

CHAPTER 8

Educational Practice (2)

“Even as the central assumptions of modernity – that mighty *homo economicus* exists to shape nature and society to serve the goal of every-increasing production, for example – continue to lose credibility, we will hear its defenders repeat firmly from the pinnacles of authority that all we need to do is fine-tune the system. Yet it is painfully clear that modern consciousness has taken a detour off the primordial pathways of grace. Day by day people die as victims of this route. The road is getting tougher. At the end lies a cliff. Around us our leaders, good lemmings all, exhort us to stay the course.”

Charlene Spretnak, *States of Grace*, 1991

In this and the next chapter I am offering two stories of my current educational and organisational practice, bringing this narrative into the present, as it were. Chapter 8 is a reflective piece, much of it in the form of a letter written and sent to two colleagues, about a Masters degree course we have jointly developed and now run. In particular, I am asking myself some questions about the extent to which I might see this course as involving education for mother-consciousness. Then, in Chapter 9 I consider where the ideas and emergent practice pursued through this inquiry have brought me in my continuing efforts to build a new organisation appropriate to its task, picking up on the story from Chapters 6 and 7.

In 1996 I started working on an idea for a new MSc degree in ‘socially responsible business’ with two academics from Bath University. In my previous university job, I had started two degree courses, so brought to this project some experience of what was involved. Having formulated the idea that a programme of this sort would be a good project for my new organisation shortly after I became its Programme director, I approached two people at Bath I already knew and wanted to work with, and proposed to them that we explore the possibilities of forming a partnership to create a new course. I discovered they were already hatching a similar idea, and so we decided to work together. We constructed a proposal and course outline to put through the University committee system, and it was approved in June 1996. We then started recruiting for our new course, and accepted the first group of students in March 1997. At the time of writing, the fifth intake of students has just started, and the third graduation is about to take place.

The course is a part-time one, taken over two years by participants who are also pursuing (usually) full time jobs. It is targeted at experienced, or at least established, managers from both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations, and attracts people with many different backgrounds and experience. Through four 5-day intensive workshops spread over each year, it addresses key themes connected to the - contested – responsibilities of business organisations in changing global and local circumstances, and the relevance of these issues for the activity we call ‘management’¹. In addition, weaving across the workshops are a number of additional themes – ideas of change, systems thinking, and power. Importantly for all of us involved in creating and running this course, it also uses an action-research approach, problematising the way knowledge is created, held and received, and highlighting the role of the individual as inquirer and potential agent of change. (It’s concerns, therefore, are very close to those explored in *this* inquiry). Participants are required to undertake action-experiments - encounters, in effect (see Rowan’s model in the Introduction) – between each workshop, and to pursue a longer ‘project’ through the second year of the course. Assessment is based on the individual’s use of ideas, as in a conventional MSc degree, but also on their application of inquiry, their ability to carry this through in some sort of action, and on them developing a sense of personal reflectiveness. As far as we are aware, this is a unique programme, both in its breadth of content and in its educational approach. Participants come from the UK, but also from a wide range of other countries, including India, Brazil, Thailand and Malaysia, telling us they have found no equivalent course in other parts of the world. We are, we have come to accept, pioneers in this niche area.

This course has become a central activity in my work, and a place where I explore my own ideas and practice whilst fulfilling my role as co-creator and tutor. My continuing inquiry led me to struggle to articulate the meaning of this piece of practice, for me. Whilst working closely, and, I think, productively with my two colleagues, I realised as I reflected that we had not made an opportunity to reflect, explicitly, together. I therefore chose to write my sense-making in the form of a reflective letter to them. In so doing I was seeking several things: to hear myself, to see if they could hear me, to check the extent to which we were on common ground in what we were doing, and also to make some record, account of our collective work. This is the letter I sent:

“Dear Friends,

To me, it is one of the pleasures of having worked with you on creating and running the MSc that I now know that I can call you this –

I have known for some time that I wanted to write something about the MSc programme as part of my inquiry - it is a major part of my current educational

¹ A full course outline is included as Appendix 1

practice - and I have wondered how I would do this in a way that could engage you. I realise I could have written this as a theoretical letter, or as a piece of self-reflection, but my energy is in writing to you, as an invitation to hear my tentative sense-making story about this piece of practice and respond in any way you wish. You both seem so implicated in what I am thinking and doing that I don't feel I should do this without involving you in some way: although I hesitate to add to your workloads. I realise that I am writing this partly in order to hear myself, which in turn helps me articulate an explanation of my practice, and I offer this as one possible way of speaking about what we have been doing.

Do you remember how we began this course: simultaneously having similar ideas, and getting into conversation about them, with mounting excitement? JM woke in the night with her idea. I hatched mine, in my study at home, as I tried to think what it was that I really could do to help [my organisation] into existence: what was the action I needed to take now? Since I had been so dissatisfied with the MBA course I had been involved in, what was the alternative, and how could we begin to create it? I knew we needed to form a relationship with a university. But I also thought, small and fragile as we were as an organisation, we had something relatively interesting to bring to that relationship, through the business contacts we had. We had already been offered the opportunity of contributing to the MBA programmes at [two other] universities, but I felt that was too small an activity. I wanted to go further, to sketch out something that was emphatically not a business administration course, whilst being for business managers, and others working with them. If the [organisation] was to articulate a "new paradigm for business", I tried to envisage a course that would begin to enact that idea in educational terms. I paced the room, tracing an outline of a new degree programme and asking myself - why don't you look for a partner and just *do it*? Find out how do-able it is by trying it...(engage in a piece of systems-diagnosis).

I talked with some of my former colleagues at [the university where I had previously worked] first, thinking I knew how to access that system. Almost at once I realised that institution could only house a shadow of a new programme, one that added new content into an existing modularising structure of masters programmes - and I knew from past experience with [a previous MSc programme I had worked on in the early 1990s] how constraining that would be in terms of what kind of learning environment could be generated.

I first mentioned my thoughts to one of you, standing in the corridor as we chatted in a break during a meeting. I felt nervous about suggesting some kind of collaboration, holding both of you in some awe, aware of your considerable history of working together, not knowing how to interact with your institution except as a research student. P's response was very positive, saying that JM had just expressed very similar ideas, and suggesting we fix a time to meet and talk about it seriously. We did, and decided to move to the next stage together.

