



Coaching and Mentoring

A Critical Text

by Simon Western





Coaching and Mentoring

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'It is a pleasure to read a book about coaching that goes beyond the rather simplistic prescriptions found in most works of this genre. Far too often, contributors to the coaching literature view their clients in a rather robotic manner, ignoring the complexity and subtlety of their emotional life. In their pursuit of instant solutions, these (presumably) coaching specialists assume a Band-Aid approach to change, not paying attention to the deeper origins of executive dysfunction. Simon Western's contribution is different in that he brings back the uncomfortable complexity inherent to the human condition. By not ignoring the shadow side of human reality, his book very much enriches the coaching literature – and is highly recommended.'

Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries, Clinical Professor of Leadership and Organizational Change, The Raoul de Vitry d'Avaucourt Chaired Professor of Leadership Development

'Simon Western has a rare ability to add new dimensions to existing debates, and help us see matters from unusual angles. In this book he brings his critical perspective to bear with great acuity, focusing his attention on some key themes within the debates on coaching and mentoring. I thoroughly endorse this book.'

Professor Mark Stein, Chair in Leadership and Management, University of Leicester

'This is an unusual and path breaking book. Simon Western explores coaching in its many variations and simultaneously critiques the different discourses that comprise it. His thinking addresses what he calls the "micro practices," and macro perspectives. He inhabits that most unusual role – the scholar-practitioner – that enables him to contend with both theory and practice. As a good scholar he situates coaching historically, and as a practitioner can evaluate various methodologies, such as the cognitive-behavioral, positive-psychology and psychodynamics. I recommend this book highly to those who want to practice coaching and to those who want to understand its meaning for the wider culture.'

Larry Hirschhorn, Principal at CFAR, Professor of Human and Organization development at Fielding Graduate University, Lecturer in Organization Dynamics, University of Pennsylvania, Member, Founder and past President of the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations

'I see a lot of books on Coaching, and this is without doubt the most stimulating, original, thoughtful and well-founded account. When I heard that Simon Western was considering a book on this topic I wondered if even he – author of the excellent *Leadership: A Critical Text* – could bring new light to the topic. He has certainly done so – this is an authoritative, well researched, critical and appreciative account of coaching that has at its heart a profound concern for people, for social life and for the predicaments we face. It will be really helpful for anyone in coaching, for coaches and educators, for students of organization and work. In fact, the book is a substantial contribution to our understanding of contemporary practices of the self, and will be of interest to anyone intrigued with what it is to be social.'

Professor Jonathan Gosling, Professor of Leadership Studies, University of Exeter

'I recommend this book to anyone in the world of coaching who thinks that they occupy a secure niche. If you believe you have a therapeutic model that helps you to heal the wounded self of your clients, or if you use positive thinking to boost their self-esteem, then be ready for a major challenge and some rigorous thinking about your practice and the assumptions that underlie it.'

David Megginson, Emeritus Professor of HRD, Sheffield Business School, UK

Dedication

In memory of my beautiful son Fynn

Fynn, an inspiration to so many, his smile and spirit continue to light our lives. Together we shared the greatest joy and adventures. I miss him terribly. Be at peace Fynn.

In memory of my mother Enid Western

A great friend to me and others. A brilliant mentor and leader in the education sector who changed so many lives, and through her living testimony, contributed to the emancipation of women, creating a tolerant, more generous society.

I am very proud of both Fynn and Mum.

And for my father Terry Western

I thank you for your continued love.

This book has been a 'transitional object'. I located my future in this book, as it became symbolic of hope after facing the despair and grief at the shocking loss of Fynn, then my mother 12 months later. I couldn't write anything for ten months, then I found writing provided a small respite from the grief, a refuge where I became absorbed for periods. Researching, reading, using my imagination and thinking deeply then became a joy, as well as a real struggle and battle of will.

I write briefly about this experience for others who face a deep loss, grief or sadness, which can feel impenetrable, and for coaches and others helping those who face loss or despair. My experience is that the sadness doesn't pass – the loss and emptiness remain raw – but I have discovered that creativity and new life are possible as well. To survive and find emotional and spiritual health is to walk the high-wire between despair and hope, beauty and sadness, creativity and loss, to experience moments of grace whilst bearing the pain. Then alongside the grieving process, hope and love grow in the face of despair. This book is a tribute to my son and mother; they both would have demanded nothing less from me, that I write the very best book I could. I am filled with love and gratitude for their continued inspiration and presence.

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About the Author



Dr Simon Western

Currently: Director of Analytic-Network Coaching Ltd, offering a researched and innovative new coaching process, which aims to transform the way coaching impacts on both individuals and organizations. www.simonwestern.com

Our task is to work in 'good faith' to build the 'good society'.

Theory and People Development: *Academia and Teaching*

Previously: Director of Coaching at Lancaster University Management School and Leading Master in Organizational Consultancy, Tavistock Clinic. Simon has a pedigree of teaching internationally and publishing on leadership and coaching (*Leadership: A Critical Text*, new edition in 2013). His thinking draws on cross-disciplinary research (psychoanalysis, organizational culture, religious studies, environmentalism) and also on his diverse and rich work experience, having worked in a factory, as a general and psychiatric nurse, a clinical manager, family therapist, organizational consultant, academic and coach working in FT100 corporate offices.

He takes a psychosocial, critical and ethical perspective, to develop innovative ideas such as Eco-Leadership, addressing ethical and business concerns in the 'network society'.

Practitioner: Strategic Coach and Consultant

Simon works internationally with C-Suite leaders across diverse organizations. His expertise is to work in depth and breadth, coaching individuals and teams through challenging times and developing strategic interventions across organizations.

Clients include: London Business School, Global OD Team HSBC Bank, CEO family business, leaders in Educational sector and CEO and clinicians in Health sector and Hospice sector.

