

Interiority as the Cutting Edge between Theory and Practice: A First Person Perspective

Coghlan, David

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

Rainer Hampp Verlag

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Coghlan, D. (2010). Interiority as the Cutting Edge between Theory and Practice: A First Person Perspective. *International Journal of Action Research*, 6(2-3), 288-307. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-414128>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Interiority as the Cutting Edge between Theory and Practice: A First Person Perspective

David Coghlan

The three realms of meaning: practical knowing, theory and interiority provide a framework for understanding the epistemological challenges confronting action researchers. Action researchers have two external horizons: that of practice and that of theory. Practice engages with the world of practical knowing, where the challenges are the successful completion of practical tasks. Theory engages the realm of scholarship as action researchers seek to develop understanding of, for example, the dynamics of organization and change. Interiority involves shifting from what we know to how we know, and is a process of intellectual self-awareness. Interiority goes beyond practical knowing and theory, not by negating them or leaving them behind, but appreciating them and recognizing their limitations. Interiority is the integrating factor that enables action researchers to hold both, to appreciate the value of both and to move from one to the other appropriately. It is a process at the cutting edge of integrating theory, practice and research.

Key words: action research, practical knowing, theory, interiority, Bernard Lonergan

At a conference dinner two years ago, I was asked what my theory of my engagement in organization development/action research was. Quite spontaneously, I replied that it was about integrating practical knowing, theory and interiority. Whatever about the surprise expressed by my dinner companion who asked the question, I was surprised by own answer. I was not able to develop my answer on that occasion, and I made a mental note that some day

I would take the opportunity to explore and try to articulate more fully what I meant. I have since undertaken this exploration, and so in this contribution I seek to engage in a first person philosophical reflection on how I understand my practice as an action researcher, so as to contribute to our developing understanding of the scholarship of practice. I ground this inquiry in the work of the theologian-philosopher, Bernard Lonergan on whose empirical method I base my way of working (Coghlan 2008, 2009, 2010). The aim of this article is to explore a philosophical basis for action researchers as contribution to the continuing developments of action research's self-understanding (Shotter 2007; Avenir 2009). The structure of this exploration is as follows. In the first part of the article I reflect on the philosophical process of first person practice, and focus on the operations of human knowing which yield a general empirical method. In the second part, I outline some of the characteristics of meaning and introduce Lonergan's (1972, 1993, 1996) notion of the realms of meaning: commonsense, theory and interiority as a framing for an epistemology for the action researcher. Finally, I reflect on my framing of my work as an action researcher.

First person practice

First person practice means that attention to our own values, assumptions, beliefs and ways of thinking and acting are afforded a central place of inquiry in our action research practice. It involves attending to how we experience ourselves in inquiry and in action (Marshall 1999; Sherman/Torbert 2000). Philosophically, first person practice means that, rather than observing ourselves as objects from the outside, we experience ourselves as subjects with direct awareness of how we think and act. Varela and Stears (1999) demonstrate how first person practice forms the basis of a science of consciousness, as it engages the dynamics of subjective experience with validation. In order to ground this science of consciousness, they argue, it is necessary to have a method. They outline two dimensions for such a method: providing a clear procedure for accessing some phenomenal domain, and providing a clear means for an expression and validation within a community of observers who have a familiarity with such procedures.

Human knowing comprises an invariant series of distinct operations: experiencing, understanding and judging (Dewey 1933; Lonergan 1992; Meynell 1999). Experience occurs at the empirical level of consciousness, and is an interaction of inner and outer events, or data of sense and data of consciousness. We not only experience external data through our five senses, but we also experience internal data as we imagine, remember, feel, and think. We also experience ourselves as seeing, hearing, thinking, feeling, remembering and imagining. Sensory data are what we experience but do not yet understand. So we ask questions, and the answers come in the form of insights, which are creative acts of understanding, of grasping and formulating patterns, unities, relationships and explanations in response to questions posed to our experience. While we might not know yet if a particular current search is intelligent, we anticipate intelligent answers. Understanding occurs at the intellectual level of consciousness as we move beyond experience to explanation. While insights are common, they are not always satisfactory answers to our questions. The question then is, does the insight fit the evidence? This opens up a question for reflection. Is it so? Yes or no? Maybe. I don't know. So we move to a new level of the cognitional process, where we marshal and weigh evidence and assess its sufficiency. We are at the rational level of consciousness. We do not merely know; we also make decisions and act (the responsible level of consciousness). At this level we ask what courses of action are open to us, and we review options, weight choices and decide. The responsible level of consciousness is added to the empirical, intellectual and rational levels.

