the concept 'look at me', each one of which was given a key letter. Seven of these past experiences are listed above and are represented by the letters A/C/G/J/N/O/R in the following pattern:

Low
High
 Look at me J C PDJ QB O A R ~~FK~~ ~~H~~ ~~LE~~ ~~HGM~~

Thus the past experience represented by the letter 'N' is experienced by this manager as exemplifying a very high degree of 'look at me', 'J' as a very low degree, and 'O', 'A' and 'R' as being relatively indifferent. The detail of the method is described in Boxer (1981b), but in essence it is very simple: it uses as a basis for reflection an analysis of the similarities in the patterns, which can be expressed in terms either of the concepts or of the elements (past experiences or options). In the analysis of the concepts based on the past reflection above, part of the 'tree' of concepts came out as shown below. This 'tree' shows the concepts as similar insofar as they pattern elements in similar ways. The further to the right the link is between concepts or groups of concepts, the more similar they are.



The important part of the reflective process comes from the process of reflection whereby the manager gives meaning to these similarities and differences in how he patterns his experience. This patterning reflects the manager's particular way of listening to himself listening to his speaking. What happens as a result of doing this is that the manager's ideas of how he ought to be listening to his experience, as implicit in the original position which he has taken, is challenged by the way he actually seems to be listening, which emerges out of the process of reflecting on the patterns in the ways in which he has patterned his experience ¹⁴.

In this 'tree' of concepts, the manager was asking himself 'Why, when I am saying "Look at me" to myself, am I also usually saying "Let me out"...?' On reflection, his answer was another concept which embraced a larger patterning of experience which could then be set alongside 'piously hopeful'. This process continued until the manager had included his concepts within a smaller number of concepts, each one of which embraced a particular way of listening through which his experiences spoke to him.

That is reflective analysis - recognising the ways in which he listened to the voices through which his experience spoke to him ¹⁵. The recognition of the dilemmas/paradoxes comes then when these 'voices' are read back into the way he patterns his experience ¹⁶. Thus dilemmas can arise because not all of the 'voices' can be brought together - the manager listens in a number of distinct ways which can be paradoxical in relation to each other. In recognising these dilemmas/paradoxes, the manager is listening to his own way of listening to his experience - listening x listening or listening². Becoming aware of these different ways of listening enables him to call them - and therefore his own part in them - into question. The following comment by a different manager conveys something of the result:

"Getting to know myself through important events and activities was fascinating. Self-analysis by computer? The idea is ridiculous, the concept intriguing, the practice quite practical. The objective viewpoint given me by the computer

¹⁴ If the explanation of similarities and differences is only based on the elements, then the 'ought' explanation tends to come up, although even here some of the similarities between elements may be surprising enough to make this difficult. It is only when the concepts are grouped that it becomes clear that the manager has his own ways of speaking. This distinction between the 'ought' and the 'is' is the distinction made by the Grubb Institute in "Organisational Role Analysis" between the normative (what 'ought' to be seen), and the existential (what is experienced as 'there' by the subject). The phenomenological (what is seen by an 'other' observer) remains other to the reflection of course. This distinction between the normative and the existential is also the distinction between 'espoused theory' and 'theory-in-use' or 'say-how' and 'know-how'.

¹⁵ This conception of 'voice' is another way of referring to a particular way of speaking.

¹⁶ This is done by looking at how the concepts pattern the elements. Re-arranging the concepts and elements so that areas of high rating and low rating appear in different zones in the matrix reveals the ways in which the concepts define the 'swings and roundabouts' in the manager's situation - gaining this means losing that etc. The final part of the process therefore involves formulating these dilemmas/paradoxes.

printout distanced me enough to allow me to see my activities in a new light. The juxtaposition of perhaps less likely events forced me to really analyse what happened in those events, and how I learned from them... trying to open new approaches to my experience was a stimulating experience for me." (An MSc student's comment on the use of the technique on a course entitled 'Learning as a subversive activity', Boxer, 1981a)

Avoiding choosing

Reflective analysis, then, not only demands that the manager examines the ways in which he frames his own experiences: to examine the ways in which he listens to his speaking. Reflective analysis also leads him to be more aware that he has more than one way of listening, and that these involve him in acting out certain fundamental dilemmas or paradoxes in his experience. This presents the manager with a new issue: on what basis am I to frame my experience? In learning to ask himself this question, the manager is learning to be critical of his own development.

