

Abstract

Unlatching the gate: Realising my scholarship of living inquiry

In writing this thesis, I address the “new scholarships” identified by Ernest Boyer (1990) and Donald Schon (1995). In particular, I seek to make a contribution to an emerging “scholarship of inquiry” in which – in the spirit of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1934) - the focus is on living the questions rather than seeking answers. I do so through the self-study of four strands of my practice: as a man, in loving relationships, in search of healing and as an educator.

The thesis is both an account of my learning in these areas and an action research inquiry in its own right as, over the course of two years, I sustain a cyclical process of writing and reflection, searching for connections, contradictions and tensions between the various strands.

In its manner of presentation, the thesis responds to the “crisis of representation” identified by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) by using what Eisner (1997) calls “alternative forms of data representation”. The stories of living inquiry are self-reflective narratives of lived experience including “artistically rendered forms” such as poetry, creative writing, paintings, sculpture and audio recordings, where these help to convey something of the emotional, aesthetic and spiritual qualities inherent in the inquiries.

Throughout the thesis I develop the idea of *living inquiry* – a holistic approach in which all aspects of life are potentially available as sources of learning. *Living inquiry* is a form of action research embracing first, second and third person inquiry. It consciously avoids adopting any single method, preferring Feyerabend’s (1975) argument that there are no general solutions and that the best chance of advancing knowledge comes from the intuitive use of a pluralistic methodology

Agreeing with Lyotard (1984) that “the [postmodern] artist and the

writer... are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*", I realise *my scholarship of living inquiry* by reviewing the text to identify twelve distinctive ontological and epistemological standards of judgement and criteria of validity and by showing how they are both embodied in, and emerge from, my practice.

As the thesis draws to a close, eschewing the notion of a generalisable theory in favour of one that is situated and particular, I also identify six underlying principles that inform my continuing life of inquiry:

- trusting the primacy of my own lived experience as the bedrock of inquiry, whilst remaining open to the world of ideas and to what others have to offer
- valuing the originality of mind and critical judgement inherent in my own forms of sense-making and knowledge creation and the wide variety of forms of representation that they generate
- exercising my *will to meaning* to move me towards what brings a sense of significance and purpose to my life and to clarify my vocation as a healer and educator
- making an existential choice of optimism, of doing my best, of striving to make things better or to make the best of any given situation – for myself and with others
- refusing to subsume my life of inquiry within any prescribed form, "following my bliss" to find my own path as a unique and eccentric human being
- communicating and accounting to others for my life of inquiry as an individual claiming originality and exercising my judgement responsibly with universal intent.