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I am also grateful to Sage editors Kiren, Kirsty and Ruth for their patience and understanding, and am impressed by the professional and sensitive way in which they do their work.

Credits

Illustrations are original artwork by Maia Kirchkheli.

All photographs taken by author.

Introduction

Coaching – The Merger of the ‘Wounded Self’ and ‘Celebrated Self’

Bridging the ‘wounded self’ and the ‘celebrated self’

The organization and structure of this book

Who is this book for?

What authored the author?

This book aims to be thoughtful yet polemic, taking a critical stance, to look at coaching and mentoring from perspectives that provoke curiosity and that support practitioners and interested parties to scrutinize coaching in depth. It is a book of ideas, clearly aimed at stimulating thinking and dialogue, through situating coaching and mentoring in a broad historical and social context, and drawing on a wide range of theory from beyond coaching.

This book has four core aims:

- 1 To account for how coaching has emerged and what discourses and normative practices underpin and influence contemporary practice.
- 2 To develop a meta-theory of coaching that encourages future development based on a coherent body of knowledge with a sound theoretical base.
- 3 To offer clear ‘frames of thinking’ based on coaching discourses and theory that act as heuristic resources for coaching practitioners and educators.
- 4 To apply an emancipatory, ethical and critical approach to coaching, shifting practice away from a limited technocratic, functional approach and towards a more generative and progressive approach.

Box I.1 Clarification of Terms: Coaching and Mentoring

The differences/similarities of coaching and mentoring are fully explored in Chapter 2. Although their original roots are different, both mentoring and coaching in the modern context selectively draw on a range of the same narratives to describe the activity. However, it seems that coaching and mentoring are essentially similar in nature (Garvey et al., 2009: 27).

Mentoring has a longer tradition than coaching but both activities share many of the same practices, applications and values. In the end it comes down to a choice of terminology and the meanings associated with that terminology. ... Coaching has become the dominant term ... For the future, maybe a new term will emerge that will satisfy all interested parties. (Garvey, 2010: 351–2)

I agree with Garvey and other scholars who make the case that the terms 'coaching' and 'mentoring' are not easily distinguishable, and it is often a matter of choice as to which is used. It is also the case that both practices draw upon very similar values and applications. Therefore, in this book, I will use the term coaching to embrace the multiple and overlapping practices of coaching and mentoring, as coaching has become the dominant term, and maybe it is becoming the dominant practice. Mentoring retains a special place in relation to unpaid approaches to 'helping' that focus on social issues, and have mutual benefits for both mentee and mentor.

Mentoring will be named separately when a distinction is necessary. 'Coachee' will refer to the recipient of coaching and the term 'client' will refer to an organization or their representative sponsoring the coaching work.

Coaching is a growing phenomenon; according to the International Coach Federation (ICF) its membership has soared from about 1,500 in 1999 to 16,000 members as of 2011.

The coaching market is worth around \$1 billion worldwide, a number that Harvard Business School expects will double in the next 2 years. (Joo, 2005: 465)

Coaching has arrived, and appears to be stabilizing itself after a period of emergence that was recently described as 'The Wild West of Coaching' (Sherman and Freas, 2004), highlighting the unregulated, diverse and hybrid nature of the practice. There is a huge investment in coaching, and the capital being invested goes beyond financial; it is social capital as well. Individuals, businesses, public and not-for-profit organizations and social enterprises are

all investing in coaching and mentoring to improve either personal and/or organizational success.

Coaching is predominantly a Westernized phenomenon, and therefore this book traces its emergence through Western culture. Whilst in a globalized world it travels quickly, the dominant culture that coaching arose from is Western, individualized, democratic-capitalism. One-on-one coaching support cannot be understood without tracing its evolution from this culture. How other cultures take up coaching, shape it locally and influence it globally will be for a future book.

To help the reader situate coaching in a broader context from the outset, I will briefly offer a short narrative of how coaching has emerged from the social changes in the twentieth century and currently sits between the impact of therapeutic culture and the human potential movement. This will help situate coaching, and in Part II the book will explore in more depth a genealogy of coaching.

Bridging the ‘Wounded Self’ and the ‘Celebrated Self’

Coaching is positioned between two contemporary social dimensions – the wounded self and the celebrated self.

The ‘wounded self’

The ‘wounded self’ refers to a self that is damaged, fragmented or emotionally hurt and is the domain of psychotherapists and psychologists. Psychotherapists look for the ‘wounded self’ – this is their expertise, their business – in order to offer therapeutic intervention (the talking cure) and reparation. Therapy was created to help the ‘wounded self’; as Freud’s dictum says, ‘Psychoanalysis turns neurosis into ordinary unhappiness’ (Freud and Breuer, 1895/2004). Some argue that the therapist’s gaze produces a universal ‘wounded self’ that has permeated society. Therapeutic culture creates a socialized way of interpreting ourselves – no longer do we believe it to be fate, God or nature that shapes us, but we believe that we are shaped by life’s events, which are often interpreted as emotional traumas, or at least they evoke psychological responses and patterns which are rarely problem free: for example, *‘My Mother was really caring but I was smothered and find it hard to be independent’*, *‘My last relationship was good; however, it made me realize how easily I lose myself – I must take more care of my own needs in future.’* The therapeutic milieu is entangled with the language of the ‘wounded self’

that needs healing. To be whole is to face the past, repair and reintegrate ourselves, but also to continually deal with ongoing life 'issues' of work, identity and relationships, which continually wound us and shape us. Therapeutic intervention is no longer a one-off project for those who 'break down' or need specific intervention by a Psy expert; it has colonized society and we are not '*condemned to be free*' as Sartre says, but we are condemned to '*work on ourselves*' over a life-time process of overcoming emotional issues and reparation.