From the cognitional operations of experience, understanding and judgement, Bernard Lonergan (1972) articulates a general empirical method, which is simply the enactment of the knowing process. This method is grounded in:

- Attention to data of sense and of consciousness (experience).
- Envisaging possible explanations of that data (understanding).
- Preferring as probable or certain the explanations which provide the best account for the data (judgement).

Engaging this method requires the dispositions to perform the operations of attentiveness, intelligence and reasonableness, to which is added responsibility when we seek to take action.

The general empirical method of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible is a normative heuristic pattern of related and recurrent operations that yield ongoing and cumulative results. It envisages all data, both of sense and of consciousness. It does not treat objects without taking into consideration the operations of experience, understanding and judgement. It enables us to appropriate our own conscious reality as existential subjects. It provides a key to the relationship between questioning and answering; it is a framework for collaborative creativity that deals with different kinds of questions, each with its own focus. So questions for understanding specific data (What is happening here?) have a different focus from questions for reflection (Does this fit?) or from questions of responsibility (What ought I do?). As conscious subjects we can attend to what is going on, both inside and outside us, inquire intelligently, judge reasonably and decide freely and act responsibly. As conscious existential subjects, we can accept and confront the fact that it is up to us to decide that our actions will be responsible, that our judgements be reasonable, our investigations intelligent and that we advert to data of both sense and consciousness. The general empirical method provides a basis for internalising action research practice (Coghlan 2008, 2009) and for working with the different modalities that form the field of action research (Coghlan 2010).

Meaning

We live in a world mediated by meaning. Indeed, meaning is at the heart of human living. Meaning does not lie within our direct immediate experience, but rather goes beyond experience to what is understood, affirmed and valued. As such, meaning itself is insecure because as well as truth, there is error. There is fiction as well as fact, deceit as well as honesty, myth as well as science. Meaning performs a number of important functions. It performs a cognitive function, whereby we engage in acts of understanding. It performs

an effective function, whereby there is the world that we make through our intentions, visioning, planning, enacting and evaluating.

Meaning is not a simple matter, as several levels of meaning may exist in a given experience. At any one time, we may be concerned with only a single meaning in a given situation; other meanings may be ignored or left for later reflection. 'Differentiation of consciousness' is a notion that enables us to identify the meaning(s) sought in a given experience and so to choose how act. In other words, if we are aware of the meaning(s) contained in a given situation, we may choose to act appropriately.

The field of action research hangs on meaning. Organizations and communities are formed through common meaning formed by acts of meaning. They are held together by common fields of experience, common modes of understanding, common measures of judgement and common consent. There are many carriers of meaning: language, symbols, art, spontaneous intersubjectivity, and the lives and actions of people, to cite the more important ones. Through meaning's constitutive function, action researchers engage in change at individual group, organizational and societal levels by engaging with how organizations engage with their meaning-making functions of visioning, planning, enacting and evaluating (Coghlan/Rashford 2006). Understanding and working to change organizational actions requires inquiry into the constructions of meaning that individuals make about themselves, their situation and the world, and how their actions may be driven by assumptions and compulsions as well as by values. In a similar vein, large systems and groups hold their own shared meanings which direct their actions. Such meanings are likely to be hidden and taken for granted (Schein 2010).

Realms of meaning: Practical knowing, theory and interiority

Loneragan (1972) reflects on three realms of meaning: commonsense, theory and interiority. These three realms of meaning are integrally linked to the process of human knowing.

The realm of practical knowing

While Lonergan uses the term, commonsense, to capture the notion of practical knowing, I am using the latter term. Practical knowing focuses on the interest and concerns of human living and the successful performance of daily tasks (Lonergan 1992). It seeks to help us deal with situations as they arise and to discover immediate solutions that will work. In the realm of the practical we are interested in knowing, not for its own sake, but for developing more intelligent and successful ways of living. It focuses on the concrete and the particular. If we do not apply our intelligence when we are making coffee, then the coffee will be undrinkable.