But by what authority is he to be critical? ¹⁷ Here is a quotation from an evaluation of a workshop which made extensive use of the reflective method:

"By the end of the Workshop, the participants talked freely amongst themselves and to me about experiencing 'breakthrough'. This breakthrough was particularly associated with working reflectively. What seemed to be happening was that the reflective method had enabled them to 'know' in a conscious sense what and how they were experiencing both within and outside the Workshop. This 'knowledge' was enabling them to manage their own learning in qualitatively different ways. NIPPER¹⁸ as an analytical technique was an essential part of this process, not because it was doing something which could not otherwise be done, but rather because it enabled the individual's reflection to sustain a very high degree of focus on the quality of his own experience. (Boot and Boxer, 1980, p250)

¹⁷The coordination of speaking/listening is of course itself brought forth by a way of listening. If the speaking subject identifies himself with particular forms of this coordination, then this bringing forth of himself-as-subject will take place in relation to the field of this supposed Other-who-listens. This listening in the 'field of the Other' can be thought of as the basis of the subject's authority.

¹⁸ NIPPER was the name of software for supporting reflective analysis developed by the project referred to in the introduction which subsequently became available as 'micro-NIPPER' implemented on IBM PC compatibles. It is now available under the name CRITIK running under Windows.

The outcome of this process was sometimes totally inconsequential, and sometimes dramatic for the manager: he changed his job, or adopted a radically new way of acting in his life. On occasions, however, it led to a very high degree of anxiety, as the questions it raised heightened the tension between what appeared to be true from listening to the 'voices', and what the manager thought ought to be true - a tension about how he listened to his speaking/listening. This anxiety seemed to be associated with his experiencing an absence of authority of his own from which to choose in the face of the 'ought' authority¹⁹. In these circumstances, the manager seemed to become stuck, putting considerable energy into avoiding working reflectively²⁰. Put another way, he seemed to become unwilling to become critical of his own development²¹. It was in trying to find ways of responding creatively to this 'stuckness' that my understanding of the nature of 'strategic' became inverted. There was much for me to learn, however, from the ways in which the manager avoided choosing.

Over the years I had developed a sense of there being three distinct ways in which managers became stuck: their stuckness manifested itself as alienation, impotence or fragmentation.

- alienation took the form of the manager having lots of things to be done with good reason for doing every one of them, but with no feeling that any of them mattered at all;

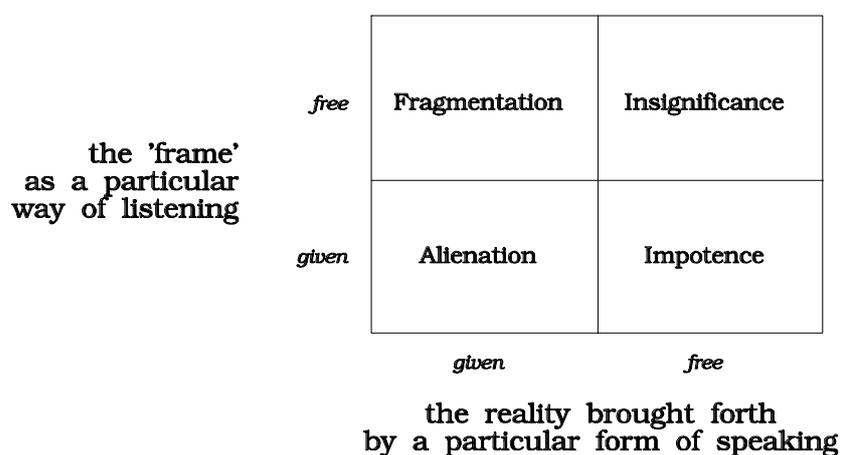
¹⁹If the subject is identified with a particular form of coordination of speaking/listening, then the possibility of choice over this form of coordination is not only a subversion of himself as supposed subject, but also a calling into question of the basis of his authority. (Hence my interest in working with clergy reflectively, since to work with them reflectively is for them to articulate profoundly issues of authority...). Anxiety in this sense is the experience of this having-been-called-into-question-as-a-subject. It is perhaps clearer to reserve the word 'anxiety' for what arises in the speaking/listening; and to use the word 'anguish' for what arises when this anxiety applies to being-called-into-question-as-a-subject.