The contemporary self is constantly in need of therapeutic intervention whether it is from a professional therapist or counsellor, a source of self-help or through self-reflection. We are constantly reminded of our task to work on ourselves, whether through advertising telling us to consume, to make ourselves younger, slimmer, fitter, healthier, happier and more desirable and attractive, or through the TV talk shows and multimedia, where we are constantly confronted with the injunction to self-improve. From Oprah to the problem pages of magazines, from the local yoga class to the Buddhist meditation, the message is clear – 'work on yourself' – and with it a subtext: you have a wounded self that needs repairing and improving. The world calls on us to 'tell all and tell often' (Foucault, 1978). The contemporary 'therapeutic' confessional (see Chapter 6) is a place to disclose and reflect upon our emotionally wounded selves.

Critical theorists claim that therapy culture creates a narcissistic, selfish and introspective society, focusing on 'I' instead of 'we'. Rather than liberating individuals from their concerns, they claim it entraps them in an increasingly widening array of 'ills' (Lasch, 1979).

The 'wounded self' is supported by evidence that shows a huge increase in diagnostic criteria of emotional ills, e.g. ADHD, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, autistic syndromes, depression and treatments of anxiety and other psychic and 'emotional' ills. The pharmaceutical and therapy industries commercially profit from these increases, and governments are shown to be supporting these trends. The UK government in 2009 invested £173 million to train and employ 10,000 cognitive behavioural therapists (CBTs) to intervene in depressive and anxiety disorders (James, 2009).

Therapy has gone beyond treating the ill in four ways:

- 1 The definition of 'illness' has become much broader with new 'illnesses' being recognized such as posttraumatic stress disorder, attention deficit disorder, multiple personality disorder – all syndromes rather than illnesses and with them huge rises in diagnostic rates have taken place.
- 2 Other areas of 'ordinary' life – one's self-esteem, relationships, bringing up children, grief and loss – all became potential areas of concern and therefore areas accessible to therapeutic intervention.

- 3 Recognized ‘illnesses’ such as depression found a much wider constituency. What in the past was understood to be misery or melancholy became a treatable illness called depression. The pharmaceutical industry found a mass market for treatments such as Prozac, thereby encouraging this trend. In Britain depression accounted for 1 per cent of the population born in the First World War, 5 per cent in the Second World War and jumped to 10–15 per cent in the 1960s. Diagnosis is a very subjective matter, that is, social class, gender and ethnicity all impact on diagnostic outcomes.
- 4 Therapy culture entered healthy social arenas and became ‘a way of thinking and being’ rather than a way of ‘curing psychic or emotional disorder’, e.g. coaching (see Bellah et al., 1996; Furedi, 2003).

In the past decade or so, counsellors have found their way into every school and GP practice, and the social mantra is: *If you have a problem it’s good to talk; if you don’t talk, you have a problem.*

Until recently a ‘stiff upper lip’, courage and resilience in the face of struggle was socially valued, whereas today emoting and confessing our wounded selves becomes socially approved:

A therapeutic culture has become pervasive. It is apparent in the emotional ‘esteem’ and ‘support’; displays of emotional incontinence and claims of victimhood are guaranteed social approval. (Fitzpatrick, 2000: 64)

Heelas (1996: 146) writes that the torrent of advice from the self-help industry ‘generates a climate of discontent’ while Beradi (2009) claims that the ‘happiness imperative’ (that we should all seek to be happy) also creates this sense of failure, as the bombardment of advertising, TV and films and social demands that we should strive to be happy leaves us feeling even more wounded, as it is impossible to live up to the illusive demand and media images of happiness and success. We are constantly being asked and internalizing the questions of the subjective self: ‘Am I happy?’, ‘Am I depressed?’, ‘Am I stressed?’, ‘Is my body perfect?’, ‘Is my sex life adequate?’

Coaching and the ‘wounded self’

Emerging from career counselling and employee assistant programmes, early coaching in the workplace followed counselling and would focus on the ‘wounded self’ – the employee who was broken, stressed and under-performing. De Haan points out how the coaching trend has shifted:

... from remedial to developmental. The negative status and stigma that attached to managers who needed a coach for their professional development appears to have been replaced by a positive status,

arising from the fact that a manager is important enough to the organization to merit the investment in coaching. (2008: 27)

Coaching has travelled a long way and it now goes beyond the healing of a 'wounded self', offering diverse positive and action-orientated interventions. However, in spite of positive psychology, solution-focused and other goal-focused approaches to coaching, the reality of what actually happens in the coaching room still resonates in part with the 'wounded self'. The solution-focused approach, by refusing to talk about problems, uses the signifier 'solution' as a substitute for the word 'problem', thereby drawing more attention to the unspeakable word. In the English TV comedy *Fawlty Towers*, John Cleese in his restaurant receives German guests and tells his staff, 'Don't mention the war!' and of course because it's unmentionable his Freudian slips about war are in every sentence he speaks.

People come to Life-coaching to overcome something they perceive is wrong in their lives and they believe things can be better. Life coaches on TV talk shows work as 'evangelists for the talking cure' (Cobb, 2005: 254). In executive coaching, much of the work may be geared to performance and organizational aims, but coaches are very often confronted with a 'wounded' part of the executive who reveals a troubled aspect of the self that they wish to resolve. Confident and experienced coaches allow all parts to surface, including the wounded self; the difference in coaching is that the coach is not actively looking for it, nor do they regress the coachee when the wounded self is disclosed, as a therapist might. The traditional psychotherapy trademarks of dependency, regression and reparation are replaced by coaching work that encourages autonomy and proactive engagement over deep insight as a way to deal with the wounded self.

Coaches also have a different starting point from therapists, and to explain this we turn to a counter-narrative that arose during the 1960s and helps explain the rise of coaching.