At its core, practical knowing describes things as they relate to us; it is a descriptive, subject-centred context of knowing, that is not interested in universal solutions. It has no use for technical language (though it might use it) or formal mode of speech; it moves fluently between saying and meanings and undertakes communication as a work of art, drawing on resources of language, support of tone and volume, eloquence and facial expression, pauses, questions and omissions. It operates in everyday descriptive language, through focusing the mind on intentions and actions, rather than the intrinsic properties of things. The content of that practical accumulation and store of knowledge is not definitions or universally valid propositions, but rather proverbs and rules of advice.

The realm of theory

The realm of theory is not interested in things and people as they relate to us, but rather as they relate to one another in a verifiable manner. Theoretically differentiated consciousness operates systematically, is governed by logic and uses language in a technical and explanatory manner. Explanation has to be accurate, clear and precise so the ambiguities of practical language are averted. Special methods are required to govern different types of investigation. There are, of course, intentions and desires to relate theory to application, but such application is typically after the fact and, as action research has well demonstrated over the years, involves an entirely different process.

The relationship between practical knowing and theory

The distinction between practical knowing and theory is not merely a distinction between practical and intellectual patterns of experience. Although they have different concerns and scope, they are not isolated from one another. Practical knowing may mistakenly claim general theoretical applicability. Practical knowing does develop general principles, but these generalizations are concerned with the concrete, practical affairs of a specific context, not with universal principles that scientific theory advances. In a similar vein, practical knowing may claim that theoretical investigation is pointless and that theory is irrelevant.

The quest for general theories typically begins from the practical reality of individual persons. Lewin's famous observation of the waiter's ability to hold a complex order of multiple cups of coffee and pieces of cake in his head while the order was still live, only to forget it once the bill had been paid, led to the research on the psychological tensions of unfinished tasks, called the Zeigarnik effect (Marrow, 1969). Zeigarnik was one of the students at the cafe with Lewin that day. Practical knowing may also develop from theory. As scholars disseminate their work, their insights become part of the general store of knowledge and action in the practical world.

There is a fundamental opposition between the world of practical knowing and that of theory. Both present different ways in which objects are considered. Lonergan (1972) refers to Eddington's (1928) famous discussion of the table as a pertinent example. In the realm of practical knowing, the table is solid, has colour and shape and needs to be capable of supporting the weight that we wish to put on it. For the scientist, the table is a vacuum of colourless wavicles so minute that the table is mostly empty space. Eddington struggled with the question of which was the real table. Was it that of the scientist or that of the ordinary person? He was not able to resolve this question and he opted that the table of the scientist was the real table. In the world of practical knowing, we can refer validly to sunrise and sunset, while in terms of scientific theory the sun neither rises nor sets. These examples from the natural sciences seek merely to illustrate that there are different realms of meaning and that we can hold seemingly contradictory perspectives across them.

In the practical mindset, deciding what to do, what is good/bad, right/wrong, what works or does not work etc. is haphazard and uneven, as the practical mind aims at the practical and short term, and is difficult to objectify. In the realm of theory, clarity and rigour can be gained within the scope of logic and mathematics, but it cannot deal with the practical realm or critique its own limitations or provide criteria between conflicting theories. Hence there is a need for something that is beyond both the realm of practical knowing and of theory.

The realm of interiority

The critical demand is a turn from the outer world of practical knowing and theory to the appropriation of one's own interiority i.e. to oneself as a knower. This is a heightened intentional consciousness, and is what Lonergan (1972) calls 'interiority'. The turn to interiority is not just cognition but an appropriation of self and one's mind. It is a first person activity. The goal of interiority is a turn from the outer world of practical knowing and theory, with the ability to recognize their competence and to meet the demands of both without confusing them. Interiority involves shifting from *what* we know to *how* we know, a process of intellectual self-awareness. Interiority analysis involves using one's knowledge of how the mind works to critique an intellectual search for truth in any area. It is a first person activity. As Lonergan (1972: 85) expresses it, 'It is only through the long and confused twilight of philosophic initiation that one can find one's way into interiority and achieve through self-appropriation a basis, a foundation, that is distinct from commonsense and theory, that acknowledges their disparateness, that accounts for both and critically grounds them both'.