We held a couple of all-day meetings at JM's home to plan out the shape and scope of the course: meeting somewhere intimate and informal seemed right, a way of both letting our thoughts range freely and getting to know each other in a new context, beginning to build collegueship in this new threesome. I enjoyed those sessions very much, feeling we came together easily on what we were trying to put together. We shaped the format - beginning with the idea of longer workshops, and then paring it down to eight 5-day intensive sessions spread over two years, each exploring a particular topic in some depth.

And then we came to the learning approach.

But first, let me try and set out something about the context we are working in. If you can bear with me, I think I need to rehearse a contexting story, in order to try and explain something. This is certainly not the only story one could give of the business background to the programme, but it is one I currently seem to hear rehearsed as a legitimating explanation as I move in what I might call the “corporate social responsibility community”. As I do so I feel aware of the danger that repeating it gives it a concreteness it does not warrant: and at the same time it seems to me that this is at least one of the discourses which is currently being created around what we – and others – are doing. It feels to me important to both be aware of it and not swallowed by it, but to make choices. Wheatley (1992) might call this a process of creating a ‘field’, an unseen and largely unacknowledged territory which nevertheless plays a part in shaping the unfolding of events.

In the three years since we took the first group of students onto the programme, the context in which we are working has changed substantially. At the time of the launch, I knew that there were two or three companies and initiatives we could draw on to support our assertion that the role and ‘responsibility’ of businesses was an issue of growing importance to both the business community and ‘civil society’: now there are dozens, developing a wide variety of activities, and dedicated teams in some major companies working on reputation assurance, social reporting, stakeholder consultation, supply chain regulation, as well as environmental management, eco-efficiency measures and risk assessment. A new technical vocabulary is emerging.

A range of arguments is being developed, by commentators, campaigners and business practitioners, in this “corporate citizenship” field. This is a term which is being used to embrace all the issues of the problematic relationship between business organisations and civil society, in all its facets. Recent examples are

Hutton's (2000) paper for the Industrial Society in the UK entitled "Society Bites Back", and Zadek's (2000) paper "Doing Good and Doing Well", for the Conference Board in the US.

One argument concerns issues of uncertainty and rapid change in the face of a globalising business environment. Thinking about business competitiveness increasingly relies on the notion of the "value chain": the idea that manufactured goods, or services, command a value in a market which is greater than the cost of the elements which constitute it, hence creating a profit for the manufacturer or supplier of the service. Customers, conventional economic wisdom suggests, will pay for services or goods according to the "utility" they get from them, their judgement of what the goods or services are "worth" in terms of what they can be used for, rather than what they are "worth" in terms of the costs of production. Michael Porter's (1985) widely-used model of the value chain encourages all businesses to identify the points in the chain of activity from the supply of raw materials to the delivery of the finished product where value is added so as to maximise the value increase at each stage, as one vital part of building and maintaining competitiveness. In past decades, this "chain" was relatively simple to identify, even where it involved internationally-traded materials, because it did not contain many individual links.

However, a combination in the past two decades of the development of global markets and burgeoning new transport and information technology is complicating this picture. Not only can a single value chain involve many more participants, linked by transport routes and computer communications across the world, but single enterprises can, and do, locate their production, product development, marketing, headquarters functions and sales operations in different countries. Production is now frequently carried out not by retail organisations, who own the "brands" bought by customers, but is "out-sourced" to a myriad of

competing manufacturers, who in turn may sub-contract it to local production units (Klein, 2000). Nike, for instance, no longer manufactures at all: it is a 'brand owner' which commissions the production of its goods from a vast and complex network of suppliers. The low-skill labour element in this value-chain is gradually moving to low-cost areas of the world, so as to maximise added-value in the chain while keeping costs to the end-user down. My "local" supermarket is no longer in any sense local: among other highly perishable goods, it stocks cut flowers - which last only a few days and could be grown in any garden in the city - from Kenya and Columbia, because the functioning of the market renders doing so cheaper than getting them grown nearby.

Many sellers of goods and services do not know where their value chains extend: they cannot easily be mapped. They involve the producers in immense technical and logistical complexities. They also involve them in making interventions in, interacting with, communities and societies that are far removed from the organisational centre, geographically, socially and culturally, and responding to events, competitive threats and community reactions that are very difficult to anticipate. Such businesses are "exposed" in many new ways, there are many more junctures at which things can go wrong or become problematic. If managing a (modern) business has to do with controlling the uncertainties in the value-chain so that goals are achieved (the instrumental/rational approach), the task is much harder in this new environment, despite more sophisticated technical systems to track expenditure, sales, stock levels, logistics, quality, labour performance and so on.

(I am noticing, as I write, how quickly I slip into the business language: I can hear my own rhetoric, as I might (and do) recite these issues to business audiences. It all seems so demanding, and factual; a harsh reality.)

So understanding this environment, and working within it successfully, so the argument goes, requires strategies for tolerating a level of risk, uncertainty, and complexity, which is unprecedented. It is a “permanent white water” environment involving:

“the interrelationship of human attitudes and activities with mechanical and electronic functions and the natural world events, an interaction in which permanent white water is found in abundance and in which extraordinary demands are made on the people operating and using these complex socio-technical systems”
(Vaill, 1996: 4)

In the light of this, “managing” involves hearing new kinds of information from novel sources: information that might previously have been seen as irrelevant to the self-contained business system. It also requires many different sorts of relationships with other people - stakeholders - in the system; relationships of consultation, collaboration and sometimes partnership (Wheeler and Sillanpää, 1997), with suppliers and customers, but also with other previously disregarded parties in the uncertain environment - business competitors, governments, regulators, multi-lateral agencies, community groups, citizen groups, non-governmental organisations.

One thread of this argument suggests that in the face of such uncertainties, individual and organisational values come to the fore. In the absence of clear guidelines as to how to act, and ambivalence as to the consequences of different strategies, value-based decisions acquire greater salience, with potential to act as the corporate “glue” holding together geographically far-flung operations and personnel where command-and-control management approaches would fail. This

was one of the assertions made by Peters and Waterman nearly 20 years ago in their influential book *In Search of Excellence*, since when the level of complexity has grown dramatically. A more recent popular business book arguing for the importance of strong values in establishing long-term company success is Collins and Porras's *Built to Last* (1998). Their analysis of 'exceptional' companies which have survived for more than three decades leads them to conclude that establishing strong, readily identifiable organisational values, and communicating these to both employees and customers, is a vital contributor to the organisation's capacity to withstand market fluctuations and changing product requirements. "Values" are seen as having the potential to act as an organisational anchor-point in a troubled sea.