²⁰Being 'stuck' then was a dependency on (over-determination by) this supposed Other-who-listens in which this Other was not to be questioned: in a sense the manager was disabled by the dependency formed - for him to think in ways Other-wise was by definition unthinkable. The stuckness could therefore be thought of as an attachment to a particular form of being listened to....

²¹Insofar as the teacher becomes caught up in this over-determination, it is as if the teacher is asking the learner to choose in the context of his way of listening. In other words it is as if the teacher takes the place of this Other - the teacher functions as *metaphor* of this Other. Thus the idea of becoming 'stuck' revolves around the place of the teacher as much as that of the learner. For more on this see: Giroux H.A. (1983) *Theory and Resistance in Education - A Pedagogy for the Opposition* Heinemann, London; and Inglis F. (1985) *The Management of Ignorance - A Political Theory of the Curriculum* Blackwell, Oxford. The process of dependency then becomes one of obedience, and whether or not this teacher as metaphor for the Other is 'disabling' (Illich I. (1977) "Disabling Professions", Maron Boyars). As metaphor, the teacher's over-determining can be contrasted with under-determining ('enabling') which always involves the conscious participation of the teacher in being able to call his own speaking/listening into question (although in his function as metaphor, this over-determining may also be conscious). In this under-determining the teacher can call his own function as metaphor into question, so that even though there is dependency/ obedience here too, it is always transitional.

- impotence was the manager being unable to connect events as they were unfolding with his desires for the way in which he felt he would like them to be unfolding; and
- fragmentation was a kind of all-consuming 'busyness' in which the manager seemed to have vast numbers of things to get done by yesterday, but with none of them appearing to lead him anywhere.

These ways of getting stuck were the corollaries of the teaching paradigms ²²:



Each of these forms of stuckness had severe implications for the business if the manager who was stuck also had some responsibility for developing the business. His alienation meant that he never really seemed able to develop anything at all, despite making himself enormously busy; impotence meant that despite all his power, he could never really find ways of using it which seemed to have any significant effect; and fragmentation led to incoherence in what he was doing, and an inability to sustain the initiatives he took. In each case the manager could say 'I have tried everything that I can think of, and still nothing works.' ²³ Under these circumstances, what would be more natural than to seek out an expert who could provide a solution? How convenient, I thought to myself!

The teacher's part

The original project (Hooper, 1977) set out with the aim of developing teaching methods to be used by managers to enhance the manager's awareness of the concepts he used in decision-making situations,

²²So first of all we had four ways of speaking/listening, each of which had their own characteristic ways of being-in-the-world. By externalising these 'givens' onto the teacher-as-metaphor, these became three forms of 'stuckness' arising from an attachment to particular forms of relation to this Other-as-listener. It was only some time after I had written the chapter that I was able to name the fourth form of stuckness: insignificance. It characterised the behaviour of not being able to accept 'givens' as they presented themselves - being slavish about not adopting the teacher's 'givens' or conjecturalism for the sake of it. This was being stuck with refusing conscious dependency through not being prepared to trust a teacher to be under-determining.

²³Except, I would say, trying questioning the basis of his own sense of authority.

and to help the manager in developing those concepts to evolve new ones. Throughout the project however, computer-based simulations of various industries and case studies were used to provide contexts for training experiences. Why was it necessary to use simulations and case studies as contexts? Surely managers had enough 'context' of their own - why create yet more contexts for them? The simulations were very successful as such, and made it possible for large numbers of managers to develop their skills and resourcefulness. But always there was the problem of defining relevance and transferring learning back into the managers' 'real' worlds.