Many elements in contemporary philosophy point towards interiority, through an emphasis on the subject. Modern philosophy, under the influence of positivism, avoided the issue of the subject in is/her acts of consciousness and so the subject became neglected and indeed truncated (Lonergan 1974). Existentialists examine subjective experience, particularly in the face of meaningless, death and anxiety. Through an emphasis on 'intentionality

analysis', phenomenological method focuses on subjective activities: feelings, mental activities and artistic expression (Ladkin 2005).

Interiority is a theory about theories, a shift to a new perspective. It is going beyond practical knowing and theory, not by negating them or leaving them behind, but by appreciating them and recognizing their limitations. Questions of science can be settled by appealing to observable data. However, in the world of interiority data are not sensible or observable, but belong to the private world of intentional consciousness.

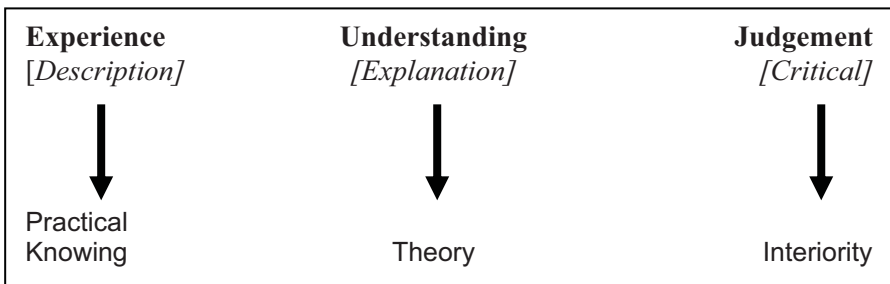
- Interiority is characterized by awareness of the actual processes of human knowing and by reflection on the operations of knowing. It calls for a self-knowledge not just of our feelings, dreams, motivations but of how we see, think, judge, imagine, remember, criticize, evaluate, conclude etc. Grasping the activity of human understanding is the main characteristic of interiority, how it happens in us. This is not just another theory about human knowing but it is judging all theories about human knowing in the light of data of consciousness.
- Awareness of how understanding unfolds reveals how there are operative and immanent norms in the unfolding of understanding, in how the mind works. By using the general empirical method, we can attend to data, think a matter through, and ask the relevant questions. We can know when we have reached reasonable conclusions and can take responsibility for them. Interiority is being faithful to the deepest and the best inclinations of mind and heart.
- We do make mistakes and we can reflect and discover our mistakes. Then we investigate the source of our misunderstandings and false judgements, how we did not attend to all the data or how we jumped to conclusions. We can learn about our own style of learning, of how, for instance, temperament plays a role. We can learn to recognize our biases, prejudices, fears and anxieties.

Action science provides a valuable expression of the challenge for interiority. Argyris (2004; Argyris/Putnam/Smith 1985) invites us to attend to how we act on the basis of privately untested hypotheses, such as inferences and

attributions. As he argues most persuasively, it is not more espoused theory that we need, but rather insight into theory-in-use that governs behaviour. Such insight requires double-loop learning. In my view, the techniques of action science, such double-loop learning, the ladder of inference and treating facts as hypotheses, provide a rigorous application of interiority, through their focus on *how* we know rather than on *what* we know.

Once we have a basic understanding of the different realms of meaning and can move from one to another as a given situation requires, interiority can be a foundation for using the other realms of meaning. In fully differentiated and integrated consciousness, perhaps a long and arduous personal achievement, the realms of practical knowing, theory and interiority enrich each other. A person can recognize and understand the distinct realms, shift between them and relate them to one another. Had Eddington been able to differentiate between the realms of meaning, he would have been able to recognise that both tables are real.

Figure 1: Realms of meaning as cognitive processes



In summary, figure 1 captures the relationship between the operations of knowing and the realms of meaning. Practical knowing works in a descriptive mode and is grounded in experience. Theory works in an explanatory mode, and is grounded in the activity of understanding. Interiority works in a critical mode, and is grounded in the activity of judgement.