The 'celebrated self'

Why drag this corpse of your memory? ... it is better to live ever in a new day. (Emerson, 1841: 137)

The 'celebrated self' reflects a more positive view of the individual that blossomed in the post-1960s milieu, where the 'turn to subjectivity' (Woodhead, 2004), the rise of a 'new individualism' and the focus on the interior life meant that individual identity became something to be celebrated. Inspired by Emerson, the transcendentalists and the Beat generation, the human potential

movement of Carl Rogers, Maslow and others influenced the celebrated self to come to the fore, highlighting an innate human desire to self-actualize. This took therapy into popular culture and beyond the wounded self, and the 'therapeutic care of the soul' became placed into the hands of the Psy professions. Society became permeated with messages to celebrate the self:

Trust your feelings, have faith in yourself, follow your bliss, do your own thing, listen to your inner child, do what feels right, be true to yourself. These messages are offered as formulas for salvation. ... Therapeutic values that are worthy of organizing one's life around, such as self-esteem, self-fulfilment, self-realisation and self-expression have come to be accepted as axiomatic, occupying the normative heights once controlled by such counter values as self-discipline, self-control and self-denial. (Cobb, 2005; 252)

Therapeutic culture can produce a wounded self as described but an alternative and in my view complementary position, rather than polar opposite, is how it supports and produces a self-reflective society, with growing emotional articulation of how we feel and how we relate to each other. Anthony Giddens says that as the modern self is more insecure and alienated, therapists are necessary and useful (Giddens, 1991):

This is where therapeutic cultures can be helpful, according to Giddens, since they provide both solace and resources for self-formation. Solace is needed in his view, because the modern self is much more insecure. ... Therapeutic cultures, in his view, do not destroy the self, and its relationships, but make them. (Swan, 2006: 4)

Nikolas Rose also observes how therapy can help individuals' well-being:

... the psychotherapies of normality, which promulgate new ways of planning life and approaching predicaments, and disseminate new procedures for understanding oneself and acting upon oneself to overcome dissatisfactions, realize one's potential, to gain happiness and achieve autonomy. (Rose, 1999: 89–90)

The celebrated self offers a hopeful optimization of the self, the potential to grow and to improve our happiness and well-being. Eva Moscovitz (2001) claimed that therapy was a new religion and cited that in the 1990s Americans spent \$69 billion a year managing their feelings and attending to their emotional health. To 'Celebrate the Self' was the new imperative.

In recent times, new spirituality, alternative healing and New Ageism, infused with reinterpreted Eastern and ancient traditions, have moved from the margins to become mainstream ways for individuals to seek solace,

reflection and intervention in order to find their authentic selves, and to discover new ways to live. They discover how to celebrate themselves, in each moment.

New Age: spirituality and the happiness imperative

To its (capitalism's) promise that anyone can be a millionaire, has recently been added the promise that anyone can be a celebrity. (Foley, 2010: 41)

The New Age movement is now big business in both financial and social terms. At the core of New Ageism is the 'celebrated self'. Approaches include 'new spirituality' that has emerged from a post-religious understanding of spirituality. New Ageism can be found in abundance in management texts on airport bookshelves. From the New Age perspective the inner self is a place of authenticity, a sacred space within us. There exists a myriad of techniques and interventions to help individuals discover and celebrate their true inner-selves: meditation, yoga, chanting, Eastern philosophy, Buddhist teachings, crystals, tarot cards, NLP, Reiki – the list goes on. The Life-coach, reiki master and NLP coach, informed by the New Age ethos, coach from the belief that each person has the truth within them, and the coaching task is to help them access it. Coaching, and Life-coaching in particular, have encompassed much of New Age philosophy that has become mainstream. Paul Heelas describes the New Age community as 'expressivists':

Expressivists live their lives in terms of what they take to be a much richer and authenticated account of what it is to be human. They are intent on discovering and cultivating their 'true' nature, delving in to experience the wealth of life itself. (Heelas, 1996: 156)

Oprah Winfrey is probably the best advocate of the 'celebrated self' through her embracing, and promotion to a world audience, of Life-coaching, self-help, personal growth, the happiness movement and new spirituality, and her phenomenal success reaches millions. In 2008 Oprah Winfrey invited Eckhart Tolle, a bestselling New Age author – *The Power of Now* (1999) and *A New Earth* (2005) – to co-host a series of ten 'webinars' which were downloaded by 38 million people (Bright, 2009: 17). Tolle talks like a contemporary Buddhist but without the religious baggage – the personal narrative that sells his story claims he became enlightened like the Buddha, but whereas Buddha sat under the Bhodi Tree to become 'the awakened one', Tolle found a contemporary place to become awakened; he sat on a park bench for two

years in a London park. Tolle is a New Age phenomenon; the message is about how to live in the present and how to live calmly in the face of modernity's distress – Tolle simply says 'let go'. Adam Bright writes of Tolle:

He breathes in. He breathes out. He waits. Something comes, and he leans over the desk to write the words that will form the core of his teaching: 'you are not your mind'. (2009: 16)

Tolle borrows from nearly every tradition (spiritual and religious) but does not belong to any of them. (This institutional nimbleness helps him win followings in unexpected communities; I'm told he's especially popular with the MBA crowd). (2009: 11)

In the workplace Stephen Covey (1990) became a best-selling author, cleverly bridging the gap between self-help, new spirituality and managerialism.

The 'celebrated self' is a phenomenon of Western culture – from post-structuralism to New Ageism – and is encouraged by Western ideologies of individualism, consumerism and choice. The post-structuralists, particularly feminists and queer theorists, don't strictly celebrate the self, but they do deconstruct the limitations of the self. They argue that binary difference like gender is as much socially constructed as biological, and they theorize and practise diverse ways in which we can choose, individually and collectively, to breach normative boundaries of sexuality and gender (Butler, 2004). In contemporary society we face the imperative to discover and then celebrate our true selves; this is our only refuge in an uncertain world.