It is true that many of the difficulties I encountered in developing the use of reflective analysis were associated with persuading teachers to set up learning experiences within the conjectural paradigm, so that managers could learn in ways which they could make relevant and timely to their concerns. The major proportion of my time in the early years was taken up with finding ways of dealing with this problem by trying to challenge the ways in which teachers chose to frame learning experiences. The easy explanation for these difficulties was that it was more comfortable for teachers to work in the revelatory, instructional or emancipatory paradigms, because it meant that they had something to give (an ability to provide 'givens'), which could therefore provide themselves with a basis for their careers. This was true up to a point, but not wholly satisfying as an explanation, because it was the managers who were choosing to come on the courses.

Let us assume that in some sense (it was as if...) the manager knew that choosing to work reflectively with his own reality would lead him to having to face up to taking or not taking responsibility for creating his own solutions. How much easier it would be for him to opt for adopting someone else's solutions instead, thus postponing the choice and, at the same time, retaining control of what the experience meant for him as a result of the 'transfer of learning' problems created in trying to adopt the teacher's ready-made solution ²⁴.

The conclusion I reached was that the ways in which managers became stuck were no more than the result of their having abdicated their own sense of authority in favour of the teacher's, consequently accepting the teacher's 'givens' without question. Each form of stuckness therefore could be understood as the inappropriate adoption of a particular teaching paradigm: the instructional paradigm meant taking everything as given, so that the manager never even started considering what he should be working with for himself - alienation. The revelatory paradigm meant taking the frame as given so that impotence followed because nothing could be listened to in a different way - whatever happened, this was what was going on. The emancipatory paradigm meant taking reality as given so that the manager was always

²⁴This scenario is exactly paralleled in the relationship between managers and consultants. The 'implementation' problem, now enjoying the status of a problem in its own right amongst consultants, is the equivalent of the 'transfer of learning' problem, and is fundamentally about the ways in which managers devise ways of not addressing questions about their own part in things by asking consultants to solve their problems for them.

holding bits of reality as given to him - the fragmentation was in being able to frame each one of them but not being able to fit them all together as a single reality. Accepting alienation, impotence or fragmentation was the price the manager paid for not invoking his own authority in questioning the 'given' bases of meaning^{25,26}.

The Development Process

So even though the teachers could genuinely help some of the managers some of the time, they could not all of the time. That did not always matter, however, because, pursuing this line on the manager's choice, the manager was often not there to learn so much as to avoid learning: there not so much to adopt the teacher's solutions as to avoid applying himself to developing his own²⁷. The characteristic of the manager who did not get caught up in this collusion was that he was not seeking to *have* a strategy: he was seeking to be strategic. The inversion between 'having a strategy' and 'being strategic' began to take its course, therefore, when I began to work with these managers reflectively. I stopped trying to work from within an institutional and/or company course teaching context, and began to work directly with the manager within time-frames and problem-frames of his own choosing.

By removing the institutional or training context, I was able to work directly with the manager's reality within his organisational context as he defined it²⁸. Through engaging in a reflective process he was able to re-frame his experience in ways which felt truer to his experience but which were nevertheless surprising to him - he had not thought of looking at his experience in that way before. Where this was successful, this created a new

²⁵The way of getting stuck with the conjectural paradigm meant taking nothing as given, so that in coming up with his own ways of listening to his own constructions of reality, the manager ensured that it wasn't part of anyone else's ways of speaking/listening - insignificance.

²⁶ Looked at from the later perspective of the subject as an invention, the teacher qua Other is always operative, whether the part is taken up by another person or is an 'internal' part. These ways of getting stuck therefore are fundamentally constitutive of the human dilemma - of being an invention. Bringing these forms of stuckness into question is to raise the question of what the subject desires and its relation to what the Other desires.

²⁷Of course good teachers know this tendency only too well, so that they place great emphasis on *education* - approaching their task as one of leading learning out of the manager rather than putting it into them. See Postman and Weingartner on this in "Teaching as a subversive activity".