Lewin on realms of meaning

The basic theory underlying action research, as framed by Lewin, is found in his famous statement (Bargal, in press).

It is important to understand clearly that social research concerns itself with two rather different types of questions, namely the study of general laws of group life and the diagnosis of a specific situation. Problems of general laws deal with the relation between possible conditions and possible results. They are expressed in "if so" propositions....To act correctly...he has to know too the specific character of the situation at hand... For any field of action both types of scientific research are needed (Lewin 1997: 145).

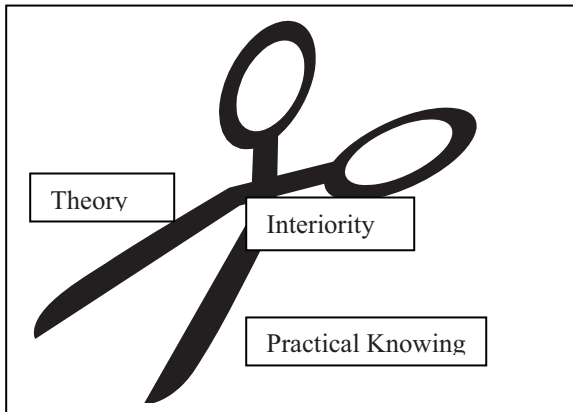
In my view, Lewin's statement implies Lonergan's three realms of meaning. If the general laws of group life mark the realm of theory, and the dynamics of a specific situation mark the realm of practical knowing, then their coming together in action research involves interiority, in order to differentiate between them and to use both, as Lewin argues.

This may be illustrated as a scissors, where the upper blade represents the general laws (theory) and the lower blade the dynamics of the concrete situation (practical knowing). The upper blade provides a focus on constructs while the lower blade yields insights and working hypotheses. The cutting movement, where the two blades come together in 'a field of action' is where action and inquiry merge, and where interiority becomes essential (figure 2).

The three realms of meaning: practical knowing, theory and interiority provide a framework for understanding the challenges confronting the action researcher. Traditional scholarship in the field of organization and management studies has had its difficulties in relating to the world of practice. Likewise the world of practice has found itself alienated from the field of scholarship. The two worlds have become polarized. Action researchers straddle the two worlds. Practice engages with the world of practical knowing, where the challenges are the successful completion of practical tasks of organization change and development. Theory engages the realm of scholarship as action research seeks to develop understand of the dynamics of organization and change. In this paper, I argue that interiority is the integrating factor for the

action researcher, and is at the cutting edge of theory and practice, so I offer it as a contribution to our understanding of the scholarship of practice (Raelin 2007; Antonacopoulou 2004).

Figure 2: Interiority at the cutting edge of theory and practice



Practical knowing, theory and interiority for the action researcher

The field of organization development may provide an example of how the three realms of meaning may be perceived. Organization development comprises a range of theories built on research on topics such as change, intervention, the role of consultants, to name a few (Coghlan and Shani, 2010). It draws on the extensive research done in the fields of management, organization theory, group dynamics, leadership, strategy, social psychology, organizational sociology and so on. At the same time, there is the world of OD practitioners, which is often atheoretical and is founded on the learned practical experience of practitioners as to what works and doesn't work. Interiority provides a frame whereby both theory (based on research) and practice (based on what works in practitioners' experience) may be viewed critically and theory may be applied in a given situation, for example, what intervention may be appropriate in a particular setting under certain circumstances in order to achieve a particular purpose. A journal such as *The OD Practitioner*

which brings theory to practitioners in a form that enables them engage with theory in the context of practice acts as agent for interiority, albeit without using the terms.

Discussion and personal reflection

As I reflect on my work in the mode of first person practice, several themes present themselves that capture the challenges of interiority, not merely for me, but what I offer to action researchers for them consider their own themes. I discuss briefly how the realms of meaning are operative in my teaching, in attending to process in the present tense and in writing.

