Going with the Flow
Teaching as Being, not Technique

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ABSTRACT
This is a précis of a completed, but unpublished monograph. These papers explore the notion of Teaching as Being and contrast it with the “doing” of teaching and teaching technique. Teaching as Being focuses attention on the experience of teachers and students, highlighting that experience is inextricably linked to learning. As the quality of the experience varies more or less positively so does learning. What is learned and the kind of learning that takes place are deeper and more transformative than might be the case in a more conventional approach. Suggestions for increasing being and flow in the classroom are provided, and caveats, considerations, and implications for higher education teaching and learning are discussed.

Keywords
- Management / Higher Education
- Ontology
- Phenomenology
- Existentialism
- Pedagogy
- Epistemology

INTRODUCTION
This paper explicates and integrates a number of concepts, principles, and practices that bear on the experience and efficacy of teaching and learning. The title, Going with the Flow: Teaching as Being, not Technique, says much about this paper and its origins, as summarised in the footnotes below. Grounded in the philosophies and theories of ontology, existentialism, phenomenology, epistemology, and pedagogy / adult education, as well as Eastern perennial tradition, Teaching as Being is explored and contrasted with the “doing” of teaching and teaching technique. Being and doing are shown to be qualitatively different, with the former superior in authenticity, relationship

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1 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi was perhaps the first scholar to research and popularise the concept of flow, publishing an impressive list of articles and books on related subjects from the mid-1960s onward. In terms of flow, this paper draws mostly on Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) Flow: The Classic Work on How to Achieve Happiness. Ackerman’s works (1986 referenced here), though directed to organisational leaders, provide basis for the notions of energy flows between and amongst teachers and students. See, also, Dreher (1996): The first two chapters in her thoughtful work, The Tao of Personal Leadership, address flow (zanshin), process, and the role of energy flow in, around, and between people. Teaching as Being also draws on the theory and practice of improvisation theatre (Gesell, 2006) and certain elements of Dialogue to represent energy flows in group dynamics and interaction (see Hays, under review, for an overview of the research in the area; also Isaacs, 1993 and 1999a,b). Finally, Vogt (2005) critiques Csikszentmihalyi’s notions of flow and happiness, finding it insufficient to explain “what makes human life human” (p. 119), and adding his insights on human capabilities theory and how to achieve “human flourishing.”

2 Teaching as Being may be a new expression, if not a new idea. The author has found no scholarly works using Teaching as Being as connoted here. It is acknowledged, however, that Peter Vaill (1996) coined or popularised the phrase “learning as a way of being” with his book Learning as a Way of Being: Strategies for Survival in a World of Permanent White Water. At least four of Vaill’s seven ways of learning as ways of being (LWB) are relevant to Teaching as Being: Creative, Expressive, Feeling, and Reflexive, with the latter two of particular relevance.

3 See Dhiman (2002) and Smith (2007) for examples of perennial [wisdom] traditions, as used here.

4 See Table 1 for a comparison of “teaching as being” and “teaching as doing.” Howard (2002) distinguishes and examines the relationship between “our being” (who we are) and “our doing” (what we do) in her paper on learning in the workplace. Rowan (2002), while writing on psychotherapy, maintains that there are only three ways of relating to clients: instrumental, authentic, and transpersonal. He notes that the transpersonal form of
and relating, and fulfilment. *Teaching as Being* focuses attention on the experience of teachers and students, highlighting that experience is inextricably linked to learning. As the quality of the experience varies more or less positively so does learning. Evidence provided\(^6\) suggests that what is learned and the kind of learning that takes place are deeper and more transformative than might be the case in a more conventional approach.

The underlying thesis and main premise of *Teaching as Being* is that:

A teacher’s authentic and full presence and engagement in the classroom are essential to creating the richest possible classroom experience for self and students. This includes adapting to and capitalising upon the dynamic flow of energies, topics, and opportunities for learning as they arise.\(^7\)

Table 1 provides a series of contrasting depictions of the being and doing of teaching and learning in higher education. In general, *Teaching as Being* is more fluid, unbounded, and emergent, while *Teaching as Technique* tends to be more ordered, precise, and predictable. Readers may find aspects of both columns in the table appealing and characteristic of their own teaching and learning styles. While both have strengths and weaknesses, evidence is mounting that approaches embodying more being aspects foster deep, transformative learning (Hays, 2008). Gabriel (see Footnote 6) exemplifies a teacher who has moved from right column (doing) to left (being). In the process, he has rediscovered why he chose to teach in the first place: love of learning, passion for sharing, desire to serve, and a need to express his individuality. Gabriel sees himself as a work in progress, not as a done deal (as he openly declares to students and peers).\(^8\) Perhaps that’s why he comfortably

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5 Hartman and Zimberoff’s (2003) article on existentialist therapy addresses the social, cultural, and spiritual concerns of life, what they refer to as the “human condition.” “Becoming a more spontaneous, confident, and effective person is not the result of becoming a better ‘you’ or something new, but of becoming a more truly you,” writes Gesell (2006; p. 19). Driver’s (2007) paper on meaning and spirituality at work offers insights on authenticity. Also see any of the following for observations on and applications of authenticity: Harvey et al (2006), Novicevic et al (2006), and Zhu et al (2004).