For example, the multinational telecommunications company Motorola strongly communicate their Code of Business Conduct to employees, business partners and customers. The Code is based on two "key beliefs": Uncompromising Integrity, and Constant Respect for People. The introduction to the Code states:

"Times will change. Our products will change. Our people will change. Our customers will change. What will not change is our commitment to our key beliefs"

In this way, the belief-system is being used to provide a point of permanence where little else is to be relied on. Collins and Porras are in fact neutral on the exact nature of values - who they come from, how they are derived and what they dictate. 'Visionary companies', they suggest, do not need to be 'enlightened' or 'humanistic' - but they are distinctive in pursuing a cluster of objectives, of which making profit is just one.

But this argument is currently being taken a stage further, suggesting there are particular values which are now fundamental to business success (Zadek, 2000). For the Centre for Tomorrow's Company, for instance, the key ingredient is inclusiveness, a strongly consultative/stakeholder-based approach to management. Business in the Community frames this as a community orientation: Sir Peter Davis, the BiTC chairman, states on the organisation's website:

“We believe there is an increasingly urgent need for business to make a difference and to be seen to be making a difference to the communities where they work.....it is through working together and learning from each other that we can create an enterprising and successful business community”

Protecting and enhancing reputation, establishing a profile as a trustworthy employer, a reliable supply-chain partner, a welcome inward investor in a new country are held to be functions which are becoming an integral part of the creation of profit. In a recent book entitled *Funky Business: Talent Makes Capital Dance*, two Swedish business school professors set out the new demands on business in changed conditions, stating:

“Funky organisations have total ethics. Ethics must concern everyone and everything at a firm. They must be practised everywhere, continually. You just cannot be a little ethical or merely ethical when it suits you. Ethics is absolute.....In an age of affections and abundance, ethics is also a potent competitive weapon.” (Ridderstråle and Nordström, 2000: 236)

Similarly, many of those seeking to promote the adoption of more “environmentally-friendly” business practices promote the cost-savings to be made by recycling, cutting waste and using resources more efficiently (Hart, 1996) and the potential business opportunities for new business that lie in green-

innovation (Füssler and James, 1999, von Weisäcker, Lovins and Lovins 1998). Such concerns, far from being antithetical to the core value-creation purpose of business, are seen as enhancing the meeting of that purpose through innovation and efficiency, whilst reducing the physical stress placed on natural systems.

In a recent publication entitled “Visions of Ethical Business”, a senior partner in a major management consultancy firms writes:

“Many companies do not yet recognise that their reputation and their ability to operate successfully over the long term require them increasingly to have a clear “Corporate Citizenship” policy.

... None of this in any way detracts from the prime objective for any company: the need to achieve commercial and financial success in its core business and maximise - or at least optimise - the return for its shareholders. The issue for any organisation is the generation of additional benefits, arising from a sensible and enlightened approach to good Corporate Citizenship, alongside the basic financial motives and shareholder value”. (Peter Smith, Senior Partner, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 1999)

These developments can be enthusiastically embraced, the argument goes, within the current business imperative. Ethical business is good business, an indication of good management.

A variation on this approach maintains that, in the new conditions, the value of a company increasingly lies in its intangible assets - its intellectual property, its reputation, and particularly its ‘brand’. Quantifying the company market valuation attached to ‘intangible’ assets, such as intellectual capital, brand and reputation, is

currently a topic of some interest amongst analysts, consultants and accountants, and the topic of a forthcoming report from the Department of Trade and Industry Innovation Unit, entitled *Managing the Value Gap* (see also Arthur Andersen and Economist Intelligence Unit, 1992; Interbrand, 2000, Ridderstråle and Nordström, 2000). Damage to the 'brand' - an image held in the minds of consumers, which leads them to choose one make of apparently similar product over another - is seen as significantly threatening to the profitability of the company concerned. Companies facing such threats act quickly and thoroughly to try and limit the damage. There have been several high-profile examples of brands being threatened - reflected in share-price uncertainty - because of behaviour by the company which is subject to targeted campaigning by NGOs and becomes labelled socially or environmentally irresponsible. Nike's continuing efforts to meet its critics on human rights and labour practice issues is a case in point. If Nike sportswear were seen as undesirable to young people, the company would quickly falter in a highly competitive market. The company's Director of Labor Practices maintains that external monitoring and labelling schemes are an inappropriate response: it is the Nike brand itself that must stand for good production standards and evoke confidence in its customers (Murphy and Matthew, 2000). A similar process, on a smaller scale, seems to be happening with Marks and Spencer's St Michael brand, under attack from British Trades Unions because the company is increasingly sourcing its textiles from overseas producers, and discontinuing contracts with more expensive British suppliers. The brand's reputation for good quality British-made clothes at affordable prices is under threat, as an association is established between the brand and the loss of British jobs.

Faced with a huge array of new demands and growing sophistication in the use of new communication technologies which enable businesses and their critics, coming from many different perspectives, to move information around the world very quickly, there is little doubt that business leaders and managers are

beginning to need to find new responses. Whether confronted with challenges about their 'corporate citizenship' or not, the complexity and unpredictability of the business environment resulting from globalisation means that managers face what Vaill calls "process frontiers":

"a new area of activity for the organisation or a substantial modification in the way something has been done heretofore...process frontiers involve new attitudes, abilities and actions and...cannot be managed by already existing organisational policies, procedures and traditions" (1996: 135)

Such novel situations, then, call for new organisational processes and procedures as well as new skills and competencies on behalf of the managers that are facing them. There are many current contenders for what the new procedures might be, centring around the concepts of accountability and governance: environmental and social auditing and reporting of some kind, wider use of external monitoring and assessment of company production processes, more transparent accountability processes, holding companies answerable to environmental and social as well as financial "bottom lines" (Elkington, 1998). In the past three years there has been a burgeoning of activities along these lines - such as the Ethical Trading Initiative, partly funded by the Department for International Development, the Global Reporting Initiative, the publishing of Social Reporting Standards by the Institute for Social and Ethical Accountability, and the launch of SA 8000 by the Council on Economic Priorities. The current UK Company Law review is likely to recommend some sort of acknowledgement of Board's responsibilities to other stakeholders in addition to shareholders. It is also possible to begin to envisage what the concomitant new management skills and competencies might be: an ongoing and deliberate willingness to learn from new and unprecedented situations, as a 'normal' part of working experience: an ability to communicate with a wide range of individuals and groups outside the business organisation, and a willingness to do so. A new professional area is in the process of being born -

social auditors and reporters, reputation and assurance managers, social risk assessors, stakeholder relations managers.