Revans' praxeology

As a university-based scholar my work with students across the age and experience range is deeply influenced by the writings of Reg Revans, the creator of action learning. Revans (1971) articulated a theory of action or 'praxeology' as he termed it, comprising engagement with three cyclical systems - alpha, beta and gamma. *System alpha* focuses on the investigation of the problem, based on the managerial value system, the external environment and available internal resources. *System beta* focuses on its resolution, what decisions and cycles of negotiation are required to implement the decision through trial and error. *System gamma* focuses on the learning as experienced uniquely by each of the participants and involving self-awareness and questioning. These three processes utilize analysis, cycles of action and reflection and attention to learning.

Revans' praxeology engages practical knowing, theory and interiority. *System alpha* is largely a theory activity in how it generates understanding of the origins of the problem, though interiority activity of what and how value judgements about desired outcomes are also implicit. *System beta* focuses on the resolution of the problem, what decisions and cycles of negotiation are required to implement the decision through trial and error in the company of peers. This is largely a practical activity as workable solutions are sought and tested. *System gamma* focuses on the learning as experienced uniquely by each of the participants and involving self-awareness and questioning, that is,

interiority. My andragogical activity focuses on teaching learners the general empirical method so as to facilitate them to engage in a rigorous analysis of their settings and of the issues that they seek to change, to engage in addressing the issues and to attend to their own learning in and through the process (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). In terms of Revans' praxeology, students work to learn how to analyse situations, to engage in cycles of action and reflection while always keeping an eye to not only what they are learning but how they are learning. In this way they are learning to move through the three realms of meaning, and to recognise how interiority enables them to understand how each realm has its role in their learning.

Attention to process in the present tense

Attention to process in the present tense appears to me to be a critical dimension of the practice of interiority. This is something I learned from Edgar Schein. One of the most significant books in my own development was his *Process Consultation* (Schein, 1969). When I was introduced to that little book in the early 1970s, my thinking was transformed and I began to give my attention to process issues in groups and in learning. In a seminal article, Chandler and Torbert (2003) explore how first, second and third person voice and practice may be engaged in the past, present and future. Much of what we refer to as qualitative research is focused on the past. Interiority builds on the past, takes place in the present with a view to shaping the future. Attending to data of consciousness in the present tense, i.e. interiority, finds different expressions in the literature: attending to one's theory-in use (Argyris and Schon, 1974), one's 'action logics' (Torbert and Associates 2004), 'inner and outer arcs of attention' (Marshall 1999) and 'accessing one's ignorance' (Schein 1999), to cite some examples.

The general empirical method facilitates working in the present tense (Coghlan 2009). Being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in executing the practical task of being helpful to a group engaged in trying to accomplish its task is demanding on theory, in that the pertinent process issues identified and being worked on must be grounded in robust theory, appropriately used. It is demanding on interiority through the self-reflection

of the action researcher as to whether, in any given moment, an intervention may be appropriate.

In an earlier work (Coghlan 2008), I recount that while at a meeting of researchers and managers I felt that the meeting was getting bogged down. I was processing what was happening and wondering whether my feeling was due to me losing track of the meeting or whether there was something happening in the meeting. My insight was that there was something happening in the meeting that was causing it to become somewhat fractious and that this insight was that there were philosophical differences among some of the participants about the nature and purpose of the research. The chair suddenly asked me to comment on what I thought was going on. My theory was that there was an emerging fundamental difference between those who understood the research as verification and those who understood it as discovery. In practical (commonsense) terms I had to respond to the chair's stimulus and to do so in a manner that would enable the group to receive its own insight and that would keep the conversation going. I was aware of these options and was aware that my insight was an inference and had not been tested. Accordingly, I posed a question to the group and invited consideration of the two ways of understanding the research that were apparent to me in the conversation. A fruitful discussion followed.

What is relevant about this story is that I attended to the data of my consciousness and was aware that my understanding was an untested inference and that then shaped my concern for how I might respond to the chair's invitation. The theory of conflicting epistemologies, while relevant, might not have been helpful to share as it might not have engaged the practising managers in the room if a discussion on the philosophical nature of research had ensued. My awareness that I had to balance both theory and practical knowing in the concrete situation led me to examine my own cognitive processes and so to find an appropriate way of responding that kept the conversation going.