Coaching: the merger of the 'wounded self' and 'celebrated self'

Therapy is too good to be limited to the sick. (Furedi, 2003)

As the *celebrated self* became more prominent, and positive psychology and the happiness industry took off (Seligman, 2002), a new profession was required to administer to the 'celebrated self', one that was not restricted to the therapeutic or pharmacological treatment of the 'wounded self'. Coaching carried with it some of the therapeutic experience and techniques that enabled the coaches to work on the 'wounded self', but real success came when coaching was reinvented to focus on the 'celebrated self'. This made coaching more marketable and more accessible. Coaching meant that you could find resources to cope without having to openly acknowledge your inner demons.

The executive coach was a new innovation in the workplace. Managers and leaders wanted and needed help to survive the new demands of an increasingly stressful workplace ('wounded self') and to try to align and

rediscover their passion and their authentic selves at work (their 'celebrated self'). A New Expert was required for the lost flock at work.

In the late twentieth century the workplace became more globalized, digitalized and also more alienating. Employees increasingly used their subjectivity, identities and emotions to take on multiple roles and face new complexities, but the workplace culture was no place for the rhetoric of dysfunction or failure. To achieve at work is to be successful, confident, an individual with dynamic energy and a lot of agency. The 'wounded self' was to be kept at home or at least minimized or hidden.

Coaching filled the gap – promising to enhance individual performance in both life and at work – achieving a bridge between the 'wounded' and 'celebrated' self. Popular culture (for example, Oprah Winfrey) and therapy culture produce two selves: a celebrated self to be nurtured and with a culture of entitlement, and a wounded self that constantly needs reparation. Coaching works between these two poles, and depending on how it is delivered and the demand for it, will lean towards one or the other.

It markets and brands itself by dealing with the 'celebrated-self', selling change, transformation, self-discovery, higher productivity, improved performance in work role and in life more generally. Short-term and transformational coaching clearly is a tempting offer that promises to help the individual 'celebrate the self' and, by doing so, create a cycle of success.

On the other hand, within the 'imperative for happiness' lies unspoken and hidden parts of the wounded self that appear in the coaching sessions. Whilst coaching markets itself and works well on the celebrated self, it often works at the same time with the wounded self too offering solace to the alienated, offering a post-modern confessional to the troubled soul. Coaching is a hybrid expertise that has adapted brilliantly to the complex and competing demands of contemporary society.

My experience of coaching (having worked in many other therapeutic and consultancy roles) is that it can be a hugely liberating space in which to work, where in-depth work with coachees can be achieved, alongside strategic delivery of their personal and organizational goals. For me this creates a unique space where Freud's reality principle and the social world meet 'maternal containment' and our internal lives (see the 'P-M-P' coaching process, Chapter 13). Coaching is a vital and dynamic space that enables creativity to emerge, whereas other 'helping relationships' are often saddled with more restrictive cultures (therapy, for example, is weighed down by the rhetoric of pathology, and psychology entranced by empiricism, technique and measurement; and the institutions that oversee psychotherapy are protectionist and encourage risk-averse thinking rather than being generative in their outlook).

Coaching opens up a new space to work, one that is full of potential, a 'post-modern confessional' (see Chapter 6) and a place of solace in a bewildering social environment, and at the same time an engaged space where dynamic change and new strategic thinking can occur.

Coaching, however, lacks a robust theoretical base, and here we have a crisis emerging. The tendency in coaching seems to be to mimic the institutions around it, rather than encouraging serious scholarship and theorizing about coaching itself that would lead to innovative research, education and practice. This book aims to build on existing scholarship in coaching and draw on wider social science resources to offer a refreshing critique of coaching theory and practice that delivers new insights leading to further developments. Examining the macro-social influences and the micro-practices of coaching, the book finds them inextricably linked, yet the macro-social influences are in large ignored.

There are worrying moves in 'second wave' coaching that are attempting to homogenize and control practice, taking it towards professionalization and an instrumentalized practice, where the scientific rationalism that dominates HR departments and managerial training seeps into coaching and colonizes it. Coaching then changes from an evolving and exciting new developmental practice that works between human experience and social systems (organizational change), to a practice that works on human behaviour drawing on psychology/therapy approaches. This text opens a discussion on what informs coaching practice, attempting to get coaching practitioners, academics and trainers to develop a critical reflective stance to question the norms and assumptions of coaching.

To better understand coaching and mentoring, however, we should first take a retrospective look at helping relationships, in order to give a longitudinal perspective, to observe where continuity and tradition can teach us, and to use the past as a theoretical resource to shine a new light on contemporary coaching practice. The counterpoint of the past runs unacknowledged alongside the melody of the present, and if looked at with a critical eye, it illuminates practice in fascinating ways. The fetish of the new often obscures important lessons and links from the past, and this is also true of coaching (Burrell, 1997; Case and Gosling, 2010).

This macro overview of coaching and mentoring, addressing the historical, social and organizational contexts in which coaching has emerged and thrives, is complemented by an 'in-depth' view of micro-practices analysing the broad approaches to coaching. These macro and micro perspectives are important in order to gain a clearer picture of where coaching is today and in which direction coaching and mentoring are heading. Current literature leans towards the micro-practices of coaching/mentoring, with coaching

texts focusing on how to coach. The theory of coaching mimics this position, and texts quickly turn to psychotherapy theory as surrogate coaching theory (Peltier, 2001; Cox et al., 2010). Whilst acknowledging the importance and influences of psychotherapy (see Chapter 7) this book pushes for a wider theoretical base, which includes the other three discourses that inform coaching practice and also the meta-social influences that require other theoretical resources. The aim is to develop a coaching meta-theory that doesn't try to integrate all theory, but offers both a coherent theoretical framework that oversees coaching, and a standpoint from which coaching practice and theory can critique itself.

Coaching/mentoring can be an emancipatory force, a practice to help individuals achieve a fuller sense of self and become more creative and autonomous, alongside a collective endeavour to improve workplaces and society in general.