Zadek (2000, and Weiser and Zadek, 2000) develops this line of argument further, by stressing the possibilities an active corporate citizenship engagement for companies offers them for innovation and learning – a chance not only to develop new skills, but to

“acquire and act on high quality information about stakeholder interests that are likely in the future to translate into market signals.” (2000: 15)

So the story goes.

It is a short step from there to begin to sketch the business education that would be appropriate. One well-developed response is through the idea of the ‘learning organisation’ or ‘learning culture’, and the need for managers to learn-to-learn. Vaill (1996), for instance, offers his model of “learning as a way of being” as a contender. He describes most business and executive education as “institutional learning”, characterised by assumptions of goal-directedness, which is usually the possession of new knowledge or skill. This goal is seen to be fixed, and outside the learning process, and its attainment is seen as “answer-oriented, cumulative and painful”. In its place he proposes a much more holistic form of learning which is self-directed, creative, expressive, connected to the learner’s feelings, happens on-line, is continual and reflexive. In this way, managers can engage in “leaderly learning” rather than managing.

And at this point, I think, a problematic dynamic begins to show itself. The best way I can think to describe it is to say: all roads seem to lead back to the same starting point - overcoming the difficulties faced by businesses in new conditions,

so that they can continue to do business. They don't lead somewhere new: or at least the elusive possibility of doing so melts away. On repeated occasions over the last couple of years, as my organisation has become a 'player' in the emerging conversation in this country about corporate citizenship, and the education which it requires, and I have participated in formal and informal discussion groups, conferences and consultations², I have had a sense of a fragile space receding, closing down. I am left wondering what this explosion of activity is all for. The "sensible and enlightened approach" advocated above by someone who is undoubtedly at the front edge of the mainstream corporate social responsibility discussion speaks explicitly of its own positioning, inside an unchanged common-sense. Ultimately the resolutions and actions seem so trivial, given the nature of the challenge posed by an idea of sustainability. But does this matter? Does not complexity theory suggest that the flutter of the butterfly's wing can have profound and far reaching effects? Small steps offer the opportunity for engagement and learning. The reasonableness of the arguments is compelling.

But I think in the MSc we have created something different which reminds me what the effort is about and an alternative tentative way forward might be: its as if I cannot rest in this reasonableness because of the pull of what I myself have been part of creating, like a stake in the ground to which I must return, reminding me of the nature of the task....

I think about this partly as a question of discourse. Our language and practices anchor us in modernity, and offer no easy route to "sensibly" move away. The "final vocabulary" (Rorty, 1989) of business is so strongly established in our

² In 1999 I attended a two day consultation for 30 invitees at Tarrytown, New York, on "Developing the Balanced Leader", hosted by the Initiative for Social Innovation in Business and the Aspen Institute; I was a speaker at a Corporate Citizenship conference at Warwick University in November 1999. In January 2000 I attended a three day consultation for invitees on "Education for Sustainability" at St George's House, Windsor Castle, hosted by the Environment Foundation and the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum

culture - and day-by-day establishing itself in all the cultures of the world - that to move outside is to risk straying into senselessness. To 'understand' the whirling complexity of our places in the world is to simplify, ignore, concretise and impose the framing that contains us: this is what we - modern humans - work at every day of our lives, with varying degrees of success, to hold our shared reality together. *And yet somehow we have to learn to do something differently.* The tightening in my gut at moments which seem like closure, and the alternatives spoken to me by my feminist perspectives alert me about this (and I am coming to take notice of those internal signals) - but they don't easily deliver me the words, the actions, the interventions to help me in the moment when I think I see closure and reductionism taking place. (Perhaps that is simply to say this is an 'inquiry frontier' for me: questions about whether to work to find appropriate in-the-moment responses, or to accept the impossibility of there being 'effective' ways to act, whilst still being/acting in the places where such things are needed. These, of course, are echoed in ongoing inquiries for many of the participants on the course)

Some of these issues can be seen playing out in the discourse which is being built around the idea of 'sustainable development' and 'sustainable business'.

The first use of the term 'sustainable development' is usually attributed to Gro Harlem Brundtland's 1987 report 'Our Common Future':

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

It is a phrase which is often used with different framings, sometimes as a modernist term, drawing on the idea of 'development', and at others as a post-modern/eco-modern term, suggesting a decentring of the egotistical human

relationship to the Earth. The ‘ development’ theme of sustainable development has been strongly criticised from the perspective of colonisation. For instance:

“The ideology of the dominant pattern of development derives its driving force from a linear theory of progress, from a vision of historical evolution created in eighteenth and nineteenth century Western Europe and universalised throughout the world, especially in the post-war development decades. The linearity of history presupposed in this theory of progress, created an idea of development that equated development with economic growth, economic growth with expansion of the market economy, modernism with consumerism, and non-market economies with backwardness” (Shiva and Bandyopadhyay, in Welford 1997: 4)

In its fullest sense, sustainable development requires humans fitting their activities to – no, deriving their activities *from*, the needs of planetary health and regeneration, recognising the inter-relatedness of natural and man-made systems. There are many different expressions of how this might be done (the most pragmatic, that I am aware, being that of The Natural Step), but all require a shift in human consciousness from human-centred to Earth-centred, accepting in some form that there are greater needs and purposes than those of the human/modernist project of economic growth. The NGO/think-tank Forum for the Future offers this definition of sustainable development:

“a dynamic process which enables all people to realise their potential and to improve their quality of life in ways which simultaneously protect and enhance the Earth’s life support systems”

For many, as discussed in Chapter 4, this is not new knowledge, but a re-awakening of traditional knowing, and is deeply spiritual (Spretnak 1997, Macy 1995, Berman, 1981).