²⁸ What I had done in becoming self-employed was to give up my own institutional context and start working in the manager's context - in other words to stop privileging my own institution. In taking this step however, what I was to find was that I was also asking my clients to stop privileging their institutions. To privilege my own institution was to be attached to a particular way of being listened to. To question that privileging was to be conjectural. Inevitably therefore, in listening conjecturally, I was questioning the nature of my clients' attachments to their institutions.

kind of problem for the manager. Although he was still dealing with his own reality, it was no longer framed in a way which others wanted to recognise: he had placed himself within a different frame from that which had currency/authority within his organisation²⁹. Thus although the outcomes of the process were valued by him as a learning experience, because I had been working reflectively, he could not explain his re-framing by what I had brought to the process. As a result he found himself in the position of not having any way of describing its value as a distinct form of learning experience to others; and the more deeply he had worked reflectively, the more he had developed a different frame, and the less able he was therefore to explain what he had learnt. He was thus left with having to justify his working reflectively purely on the basis of its value to himself, and the extent to which it enabled him to be more strategic for himself.³⁰

Two kinds of consequence seemed to flow, therefore, from working reflectively: either it resulted in the manager experiencing an absence of authority within himself from which to choose, in which case he was brought face-to-face again with his own stuckness, but with a heightened sense of anxiety; or it increased his sense of what he needed to do, but left him less able to explain this to others³¹. So what was the nature of this choice reflection?

It started with the manager being prepared to take up a particular speaking 'I' position at the beginning of the reflective process. In a sense the hardest part of all seemed to be taking up this position³². It seemed to be hard because in taking up a position, the manager was immediately opening himself up to the possibility that he (or at least someone) could be critical of this position. Such a choice was the first step along a one-way track for him which could arrive ultimately at his being able to take nothing as given, and certainly not what he considered to be 'reality'. The teacher could seek to be as conjectural as possible in the way in which he related to the manager, but

²⁹In other words he too was now faced with the problem of insignificance.

³⁰It is not surprising therefore that some of these clients became self-employed as well! I wasn't convinced however that this was always a very good 'solution' to insignificance. It was this that led to developing the 'third order' conception of 'the economy'.

³¹Since then I have come to elaborate the processes whereby managers justify these forms of stuckness to themselves in terms of *melancholia* (fragmentation), *mysticism* (impotence), and *cynicism* (insignificance). With alienation, there is no need for justification!

³²Returning to the issue I raised in an earlier footnote about the way in which I have used 'speaking' and 'listening' in this Chapter, I suggested that speaking, in the sense of bringing forth a reality, could be understood as the articulation of constructs-and-elements embedded in an 'outside' which, through its being spoken of, was articulated in relation to a Person's 'inside'. This 'taking up of a position' can be understood then as taking up a position as a Person-with-an-inside in relation to this outside. Many managers find this very difficult to do in the face of the complexities of an organisation and its infrastructure, tending to define themselves instead as a 'role'. *Projective analysis* emerged as a way of addressing this 'outside' in a way which could support a bringing-forth of an 'inside' position... Getting 'stuck' on the outside - the automaton - was the corollary of an attachment to the instructional position - a common attachment amongst managers!

if the manager chose not to take a position for himself, then nothing could be done.

The ability to 'take a position' then was the first step in engaging in any kind of reflective process. As I gained experience of working with managers over longer periods of time, I began to see this ability within the context of a longer term development process. This ability to 'take a position' seemed to depend on a prior process I referred to as a 'circular' process. In this circular process, the manager was forming a view of 'where he was at', 'where he was coming from', and 'what was going on'³³. The manager who could 'take a position' was well able to provide the lists of options and experiences which provided the starting point for reflective analysis. The fundamental characteristic therefore of this position-taking lay in the manager's preparedness to recognise himself.