Writing

An important expression of interiority for action researchers is how they write. Marshall (2008) reflects on the role of form in her action research writing, and suggests that we invoke the writer in us and our own direct voice in whatever form it takes. Schein (1999, 2009a, 2009b) provides useful examples of how to engage interiority in his own writing. He consistently works from his experience to be practically helpful to clients (practical knowing), and builds theory from his experience. At the same time, he demonstrates how he reflects on his own thinking as he works to be helpful, frequently identifying errors in how he misread situations and intervened inappropriately, and how his own theory and practice has been shaped by this reflection. His principles for process consultation and clinical inquiry emphasize the need to be constantly in touch with what is going on in oneself, particularly through accessing one's own ignorance and sharing the problem (Schein 1999). This article is itself an effort in interiority, in that I am presenting this exploration as a first person inquiry, rather than in the more traditional third person philosophical mode only.

Conclusions

Interiority marks the unity of the human subject, through recognising the integral nature of the cognitive process and appropriating the data of consciousness accordingly, that is, to engage in differentiation of consciousness. Lonergan (1972: 84) remarks, 'It is, of course, only in a rather highly developed consciousness that the distinction between the realms of meaning is to be carried out'.

The quest to achieve interiority, therefore, is a personal first person quest (Eidle 1990). As explored above, first person practice means that, rather than observing ourselves as objects from the outside, we experience ourselves as subjects with direct awareness of how we act and so learn to grasp our own interiority. It involves applying the general empirical method to our own process of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible.

Articulating my response to the question put to me at dinner has itself been an exercise in interiority. It has challenged me, not so much to engage with the theory and practice of being an action researcher but to examine my own way of knowing as I engage with the worlds of practical knowing and theory. I have sought to explore how interiority involves shifting from *what* I know to *how* I know and accordingly how this is a process of intellectual self-awareness. Interiority goes beyond practical knowing and theory, not by negating them but by appreciating them and recognizing their limitations. Interiority is not merely a theory of operating it is an appropriation of the self and one's mind.

Self-appropriation is a movement towards interiority. It is not something one can talk about in ordinary common sense conversation, nor is it something that can be handled adequately with any amount of theory. It regards immediate internal experience. It is a third field of development (Loneragan 1996:114).

The epistemological problem is to differentiate these patterns of experience from one another, and to appropriate the various situations that present themselves to us. In Varela and Stears' (1999) terms, this is an exploration of the science of consciousness. As an action researcher who engages with both practical knowing and theory concurrently, as conceived by Lewin, I understand interiority to be the integrating factor that enables me to hold both, to appreciate the value of both and to move from one to the other appropriately. It is a process at the cutting edge of theory, practice and research and which challenges me (and other action researchers) to facilitate others to learn, to attend to process in the present tense and to impact how I write and disseminate action research.