Below is an outline of the organizational structure of the book that takes you through this journey, beginning with the present state of play, to then reveal historical and social influences, before outlining the underpinning assumptions and discourses that permeate coaching practice, and then moving on to developing a meta-theory of coaching that can be used by practitioners and theorists to inform their practice and develop new research and practice. Finally it looks at coaching from an educational and development perspective and highlights key pedagogical principles.

The Organization and Structure of this Book

Part I Scoping the field with a critical lens

Part I offers a critical overview of coaching and mentoring. Chapter 1, *A Critical Theory Approach to Coaching*, describes the four critical lenses – looking awry, depth analysis, network analysis and emancipation. These frames are important to critique the literature and also to apply to coaching practice. Chapter 2, *Scoping the Field*, examines the terms, scrutinizing practice and rhetoric to reveal how diverse coaching approaches connect and where they do not. It then deconstructs and challenges some of the normative assumptions of coaching.

Part II From friendship to coaching

Part II addresses the context from which coaching and mentoring emerged. To better understand contemporary practice it is important to see it in the

light of past helping relationships. The reader is taken on a journey through three historical periods – *Pre-modernity* (Chapter 3), *Modernity* (Chapter 4) and *Post-modernity* (Chapter 5). Each historical period is examined from three viewing points – friendship, the Soul Healer and the work realm – tracing how coaching has emerged as a distinct ‘new’ and hybrid practice, yet with continuity throughout the past. This retrospective examination sheds new light on contemporary practice.

Part III The dominant discourses of coaching

Part III offers a description of four core discourses that underpin coaching and mentoring. The introduction sets out a table with the four discourses and clarifies *what is discourse*, and the *critical discourse analysis* used to reveal the four coaching discourses. Chapter 6, *The Soul Guide Discourse*, describes how coaching works as a ‘mirror to the soul’. The coach focuses on the inner self and the human spirit, allowing the coachee to discover their desire. This also creates a contemporary confessional space where the coachee shares their fears and anxieties; the coach focuses on human experience. Chapter 7, *The Psy Expert Discourse*, reveals how coaches work as ‘technicians of the psyche’ drawing on established Psy professional expertise (in psychotherapy, psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis). The focus is to modify behaviour and cognition with psychological tools and techniques; the coach focuses on personal performance.

Chapter 8, *The Managerial Discourse*, describes how coaches are working in the discourse of managerialism. The managers’ claim to expertise is their ability to deliver efficiency and productivity (MacIntyre, 1985). Coaches absorb the Managerial Discourse, and the coach focuses on supporting the executive to take up their role more effectively to improve personal and organizational output; the coach focuses on productivity. Chapter 9, *The Network Coach Discourse*, takes coaching beyond individual psychology, soul-work or performance and situates the individual in the networks of work and society. This radically repositions coaching work as the coachee is seen as an ‘actor in a network of other actors’ and the Network Coach’s task is to help the coachee find nodal points of change, to realize the interdependencies, to form collaborations and make connections to influence networks of activity; the coach focuses on connectivity. The Network Coach is the newest discourse emerging in coaching, and has a vital role in shifting coaching from personal and operational interventions towards strategic thinking that also takes an ethical stance. Chapter 10, *Discourse Mapping*, describes how coaching works not only within the discourses but also between and across them. The coaching discourses are not discrete – they

blur and coaches often draw on more than one discourse in their work. Sometimes they are complementary, at other times tensions arise. These dynamics are explored in Chapter 10.

Part IV The future of coaching

Part IV looks to the future of coaching, arguing that there is a need to develop a coherent coaching theory and improve education. Chapter 11, *Developing Coaching Theory*, defines what theory and meta-theory is, looking beyond theory as a scientifically 'predictive' practice, and also to how metaphor and imagination can develop explanatory theory. This sets the scene for Chapter 12, *Creating a New Coaching Meta-theory*. It identifies how coaching needs to be theorized from two perspectives, firstly as micro-practice – the activity and techniques used between two people – and then as a meta-theory which draws upon the four discourses to offer a theoretical explanation of coaching practice. The second perspective is the macro-social, the collective, institutional, formal, informal and social aspects that influence coaching. The macro-social is ignored in most coaching texts, yet needs to be included if a coaching meta-theory is to fully articulate how coaching works and how it changes. The macro and the micro are not separate but are in a constant dynamic, influencing each other, and both need accounting for.

Finally Chapter 13, *Coaching Formation*, describes pedagogy and educational approaches that deliver training and development aligned to the four discourses, and urges the coaching fraternity to focus on imaginative, creative and generative education, training and development, rather than over-focus on trying to raise coaching quality through 'control mechanisms' such as accreditation and standardization. Setting out a coaching process and pedagogical guidelines for coach trainers, this chapter looks to a bright future of coaching and mentoring.

Who is this Book for?

Coaching/mentoring practitioners

For all who coach or mentor both formally and informally, this book will provide a rich source of ideas and reflection. It offers coherent and ordered ways to think about the underlying assumptions that inform a coaching practice, and offers alternative narratives. Coaches should be better prepared to strategically plan their coaching sessions, to contract more clearly, to see

where their developmental needs are, and to work with more freedom in the knowledge that they are working within a broad framework of coaching that isn't limited to any singular approach or technique.

Purchasers and providers of coaching

- Individuals
- Managers and leaders
- HR professionals
- Consultants
- Business schools
- Management and leadership development, and organizational development teams

Buying and delivering coaching/mentoring is a big commitment and this book will provide an informed view of how and when coaching/mentoring can be useful, taking a more systemic and organizational development approach to understanding its impact on individuals and organizations. There can be much confusion as to what can be expected from a coach, as there is such variety and what is delivered is not always what is 'written on the tin'. Coaches themselves often lack coherence, and this book sets out clear frameworks of the discourses that underpin coaching that will aid both providers and purchasers to make sense of the diverse coaching market.