In order to take his position as a manager, he had to grasp a very complex reality. Once grasped, the reflective process involved working with the manager through two stages : gathering and parenthesisising. It had become apparent to me that the nature of the frames which the manager formed for himself constructed the complex reality of objects he experienced... but equally it was as if the objects brought forth particular ways of framing. Gathering involved him in being able to articulate the specific form his grasp had taken - to articulate his way of listening to his speaking in the form of concepts. Having articulated his listening in this way, parenthesisising was then the process of listening to his listening-and-speaking and enabled the manager to see the particular frames from which he worked (not all of which were his own); and its corollary which was to begin to call into question the nature of the 'reality' he had recognised. Thus while gathering enabled him to articulate his particular way of constructing a 'reality', parenthesisising enabled him to see it as relative to his own particular way of listening to his speaking/listening.³⁴

The reflective process could now be seen therefore not only as a process of recognising, but also as a process in which the manager could move to a position from which he could question the nature of that recognition

³³The manager who could 'take a position' then was the manager who could refer to himself in his own speaking - he was aware of the subject-positions he took in his bringing-forth of his 'reality'. As my work as an analyst developed, this prior 'circular' phase became increasingly important as I worked with managers in increasingly complex 'realities'. This circular questioning of the client was also a 'gathering' process for myself-in-relation-to-the-client.

³⁴What is being introduced here is the notion that it is possible to listen to listening - listening². This listening² is spoken about in the Economy paper in terms of a *virtual axis* on which the subject invents his being. In these terms, this listening² can never arrive at what is *really* the subject. The mystic, cynic and melancholic can be seen therefore as ways of concealing this impossibility by deferring or displacing this problematic into another place or time. The mystic says "I'll get it right eventually - perhaps in another life"; the cynic says "It's never right anyway, so why bother trying"; and the melancholic says "I had it right once - if only I could get back to that". The automaton of course assumes that he is a part of another's machine, so doesn't allow the question to arise in terms of himself.

- in terms of both his speaking and listening³⁵. As I described earlier, the effect of this seemed to be that the manager either fell back into being even more stuck, albeit knowing that he was stuck, or of facing the question of his own authority in how he framed his experience. But what happened if he took up this question for himself?

So Then By What Authority...?

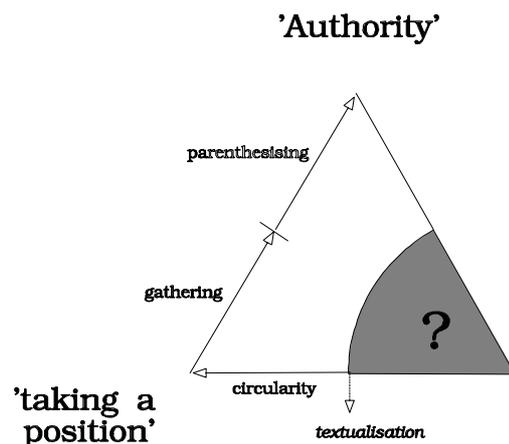
After the reflective process seemed to come a process of 'textualising' his experience³⁶. Textualisation involved the manager in a process of 'inscribing himself on the surface of the Real'³⁷ - questioning the nature of the reality he brings forth in the very act of bringing it forth³⁸. When working with his own experience, this process of textualisation involved him coming to see himself as nothing but the assumption of a particular coordination of speaking/listening. He (as coordination) was no longer constructing the objects he experienced. It was more as if both he and his 'reality' were a (not quite right yet) construction by some Other. In the diagram which follows, this is shown as the movement tangential to the '?'.

³⁵Although I identify reflection primarily with parenthesising, there was always a gathering process implicit in the use of the method - producing the original list of concepts, not to mention the 'position-taking' assumed prior to this. In the early days however, when I was working with the manager's personal history and choices, it was possible to move almost directly into parenthesising: the concepts and elements seemed obvious. Now I see that as true for me, but not so for the manager - I was short-circuiting part of the process. Now I see the gathering process of establishing the concepts as being as important as their subsequent parenthesising.