References

- Antonacopoulou, E. (2004): The dynamics of reflective practice: the relationship between learning and changing. In: M. Reynolds/R. Vince (eds.): *Organizing Reflection*. Aldershot: Ashgate: 47-64.
- Argyris, C. (2004): *Reasons and Rationalizations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Argyris, C./Putnam, R./Smith, D. (1985): *Action Science*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Argyris, C./Schon, D.A. (1974): *Theory-in-Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Avenir, J.-M. (2009): A methodology framework for constructing generic knowledge with intended value for both academics and practice. In: B. Brogger/O. Eikeland (eds.): *Turning to Practice with Action Research*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang: 141-178.
- Bargal, D. (in press): Kurt Lewin's vision of organizational and social change: The interdependence, of theory, research and action/practice. In: D. Boje/B. Burnes/J. Hassard (eds): *The Routledge Companion to Change*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Chandler, D./Torbert, W.A. (2003): Transforming inquiry and action: Interweaving flavors of action research. In: *Action Research*, 1(2): 133-152.
- Coghlan, D. (2008): Authenticity as first person practice: An exploration based on Bernard Lonergan. In: *Action Research*, 6(3): 351-366.
- Coghlan, D. (2009): Toward a philosophy of clinical inquiry/research. In: *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 45(1): 106-121.
- Coghlan, D. (2010): Seeking common ground in the diversity and diffusion of action research and collaborative management research action modalities: Toward a general empirical method. In: W.A. Pasmore/A.B. (Rami) Shani/R. Woodman (eds.): *Research in Organization Change and Development*, Vol 18. Brinkley, UK: Emerald: 149-181.
- Coghlan, D./Brannick, T. (2010): *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.
- Coghlan, D./Rashford, N.S. (2006): *Organizational Change and Strategy: An Interlevels Dynamics Approach*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Coghlan D./Shani, A.B. (Rami) (2010): Editors' introduction: Organization development: Toward a mapping of the terrain. In: D Coghlan/A.B. (Rami) Shani (eds.): *Fundamentals of Organization Development*, Vol 1. London: Sage: xxiii-xxviii.
- Dewey, J. (1933): *How We Think*. Lexington, MA: Heath.
- Eidle, W.R. (1990): *The Self-Appropriation of Interiority: A Foundation for Psychology*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Eddington, A. (1928): *The Nature of the Physical World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ladkin, D. (2005): The enigma of subjectivity: How might phenomenology help action researchers negotiate the relationship between 'self', 'other' and 'truth'? In: *Action Research*, 3(1): 108-126.
- Lewin, K. (1997): Action research and minority problems. In: K. Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. (original publication, 1946): 143-154.
- Lonergan, B.J. (1972): *Method in Theology*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.
- Lonergan, B.J. (1974): The subject. In: W. F Ryan/B. Tyrrell (eds.): *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd: 69-86.
- Lonergan, B.J. (1992): *Insight: An Essay in Human Understanding*. The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 3, F. Crowe and R. Doran (eds.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Lonergan, B.J. (1993): Dimensions of meaning. In *Collection. The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Vol. 4, F. Crowe and R. Doran (eds.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 232-245.
- Lonergan, B.J. (1996): Time and meaning. In *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964. The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Vol. 6, R. C. Croken, F. Crowe and R. Doran (eds.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 94-121.

- Marrow, A.J. (1969): *The Practical Theorist: The Life and Work of Kurt Lewin*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Marshall, J. (1999): Living life as inquiry. In: *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 12(2): 155-171.
- Marshall, J. (2008): Finding form in writing for action research. In P. Reason and H. Bradbury (eds.) *Handbook of Action Research*. 2nd ed. London: Sage: 682-695.
- Meynell, H. (1999): *Redirecting Philosophy: Reflections on the Nature of Knowledge from Plato to Lonergan*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Raelin, J.A. (2007): Toward an epistemology of practice. In: *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 6: 495-519.
- Revans, R. (1971): *Developing Effective Managers*. London: Longman.
- Schein, E.H. (1969): *Process Consultation: Its Role in Organization Development*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Schein, E.H. (1999): *Process Consultation Revisited: Building the Helping Relationship*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Schein, E.H. (2009a): *Helping*. San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler.
- Schein, E.H. (2009b): Reactions, reflections, rejoinders and a challenge. In: *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 41(1): 141-158.
- Schein, E.H. (2010): *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sherman, F./Torbert, W.R. (2000): *Transforming Social Inquiry: Transforming Social Practice*. Boston: Kluwer.
- Shotter, J. (2007): With what kind of science should action research be contrasted? In: *International Journal of Action Research*, 3(1-2): 665-92.
- Torbert, W. and Associates (2004): *Action Inquiry*. San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler.
- Varela, F.S. and Stear, J. (1999): First person methodology: what, why how? In: *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6(2-3): 1-14.

Acknowledgments

I thank Geryl Hynes and Patrick Riordan for their comments in the initial development of this article and the reviewers and editors of the *International Journal of Action Research* for pushing me to go deeper into my own interiority. Thanks to Geraldine Kiesal who posed the original question at a dinner in Lyon and Marc Bonnet who was the gracious host and created the environment for the discussion.

About the Author

David Coghlan is an Associate Professor at the School of Business, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland and is a Fellow of the College. He is currently on the editorial reviews boards of: *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*,

Action Research, Action Learning: Research and Practice, among others. Recent books include *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* (Sage, 3rd ed. 2010) and *Collaborative Strategic Improvement through Network Action Learning* (Elgar, 2011). He is co-editor of the 4 volume set, *Fundamentals of Organization Development* (Sage, 2010).

Author's address:

School of Business, Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland.

E-mail: dcoghlan@tcd.ie