Educators, academics and trainers

The book offers a broad view of how coaching and mentoring have adapted to the contemporary world of work, and how identity, subjectivity and therapy culture are engaged in the workplace through coaching as a new and hybrid 'talking cure'. Coach educators and trainers will benefit from this book, as it reveals underlying principles and discourses they work from at intellectual and practical levels. Chapter 13 sets out eight coaching pedagogical principles, and offers some education ideas for coaches to develop unusual skill sets such as 'associative intelligence'.

Academics and post-graduate students studying management, leadership, HR and organizational studies will also find this text useful as it positions coaching in the wider field of organizational development. Social scientists, psychologists and those studying psychotherapy will also see the

relations and dynamics between coaching and therapy. Many coaching texts refer to psychotherapeutic influences and in this book I claim that therapy can learn from some of the innovative and hybrid developments in the coaching field.

What Authored the Author?

All writing has a biographical element as does all coaching; we bring ourselves to the work whether this is explicit or not. Coaching is very much about the use of the self – the coach may envisage the self as an instrument, a tool, an emotional container, an intervention, a thinking partner, a sounding board, or other metaphors may come to mind. Using the self as the main currency for the work means that the coach should a) know themselves, b) be clear what their role entails, c) have an understanding of what underpins their coaching work, i.e. to know the discourses, the underpinning theories and assumptions that inform what they do (these discourses remain largely hidden unless we take a critical stance to reveal them). Explicitly naming some of the influences that impacted on me, and therefore speak through this book, will give the reader a clearer viewpoint from which to understand and critique my writing and thinking. For coaches one of the key tasks is for them to be reflective about the influences that speak through their work, as this gives them an opportunity to draw on these appropriately rather than be condemned to enact them without thought, which leads to inappropriate coaching interventions.

This book is written from three perspectives; firstly from a very broad personal experience of the workplace; secondly from a wide theoretical perspective, drawing on psychoanalysis, critical organizational theory, theology, political and philosophical theory and the social sciences (I also have led, and teach internationally on, master's programmes in leadership, consultancy and coaching, and write on these subjects); thirdly it comes from my personal experience of a lifetime spent in helping relationships.

Personal work narrative

I have been privileged in my life to have shared engagements with others in a very diverse career that has taken me into the depths of people's lives and reached across many contexts. My working life has been, and continues to be, full of 'privileged conversations'. I currently work in various manifestations – an executive coach to board level leaders and to leadership teams. My expertise is in leadership and strategic coaching and I am invited to

consult on organizational dynamics offering experiential learning events, seminars and strategic interventions.

Previously I have worked in a factory, leaving school with few qualifications, then trained as a general nurse with the physically sick and dying, and then as a psychiatric nurse with 'the mad' psychotic and schizophrenic patients in a Victorian asylum. I then worked in a therapeutic community with young people as a clinical manager and group therapist, before training as a family therapist studying systems theory and leading a community clinical team in Liverpool for ten years, working with suicidal and 'disturbed' young people and their families (who were also suffering economic and social deprivation).

This journey of working 'clinically' with the body, the mind, the individual, the small group and family, immersed me in human psychology and human relationships and it confronted me head on with the existential questions we all face about life and death, sanity and madness. It was part of my 'coaching formation' and when I work with clients and coachees, I bring this experience with me. I became intrigued by the connections that link the individual psyche and emotions to the family or team, and later how individuals, teams and families are affected by institutions, power and culture. My interests moved to influencing systemic change through studying the unconscious dynamics in organizational life. Rational explanations of the workplace did not fully explain the dynamics I had witnessed in the factory, the asylum or the hospital, and how much resistance occurred to changes that would clearly help both the client groups and staff. I immersed myself in psychoanalysis, studying at the Tavistock Clinic, and later leading their MA in Organizational Consultancy drawing on psychoanalytic theory. I took this work to Lancaster University Management School to research for a PhD in leadership. At Lancaster I was privileged to learn and work with internationally renowned scholars, where my study of organizations took on a critical perspective, drawing on Foucault, post-Marxist and post-structural theory. It opened up a new theoretical world for me, and also gave me an opportunity to work internationally with managers and leaders in the corporate sector. I worked closely with Professor Jonathan Gosling in the Strategic Leaders Unit, where we established a creative partnership and launched psychoanalytic and systems-informed leadership development interventions in global companies, which drew on observation and peer coaching (see www.lead2lead.com).

Later I became Director of Coaching at Lancaster University, setting up their post-graduate coaching programme which enabled me to reflect on my coaching work and what the meaning of coaching was. It was this process that led to this book.

My current work portfolio takes me to a variety of organizations that provide me with a cross-fertilization of experience and ethnographic information, as part of the role of coach is to observe and 'associate' (in a psychoanalytic way) to the organizational cultures in which they work. I work in internationally renowned university business schools, working with their senior teams; a multi-national bank, working with their global OD team; a small high-tech firm on the west coast of Ireland; the further education and the schools sectors; the NHS, working with CEOs and also with clinicians in a fertility clinic; and in the voluntary sector, where I have worked in Sudan with the Red Cross, and recently in a hospice. Working across domains, in diverse roles, is fascinating, and is the fuel for my academic writing and theorizing, which in circular feedback loops informs my practice. As Jacques-Alain Miller explains: 'Theory was necessary in order to institute the practice, and then, retroactively, the practice modified the theory' (Miller, 2011).