One of the curious aspects of sustainable development is the way the concept involves parts of the scientific community, who have been at the forefront in calling for changes in human behaviour in the light of growing evidence of natural system depletion and breakdown, in grappling with the non-scientific nature of ‘responsibility’ not just to humans, but to Gaia, the Earth as a living being. Science offers no language to capture this dimension of the concept of sustainability, and yet this is where some scientists are led. Lovelock, the founder of the Gaia hypothesis, was not looking for such an explanation when he began to investigate the way life is sustained on the planet, and yet was drawn into metaphysical territory as his explanations led him to the concept of the Earth as a living entity (Lovelock, 1979). One Professor of Business Economics who researches and writes extensively on the relationship between business and the environment comments

“in order to move towards a sustainable future, we must go beyond seeing the environment in sterile scientific terms (with a more minor social dimension sometimes tagged on) and come to recognise, appreciate and enjoy the spiritual dimension of ecology...the most fundamental change which must take place is a transformation of our very relationship with the Earth. (Welford, 1997:21)

In this sense, for businesses to grapple with ‘sustainable development’ and hence ‘sustainable business’ is to open Pandora’s box.³ As discussed in Chapter 4, maximising shareholder value through economic growth, and creating a sustainable way of living are ideas that challenge each other deeply. In physical terms, the planet cannot support the lifestyles of the affluent North being exported to the rest of the world (Hawken, 1993)—but this is the myth on which business

³ . “the first woman, made for Zeus, in order to punish man for the theft by Prometheus of heavenly fire, given a box from which escaped all the ills of human life” Chambers Dictionary. What a powerful feminist image!: that which is held by the female being let loose to destroy the world created by father-consciousness, as punishment for man’s theft of knowledge...

growth is founded - and the final vocabulary of business does not permit exploration of this contradiction, or of the nature of the responsibility it implies. Intuitive awareness, and spiritual awakening are not part of digital knowledge. So when sustainable development enters business discourse, it takes on another, more contained, meaning:

“Innovation and growth are prominent on the corporate agenda. But growth is a given with the needs of billions for a better quality of life. It is innovation that we have to rethink and activate. It will bring us individual and collective success only if we inspire it with a vision of Sustainable Development.” Füssler 1999

Furthermore, some business leaders begin to use the term “sustainable development” to mean not sustainability of the planet, but sustainability (i.e. longevity) of the organisation. Peter Smith, for instance, seems to be talking about sustainability, but is using these resonant words to say something else:

“Fundamental to the long term sustainable development of a company is its reputation and the trust and respect which it commands....”

This is reflected in the discourse used by the new Dow Jones Sustainability Index. Sustainability Asset Management, who research and apply the index on behalf of Dow Jones, define corporate sustainability as:

“A business approach to create long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risks deriving from economics, environmental and social/ethical developments”⁴

⁴ From a presentation made by Sustainability Asset Management at the ABB Academy, Zurich, in March 2001

I am attending a conference on Corporate Citizenship at Warwick University, hosted by the Corporate Citizenship Unit, whose new director has been a sometime colleague and friend of mine for more than 10 years. I know that this is an important event for him, early in the process of establishing his place within the University: he, and the emerging community of which he is a part, needs this event to be successful, to try and claim a credible place within business school discussion.

On the first day I have made a presentation about my organisation and our joint course with the University at a workshop on 'Education for Corporate Citizenship', alongside speakers from Ashridge Management College and the European Business Network for Social Cohesion. I know them both pretty well, and many of the people attending the session, and am feeling that this whole event has the feel of a group of people reciting things to themselves which they have already heard. Nothing new is going on here.

I have been asked to provide a 'commentary from the floor' in the first plenary session of the second day, involving three speakers, as a prelude to open discussion. I have made a couple of notes of things I might say: but as the speakers talk, my heart starts to beat

fast, because I know there are other things I want to put in this room. I am consciously inquiring into what I should be doing here, and how. I am asking myself, what is the best kind of intervention I can make here, to flag up the possibility of engaging with a wider set of issues? I notice myself feeling huge constraint, not to offend the invited speakers I am listening to, not to make myself ridiculous amidst this professional community with whom I am likely to have further interactions, not to put myself somewhere where my voice cannot be heard because it is so out of tune as to become senseless, and hence negate the possibility of opening valid space. I feel strongly about the discourses being re-enacted in this room – the beating heart testifies to it – but I don't want to assert, I want to both push at some of the boundaries in this place, and invite others to do the same...testing those boundaries a bit, maybe putting some additional language into this system we are enacting.

And so, in the few minutes I have to think, I decide to use my allotted space to comment not so much on what has been said, but on what I am noticing is not being said. I have only a half-formed sense of what I can say, and I know that I will not like the way that I will say it – but I have decided to allow myself to do this anyway. I am helped, I realise, by the fact that I speak on behalf of a marginal

organisation – I carry no organisational imperatives other than my sense that I should use my opportunities as best I can to articulate an alternative paradigm for business. Right at this moment this feels like a sort of freedom, and I give myself permission not to be intimidated into saying less. This conference is taking place at the same time as the streets of central Seattle are erupting in disorder as police tackle protesters at the meeting of the World Trade Organisation – so I decide to start with that. I say that I have noticed an absence of argument, disagreement, passion in what we have been listening to: that its rational/reasonable tone is beguiling, but strangely at odds with the passions about the role of business on a global stage that are running in Seattle at the moment. I notice that no-one, yet, has mentioned the word ‘sustainability’ amidst the talk of environmental responsibility and social accountability, or ‘inequality’ or ‘poverty’, and I wonder what we could draw on from that protest which would enliven and inform our dialogue here. Where, I ask, is the anger and sense of urgency in this room? Am I the only person who feels it?

Very quickly I am back in my seat, and the discussion has moved on. I am wondering where those words went. Nothing that follows in the rest of the session, 30 minutes or so, makes any reference to what I have said. I feel some discomfort, but – again – I

deliberately give myself permission not to be self-critical, not to start an internal dialogue about making a mis-judgement. I remind myself that I am probably saying something for others in this room who have not yet spoken, and may not, but will have heard some echo of their thoughts in what I said. When the session comes to an end, and people move towards the coffee lounge, several people come to me, saying they are glad I said what I did, agreeing with me that the discussion is too safe and complacent, saying they have found no opportunity yet to raise their concerns, resolving to try and do so in the workshop sessions that follow.