³⁶Textualisation is one way of speaking of a process whereby the manager is seeking to gain a 'design relationship' with his context - of engaging with this question of the desire of the Other. Except now it is no longer only 'he' who is doing the desiring. There is now also the Other. The conception of textualisation itself I owe to a reading of Kristeva and her four signifying practices (narrative, meta-language, contemplation, textualisation): Julia Kristeva (1984) *Revolution in Poetic Language* Columbia University Press. Textualisation I understand as the letting-be of the 'impossible-to-be-said' - that which is beyond the frame/underneath the frame: Kristeva's semiotic. Its precursor is the parenthesising of the paternal metaphor and it appears to rest on coming to the signifying practice of the text in the place of the Other.

³⁷The emergence of this process was really the beginning of developing a Lacanian critique of the manager/business. Looking back, it is possible to see the way I worked with 'differences' within NIPPER as prototyping this approach: having established a set of concepts and elements, I would look at how the concepts described differences between elements; and how elements supported differences between concepts. I would ask the manager if these differences felt right. Where they didn't feel quite right, I would ask him to elaborate the feeling into a concept; or think of an example which demonstrated the difference.... This process was analogous to the never-ending metonymy of patterning of elements into a text, followed by the re-opening of gaps in the text leading to the formation of another text, and so on: the Other arises in the gaps in the text - filling them in the same moment creates gaps elsewhere.

³⁸This paradoxical position I refer to as that of the sceptic, to distinguish it from the cynic as a response to the conjectural. This position of the sceptic is a way of addressing the impossibility of arriving at the nature of the supposed-subject-of-speaking's being. So the sceptic says "it'll do for now..."



What followed the reflective process then was this 'textualising' - a process in which the manager was questioning himself as a whole relationship to his experience as a whole. This arose when the gathering and parenthesising processes brought the manager to the limits of his identity as he was able to know it in terms of his experience, thus raising questions of authority. Textualisation was what followed from bringing this into question as a basis for his authority itself. What then was he left with?

The process of how possibilities come-to-be remains most problematic. Its main characteristic seems to be one of being subject to timing³⁹. And yet timing also seems to govern the manager's preparedness to 'take a position' and move into gathering-parenthesising-textualisation in the first place. So perhaps it is only the quality of the sense of timing which changes. Timing now appears as a possibility the manager has for the ways in which he can connect himself with his actions and experience, grounded in a sensitivity to the consequences both for himself and for others of those actions. But this quality also has the characteristic that the determination of the right timing for such actions is not in his gift. Perhaps we should learn from the samurai⁴⁰:

"There is timing in everything. Timing in strategy cannot be mastered without a great deal of practice.... From the outset

³⁹In other words the main characteristic of experience of the process of textualisation is timing. A major question arises therefore as to the nature of this timing and the dialectical play between the chronos of clock-time; and the synchronicity of kairos. This is the question that Lacan ended up on in Seminar XXVI - La Topologie et Le Temps: "There is a correspondence between topology and practice. This correspondence is time. Topology resists, and it is in this resistance that the correspondence exists."

⁴⁰This quote is from Musashi's Book of Five Rings which is subtitled "The Way of Strategy". At its heart lies the idea of the right moment to die: the samurai lives ready to die. Thus while the idea of strategy here is apparently all about 'winning the fight', the whole book also can be read as being about timing; strategy and strategic behaviour as a side-effect of following timing.... needless to say we need to read this dying as a dying in relation to the Symbolic - the circulation of the paternal metaphor - corresponding to Lacan's 'being between two deaths'.

you must know the applicable timing and the inapplicable timing, and from among the large and small things and the fast and slow timings find the relevant timing, first seeing the distance timing and the background timing. This is the main thing in strategy. It is especially important to know the background timing, otherwise your strategy will become uncertain." (Musashi, 1645)

The manager who judges the quality of his own development has been prepared to take responsibility for being critical of his own development. This leads him inexorably to his choice of speaking/listening positions; and this in its turn leads him to the issue of his authority⁴¹. It is this authority which becomes ultimately a matter of timing.

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⁴¹It is not really that this preparedness 'leads to his choice of speaking/listening positions....' Rather it is that this preparedness itself is a way of trying to allude to a certain quality of relationship to the Real of the '?' itself - a desire of the desire of the Other. There is timing in the desire of the Other.