I coach individuals drawing on my psychotherapeutic past; drawing on psychoanalysis and systems theory from family therapy; critical theory understanding of organizational dynamics; and my understanding and observations of leadership and organizational development. These influences will become apparent as the reader engages with this text. What will be observed is the critical ambiguity in the writing as I underwent therapy at different times in my life, yet I am highly critical of the pathologizing stance within it and how it can produce a victim-type subject. I am fully engaged in psychoanalytic theory and practice, yet sceptical regarding many contemporary psychoanalytic institutions who undermine the emancipatory and political applications, focusing only on the clinical and becoming cult-like in their approach shunning learning from other traditions, and in doing so failing to contribute to an important dialogue. This critical awareness is often counter-intuitive to coaches who are often trained and caught in coaching discourses that encourage them to accept ideological propositions without questioning them, seeing them as simply 'good' or normative. For example, these assumptions were recently sent to me by a solution-focused coach:

- 1 People do not need repair
- 2 Change is inevitable
- 3 Every behaviour has a positive intention behind
- 4 People make the best decisions they are able to make at a time
- 5 People have all the resources to achieve their goals

As can be seen, the positive rhetoric is underpinned by the 'naïve individualistic narcissism' that pervades much of popular Western culture (Lasch, 1979). This emerges from the human potential movement whereby people are always seen in a positive light, the happiness imperative is applied, and all answers lie within the individual. This is a very tempting and seductive ideology!

My background helps me frame questions from diverse perspectives, many of which I have firsthand experience of. My first master's was in person-centred counselling and I taught a diploma of non-directive counselling for three years, before migrating to psychoanalysis. Freud taught us that within us there is ambiguity – our unconscious minds are in tension with our conscious awareness:

The ego is not master in its own house. (Freud, 1917)

The positivist coaching ideology that says we can achieve anything we want avoids the reality principle – that the external world may not enable an individual to achieve their desires and goals, as it depends on social and structural power and economic distribution, alongside other factors such as mental, physical and emotional health for example. Serious scholarship of coaching, and advanced coaching practitioners, need to critique practice and more importantly the ideas behind the practice in order to develop the field and a) understand how coaching works, b) explain why coaching is popular and successful, and c) develop theory, research and innovative coaching education.

We are all authored by our experiences, as individuals and collectively, through the cultures and contexts that shape us. Coaches are shaped by their personal and collective experiences in coaching and beyond, and through the coaching narratives and discourses that inform their thinking and practice. Coaches reading this book will hopefully use it both as a thought-provoking text, and also as a mirror to their experience and coaching practice, reading with a curiosity and openness that enable them to reflect on their ideas, thinking and practice, and also to let the text read them.¹

¹As the text is read, the readers emotions and thoughts will be triggered, and each reader will have a unique and personal response. Allowing the text to read the reader, means to allow these responses to be reflected upon, not only from an intellectual position, but from a personal one also; 'Why did I react strongly to that? What does it say about me or about my beliefs?'

Part I

Scoping the Field with a Critical Lens

1

A Critical Theory Approach to Coaching

Introduction

Why coaching and why now?

Four critical frames to analyse coaching

Frames summary

Conclusion

Suggested reading

Introduction

Have you heard the good news about coaching and mentoring?

‘Mentoring empowered me: I gained confidence and a promotion!’

‘I can’t thank my coach enough; coaching transformed my leadership style, and I have become a better husband and father.’

‘Since I started coaching I am much more focused; my team is working more collaboratively, and we over-achieved last quarter’s targets.’

The coaching gospel has been a marketer’s dream and coaching success can be found everywhere – popular magazines, websites, books, journals and through narrative accounts. We hear less about the challenges and limitations, as coaching has focused very successfully on spreading the ‘good news’ – that it changes lives and improves work performance.

Coaching is an exciting new addition to the myriad of ‘helping professions’ and it offers a vibrant and energizing new social space for reflection that claims to lead to change and action. This effervescent and infectious approach has helped coaching grow to become a multimillion dollar business.

Coaching emanates from a number of sources, from psychotherapy to counselling, from positive psychology to ‘new spirituality’, from sports coaching to developmental theory, and finally, from management and

consultancy theory and practice. Initially there was a strong resistance in the coaching field to the link with psychotherapy at a time when coaching was trying to differentiate and define itself. Although the theory and practice of coaching clearly drew on psychotherapy, it needed to be seen as separate. Coaching is now emerging into a separate practice, yet its debts to psychotherapy are deep and tenacious. What is interesting now is the shift back towards psychotherapy, particularly in reference to theory (see Chapters 11 and 12). There is currently a 'second wave' of coaching taking place, where the moves towards accreditation and professionalization demand theory and professional standards, leading the experts in the field to turn heavily to psychology and psychotherapy. Coaching approaches and theories, such as cognitive behavioural, NLP, solution-focused, non-directive approaches and psychodynamic approaches are amongst a myriad of therapeutic influences that are abundantly found, explicitly or implicitly, in the practice of coaching. Coaching/mentoring reviewed from an ethnographer's stance is clearly a formulation of Freud's 'talking cure' in the sense that *talking* is the modus operandi of the coach, and its dominant working method is the conversational and confidential dyad, replicating the therapeutic pairing.

Coaching however is not bound by the 'old', but manifests itself in an exciting new hybrid form that is both plural and diverse. But the contemporary danger is that coaching is becoming colonized by the theories and professional codes of psychology, psychotherapy and managerialism, as it attempts to become a 'legitimate' professional activity. Coaching opens up a new space, and it is this new space that can lead to important personal and workplace development. Coaching not only offers a new expert 'helping relationship' in life experiences and the workplace, it also has the potential to bring new ideas, theories and practices to associated experts in other fields of human relations. Coaching already seems to be influencing counselling as well as being influenced by it. Linda Aspey, Chair, BACP Coaching writes:

Understanding transference, engaging in supervision and working with loss are no longer solely the domain of therapists – many non-therapist coaches are highly trained and skilled in these areas too. And many therapists are working with issues that were once the domain of coaches, using tools and models of motivation, change, leadership and performance that were once not so dominant in our therapeutic work. We are learning from each other. (Aspey, 2011)

This chapter will review coaching in its wider social, historical, economical and political context.