In my thinking, (see Chapter 5) I locate this problematic at the junction between what Bateson (1972) describes as Learning II and Learning III. The metacommunication system of our culture teaches us how to use frames, and their use defines personality, worldview and social sanity (Berman, 1981:223). According to Bateson, most of this learning takes place analogically or tacitly. In the culture of Western modernism, we have learned that knowledge that can be trusted, which is worth the term knowledge, is digital and rational, and based on accepted logical rules that are broken by metacommunicative processes. Thus, as Berman says “Western society has deuterio-learned [i.e. using Learning II] a Cartesian double-bind and called it ‘reality’”. The conversation that ‘corporate citizenship’ involves is held within references to legal frameworks, codes, practices, management logics - the story I have just been rehearsing above - to a logically containable level, which itself is the source of the difficulty. The ‘problem’ is so elusive, not accessible digitally, because it is a problematic framing, rather than a problematic frame-content - and to engage outside this framing is, in effect, to leave the territory, to be taking about not-business

(religion, morals, ‘soft stuff’), or to be talking nonsense. As Berman says, if there is a species of knowledge that that is not conscious or purposive (and which might therefore tell us something about our relationship to the world other than by designating it as an instrument of human purpose), its expression in digital terms is necessarily the falsification of the message rather than the expression of it (1981: 254) (which, of course, is why I am struggling to write this....) Yet if we cannot discuss the ways in which our calculus of the world, our discourse, is damaging, inadequate and non-sensical in systemic terms, we can scarcely conceptualise, let alone address, our problem. We need (and I notice my own strongly normative position as I state this, rejecting the permissiveness of postmodernity) to be able to try out ideas, manipulate our understanding of them, experiment with practice, act with purpose and intent. The sort of ‘knowing’ that we might need to develop what I have earlier called “mother-consciousness”, ecological consciousness, wisdom, is precisely that which modernism has so successfully outlawed. By definition, to be sensible and effective is not to engage outside the dominant paradigm. As elsewhere in this study, the paradox of purposeful action for change from a perspective that highlights the problematics of goal-oriented/within-frame action raises itself. This, I think, is the (unstable) ground on which our programme is standing.

The sort of ‘leaderly learning’ that Vaill, and others, advocate is, I think, more like Bateson’s Learning II: it is not paradigm-aware. It implies a shift from one sort of framing to another, rather into something which is more outside/between/multiply framing. It does not address the epistemological framing assumptions of modernism - the *mechanos* view of the world (Skolimowski 1994) - and so, whilst encouraging the individual to be reflective and reflexive in her or his daily activity, it does not problematise the exploitation, dependency, deathly consumption patterns and pernicious individualism that accompany modernism. It is not about re-enchantment. It remains an activity of modernist ‘father-consciousness’ (Berman, 1981).

So the educational challenge is to try and work in some way with multiple frames, the sort of learning in which learners begin to recognise the paradigm, the framing assumptions they are using, and increase their awareness of framing processes themselves, and in so doing are able to loosen their hold on them. This may not be the sort of disintegration of the personality suggested by Bateson as part of Learning III, but it is, it seems to me, learning which is more about disconfirming things than confirming, and is engaging the participant in working with more than rational/intellectual knowing.

I am suggesting that an education which is intended to be “about” the human relationship with the world as it is expressed through modernist organisations, “about” corporate social responsibility, “about” sustainability, cannot adequately engage with any of these issues as dynamics of paradigm-change: the (digital, propositional) content will in itself invalidate any such meta-purpose. If content alone is changed, such a course would reproduce the double-bind that takes place in the MBA classroom, changing the words in the discussion, but not the meaning of the discussion, not the ontological and epistemological assumptions of modernity.

I don't think we discussed these issues in detail as we designed the learning approach of the new course: maybe we didn't need to - and perhaps I would not have been able to articulate these threads in the same way then as I do now. We did build trust, and frame our purposes in broad terms. Since I was part of the learning community you had both created in the CARPP programme, it formed part of our shared values. I had seen you working to create this sort of learning environment in CARPP, and you had seen me struggling with some of these

issues as I inquired into my work with the MBA programme through the first phase of this inquiry.

We did talk explicitly about how we would design a course that took an action-inquiry approach - and thereby would introduce participants to an epistemological framework which would problematise propositional certainty and establish expectations of engagement with the connection between ideas and practice. I think we talked about not just learning-to-learn, but the idea of *living oneself into a new place*, by consciously cycling between action and reflection. And so we designed the format of intensive workshops at which there would be reflection and stimulation with new ideas, interspersed with periods of experimentation, the probably tentative living of ideas in 'real world' contexts.

(As I write this now, partly as a result of my learning by doing, it seems so clear to me that we also were designing a process of learning for ourselves, where we also experimented with our actions as educators. I knew that I would pick up a lot of ideas from helping run this course, that I would learn from you and from the speakers, that I would read accordingly: I am not sure that I was conscious of the mirroring, between the participants and us, of creating new practice by doing it - and if I had realised, whether I would have suggested we be more disciplined about our reflection on those educational actions. I think the mirroring is interesting, because I believe one of the ways in which the educational process we have created seems powerful is through its metacommunicative message: in how we have designed it, and do it, we convey something which takes the content to another level, and which we could not convey in any other way.)

There are various points in my overall inquiry, where my ideas, my reflection and my practice become very tangled (or maybe very synchronous). I am at one of

those points here. I want to say something about the ways in which, for me, participating in the running of this course is a form of feminist practice, because alongside other possible frames of analysis, as a sometimes faint but persistent song, I hold the feminist critique that both Western epistemology and the Western business model express, and recreate, masculinised modernity. From my perspective, what we have begun to articulate is a more feminised model of education, of thinking, and maybe of being, for men and women.

What I am doing here feels a bit difficult, because I am naming, in a not particularly open way, what 'we' have been doing. I am very conscious that this is my framing, not yours - so I am offering it out, more tentatively than it perhaps sounds, wondering how this sits with the sense you have of your/our practice.

Some of the starting points have been:

- offering an explicit epistemological questioning of paradigms and world views at the outset of each programme
- making space and time for individuals to engage in a disciplined way with their own experience in relation to the ideas raised. This links with Belenky et al's (1986) description of building "connected knowing" - which they associated particularly with women students, but which I think of as a central part of moving towards Leaning III engagement, for both men and women. In facilitating some of these learning groups I have become aware that the experience of being heard by each other is very affirming and at the same time challenging for many participants, in terms of how they understand knowledge to be established and transmitted.
- presenting action- and collaborative-inquiry approaches as ways of acting, in the terrain of life, rather than as ways of researching, in the terrain of academia - which enables participants to understand the possibilities of them creating routes for

themselves through this course which have meaning for them in terms of their life purposes

- seeking an on-going balance between structure imposed by us, the tutors, and openness to innovation, negotiated with the participants. I think we are (again perhaps implicitly) drawing on aspects of Torbert's (1991) notion of 'liberating structures', structures that "force people to be free" - wanting to use structure to focus attention on what is important, in order to be able to supersede the confines of the structure. Formal higher education environments carry strong analogic communications about authority and discipline, and the expected passivity of the "student" in this environment. To some extent we can counteract that by treating the participants as self-directing adults - or at least intending to - but I think we have also linked that treatment to the issues of authority, the discourses of power and people's self-reflections about their roles as learners. We have explicitly drawn attention to the questionable nature of 'authority', whether it is in the form of University rules, our own exhortations as tutors, the stories given by invited speakers, or the criteria by which we and the participants judge their work. And we have invited participants to take authority over, authorship of, their work.
- positioning ourselves as tutors with responsibilities, but also as co-travellers into areas of uncertain knowledge and strong passion, and participant-seekers for new ways of carrying out our practice

In the terms I have been describing here, what an inquiry-based approach seems to enable is not to attempt, paradoxically, to 'teach' how to supersede Learning II, but rather to engage in that paradox, set in motion a process which may lead participants to encounter a problem-dynamic. So this is partly about the quality of learning in the environment we are co-creating with the participants, but also partly about engagement in the paradox of substantive paradigm-loosening. Our tacit, meta-communicative message, through the processes I have outlined, is inviting the participants to move through their inquiry processes to somewhere we have not yet - could not have - imagined.

We are also working with ideas of ‘enchantment’, making space for spiritual practice within the course - very tentatively on my part, I feel like a beginner in this, learning a tremendous amount from you, valuing it more and more as we repeat through the courses. There have been many such practices - from simple things like offering reflective space, using walking-talks, bringing flowers, stones, candles into the teaching room at the university to more explicit acts, adopting rituals of meeting, silencing, eating together. The time we spend with each group within the holistic learning environment at Schumacher College is a very significant expression of this, offering an experiential encounter with deep ecology whilst there, as well as meditation, performing a Council for All Beings. I get great pleasure from the fact that these things sit inside a postgraduate management degree - it feels almost like unravelling modernity from inside one of its fortresses. The interplay between the course content and these explicit ways of embracing experiential and presentational knowledge in practice have a powerful effect on the participants, as demonstrated in their learning papers. The effect is to meta-communicate a different discourse about change, leadership and management, one that offers a loosening of the link with modernist masculinity, but at the same time allows for the emergence of multiple alternatives for both men and women.

One of the aspects of this programme I am most intrigued by, in terms of my own practice, is that I don’t think what I am doing, in the classroom and learning groups, is very different than the things I outlined earlier in this inquiry where I wrote about my experiences with the MBA programme (except in one way, of which more below). But because the framing is so different, the meaning is different: what I am doing is perceived not as ‘niceness’, but as educational practice. And because I then get a different sort of feedback, I feel able to go further, make myself more vulnerable, be more open to what comes – and offer

more challenge to the participants, because the framings do not place this as a violation of people's personhood, in the way that top-down education so often does. I expressed some of this in the note I circulated to the first course group on behalf of us all- written after one of the participants had asked what was our learning review after the first year, and we had talked about it amongst ourselves:

A Reflection on the MSc April 1998

One of you asked the tutors to reflect on what we have learned in running the programme through the first year – to parallel the first year learning you are doing.

This is my response to the prompt.

The first year of the programme is complete, and with a second year group now enrolled, it begins to feel to me as if this venture now really has a life – like a young seedling which is beginning to take root, and which my now be able to withstand a moderate amount of fresh air and wind. My main feeling about what has taken place is one of pleasure and excitement: that we three had an idea, worked on it together, at length, in detail, to create a working model, and have now brought it into being. We put together a model which was subtle in the way that the content and

the learning process sought to support each other – and we have really been able to put that model into practice.

In designing the programme, we took seriously the idea that one of the major imperatives faced in addressing the substantive issues raised by the course – how to evolve a more sustainable, ecological, participative form of business – is the need to “know” things in a different way. Part of the content of the programme is concerned with the impact disembodied, linear thinking has had on the ecology of the planet. Nearly a century ago Max Weber, noticing the relentless “rationalisation of the world” taking place, said he thought this was a process of “disenchantment”. Part of our task as educators, we believe, is to offer the opportunity for re-enchantment, by re-connecting propositional, practical, presentational and experiential ways of knowing, and by reconnecting the near with the far. We want to offer participants on this programme a chance to hear some of the parts of their own purpose and experience which are normally drowned out by the noise of normality, and to be able to use these to help devise different ways of acting.

This has been the purpose behind the design of the programme. What we could not know until we began, was whether we could actively co-create such an environment.

What I have learned, is that, at times, we can. Our ability to do so seems to rely heavily on our facilitation skills in the moment of working with the group (and sub-groups). I am struck by the fact that this process relies on skills of being able to notice, at any given moment, many levels of happenings: a group process level (who is taking space? how are people feeling? what isn't being said? what are the differences here as well as the samenesses?); a content level (is this making sense? what is being missed out? what questions need to be asked, or answered?); a facilitation level (how can I help this person get the most from this? what is their need? what else do they want to say? what is their chosen way of participating in this? what feedback would help them?) and – at best – a meta-level which connects these (what is hanging around the edges of this interaction? what is frightening or energising us? what is nearly say-able?)

This, it seems to me, is quite a long way from most formal teaching, which at its best is a really good, skilful performance,

well targeted at the audience. Working in the way we are on this programme is more drawing on skills and techniques which we have developed in non-teaching contexts (group facilitation skills, management development skills) and trying to bring them to bear in support of the content of the formal session. There seems to be an element of conjuring it up in the moment – so that there have been times when we have missed an opportunity or just not worked the situation. And this means we to have trust in ourselves and each other that we will make that happen when it's needed. I think we are also drawing on the non-specific resource of ourselves as people with shared intent. We are co-creating, along with the participants – so that we don't really know the shape, taste, feel of the learning process until we are doing it.

One implication of that which I have noted is that it makes us vulnerable when we are with the participants, paradoxically despite having power in this situation. We have no choice but to be open to what comes and hence vulnerable, and to try and work to the best effect with whatever comes up. We can rule nothing out of court – there is nothing we would refuse to listen to, providing it was not abusive. We can – and do – prepare for sessions, but this preparation has to leave space where the other sort of work can take place. If we are defended by having all the space accounted for

– and hence less fragile, in some ways – we could not hope to achieve the sort of learning opportunities we are looking for.”

But there is one way in which working with you on this programme is a very different experience from working with the MBA: *I feel more ‘myself’*. In this area of my work I experience a congruence between what – at times tentatively, at times unskilfully, at times with assurance – I am doing and who I want to be. I am not working to compose myself, day by day, in the same way as I was then – or at least, I find that composition less onerous. I experience myself as having more energy, more resource, more willingness to enter into a situation and see what comes of it. I am less watchful and guarded. I am less scared. Do you see this in me?

I have tried to relate my practice to some of the feminist (and other) writings on educational practice. Belenky et. al. talk about the idea of “midwife teachers” - the opposite of banker-teachers:

“While the bankers deposit knowledge in the learner’s head, the midwives draw it out. They assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating it” (1986: 217).

This captures some of what I believe us to be doing here -but the I think we have moved some way from the idea of ‘teachers’ at all, into some other role – ‘educators’ perhaps, stronger than facilitators, more like guides. The fact that the university - and my organisation, under its previous director - cannot understand, categorise and account for this role testifies to its strangeness. I know that this puts pressures on you within your institution, and that your commitment to this

endeavour leads you to carry that pressure, a piece of largely invisible work on your part: thank you for doing it.

But I also think the educational practice we are engaged in here is also more than midwifery, because of the political/transformative intent of this course. I am not neutral in my practice here, using our efforts to give birth to something shaped only by the participants. I laugh at myself when I formulate what I am doing as working to create a just and sustainable world - but I do hold that intent, and I love the fact that - although your words for it might be different - you do too.”

[End of letter]

Getting Feedback

These thoughts, of course, constitute an ‘espoused theory’ of this area of my practice – and thereby raises questions over how this impacts on those who come as students to this form of education. Given the complexity of the territory, it is difficult in some ways to know what sort of information might confirm or disconfirm what we are trying to do.

We certainly get feedback from the course participants at the general level on the effect the course has on them. We cannot refuse to hear what they are saying to us, even whilst acknowledging it is not ‘objective’. For example:

“The MSc has massively changed my life for the better....I am genuinely, eternally, deeply in your debt”

“I think, feel, act, react, move and speak differently.....my understanding of how I might act in the world to effect change has been transformed”

“This study has informed my professional practice in ways that I could not have imagined at the outset, and I now have a very powerful sense of the power that comes from the depth of learning possible when you begin to consciously cycle between action and reflection...I begin to feel that my learning is of a different order when I am able to take it into my life rather than simply hold a body of abstract knowledge in my head”

“I had learned an inquiry process full of dualities and political struggles....I am just now learning to listen, learn and inquire collectively....I really think I am learning - as a novice learns – to reflect on where we are, what we are doing and how we are feeling about our work and life in general.....I feel empowered by my uncertainty”

“This course has been the most beautiful, although sometimes uncomfortable, ‘pregnancy’, which has involved my whole being...Somehow I feel as if I have got the point of this course, I know what it is about.”

“My topic, spirituality, is one that is dominated by the patriarchy. I believe the visible and actual presence of two powerful female intellects (and people) was vitally important to me. I felt surrounded by sympathy, both voiced and unvoiced, and an understanding that being a woman brought specific issues to everything I was attempting to do. Although this in no way made my task easier (given the intellectual and personal challenges they confronted me with - gently) I do think that it was made possible by you. THANK YOU!”

I asked some members of one of my learning groups to help me reflect on my practice as a tutor, to seek some sense of how they experienced my practice. Some of what they said suggested that the tutoring process I engage in can have a powerful effect:

M: “What I picked up from you, as a tutor, was that you were committed, you laid yourself out on the table for us....

you never once stood back and set a boundary with me, you always accepted what I said and tried to walk in my shoes, you never made me feel inadequate...

The way you helped me deal with [one] session, you told me it was fine for me to feel what I felt, to speak as I did, I felt you were on my side, you were there for me, you would have protected me, you validated, for me it was an extremely powerful thing, you were a very strong woman there, for me. You made it clear that it was a perfectly okay thing for me to be doing. There was another occasion, in relation to one of my papers, where you validated me to me, and you showed me such respect, I don't think I have ever felt respect like that before in my life, apart from in private relationships – its such a powerful thing,you didn't have to say very much, or do very much, you just were, and so obviously grounded.....

L: yes, the way you sit, with both feet on the ground, like nothing is going to be let go, you could be relied on, and sometimes its not what you said, its just a kind of energy...

M: I need to have understood things in real terms, rather than in theoretical times. You lived your theory, you lived your principles, and that was very clear to me, not what you espoused, but what you did

Me: I didn't espouse much....

M: No, that's why it was so powerful to me, you often used to say just enough, to click something,

Me: Was that frustrating?

M: I think it was perfect, you had a minimalist attitude to interfering in my process, you did this thing of building the field, that's what you did, your principles and values were there, it was quite incredible, you just gave that....I was used to being taught at, so I was frustrated at first, and what I got from you was that I was grown up and could make my own way now. It was I think very professional....

L: I sense with you that you don't feel the need to move out of your space

Me: But sometimes I wonder if it's stepping away from being explicitly powerful...I don't know

M: I don't either, but I think its probably good for you to go on doubting..."

And they also reminded me of the gendering process going on, always, in the room, whether named or not:

L: "I love Dale Spender's line, 'what is it if the world is not the way they told me' – and that's what feminism is for me. You and JM were there as a constant possibility of other points of view. Sometimes in the room...there was a certain male energy and certainty, and the fact that you were there, and the other strong women in the room, meant it was always visible to me that this was not necessarily so, that I would be supported if I challenged that, even if it was just in my head. For me feminism is that freedom to think differently, from the standard way...."

M: And sometimes the analysis you brought was really important, we have talked about the importance of naming as a source of power, and sometimes you would have a phrase that just meant that someone had thought about that and it was wrong, and it meant I was not just swirling and things weren't matching up, and you would say something, and I would think 'right!' and just ground myself, and say, 'yes! there's another point of view here'"

L:...There's .a sort of exhaustion that comes from unchallenged stuff being in the room, finding ways to surface that which do not bring hell and damnation is important...

There was lots of gender stuff during the course that we did not deal with, the talk you gave at Schumacher, you did it beautifully, but it did not really get into the group, there was nowhere to go with it..⁵

⁵ Edited transcript from audio tape

As an inquirer, I hear this feedback, and do not feel able to make a judgement about its 'weight'. I cannot say that it is worthless, because I respect the people making it, and the generous intent with which it is offered. I hold that alongside the thoughts that we *could* all be engaged in some self-referring process that makes no difference, *and* that small differences in systems are both important exemplars of resistance and places where iterations of otherness, diversity can grow. For now, for me, this seems like a place where my attention and energy are well put, and where I will continue to be challenged.