6 The extended version of this paper includes two case studies, excluded here due to space limitations. The first concerns Gabriel, who transforms himself from a disheartened teacher “going through the motions” and ready to quit to an inspired and inspiring teacher making the most of experience. The second is a thoroughgoing qualitative analysis of a teaching episode from four perspectives: (a) the self (Kate—representing “teaching as being”); the faculty observer (Kate’s colleague, representing more conventional teaching considerations); (c) student as being, representing a student for whom Kate’s approach is transformational [Hays, 2008; Marsick, 1998; Piper, 2004] and (d) student as victim, representing students who do not respond favourably to Kate’s “go with the flow” teaching style, values, and expectations.

7 Hence the paper’s title “Going with the Flow.” See Senge, et al (2005), under complementary readings, for a significant treatment of “presence”, and the brief section on presence in this paper further along.

8 “Work in progress” is akin to becoming, a key philosophical concept in *Teaching as Being*. Quite recently, the author has been introduced to “process philosophy” (a la Bakhtin, Bergson, Whitehead, and others). This
experiments with new and different ways of teaching. His students describe him as unique, inspiring, and unpredictable. He “sneaks up on them!” Every class is different, with a wide range of activities. Lessons (principles, concepts, or skills they are meant to learn) are embedded in a natural exercise—the fabric of the day’s class. They seldom realise they are learning until the class reflects as a group and debriefs the experience; or until they realise they are putting what they’re learning into practice in subsequent days with friends or family, at work, or in other courses. One of the things they report finding most interesting and appealing is how much they learn from each other, not just the teacher.

KEY CONCEPTS

Before getting deeper into the material, we consider two key terms and their relationship, experience and efficacy. We, then, examine presence.

Experience. Teaching and learning are not just a one- (or even two-) way transmission of content—that which is to be learned—between teacher and student, or even amongst teacher and students collectively. Teaching and learning are qualitative experiences, dynamic and reciprocal. While content matters, teaching and learning are experiences, felt or perceived physically and emotionally, as well as cognitively. The experience can be animated and exciting, poignant or wrenching, blasé or, perhaps, preoccupied: richer or poorer, depending on many factors. Some, if not most, of those factors are within the control of teachers and students, or at least can be influenced by them.

Efficacy. Efficacy implies the ability to produce meaningful and desirable outcomes. Efficacy does not merely imply efficiency, as in methodical classroom management or production of stipulated performance measures linked to prescribed learning objectives employing the best prescribed approach. In our striving for precision and replicability, and favouring technique, technology, and even skill, we may lose sight of the humanity and deeper meaning of teaching and learning. Efficacy, then, is more about facilitating, creating, fostering, supporting, enabling, and permitting [“letting learn,” as Heidegger (1968, p. 15) has said], than it is about prescribing, controlling, or measuring.

Converging Experience and Efficacy. What enables a teacher to most effectively create and use rich learning circumstances are certain attributes that have to do with being, more so than skilled doing or expert knowing. This ontological stance might be represented by expressions such as “being there,”

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appears to be a new movement in management and organisation studies, and the author looks forward to learning more about this in coming years. As an organisational development and change practitioner, the author finds Chia and Tsoukas (2003) and Tsoukas and Chia (2002) particularly relevant.

It is hard to resist referencing the great feature film Being There, starring Peter Sellers (nominated for best actor) and co-starring Shirley MacLaine and Melvyn Douglas (who did win an Oscar for best male supporting actor). While misunderstood and attributed with profound wisdom, Chance was just “being there” authentically expressing his existence as a gardener whose only exposure, ironically, to “real” life was television. (Being There, 1979; directed by Hal Ashby and written by Jerzy Kosinski.)
“in the moment,”“finding yourself,”“going with the flow,” (and even the much touted as of late “authenticity” or authentic presence). Such states of being allow the teacher to respond to and capitalise upon opportunities as they arise, such as might be the case when a student asks a question or makes a comment that seems off topic or proposes an unexpected or ostensibly “wrong” answer to a problem. A teacher “fixed” on a particular instructional objective and associated strategy, with a prescribed correct answer in mind and a preferred method of reaching it, would find it difficult to see other possibilities, make the best of the opportunity presenting itself, or even “regroup” after getting off track or losing presumed momentum. Add to this the problem of “time management” (sticking to a tight and packed schedule in order to cover all preordained material) and a teacher has little room to manoeuvre.

**Presence**

A teacher’s *presence* in the classroom is as important, if not more so, than the instructional skill, teaching method, or technology employed to bring intended content across to students.\(^1\) This may even hold true for content expertise. Many readers would be familiar with brilliant experts who have trouble connecting with or relating to students. A single-minded focus or dependence on content (at the expense of process) may actually impede learning and undermine experience. For some teachers the answer, and perhaps the way there, is obvious; they have little patience for learners who don’t automatically “get it,” see other possibilities, or just need to spend more time with the problem—*being* with it, so to speak. Presence concerns and is manifested by an authentic “being there” in the classroom or other learning environment or situation. Presence involves an awareness of self, other(s), context, and content, and full and spontaneous engagement with the dynamics of the learning situation.\(^2\) This is represented simply in Figure 1.

Along with other holistic principles for management development drawn from Taoism that in many ways capture of essence of *Teaching as Being* and remaining in flow state, Shefy and Sadler-Smith (2006) align presence with being centred. “We remain centered,” they write, “by being present,” adding “The centeredness principle calls for the managing of the here and now” (p. 372; emphasis

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11 Please note that the author uses “students” or sometimes “participants” as opposed to “learners” (his preference) to allow for the notion that both teachers and students can and should be learners. One of the core concepts, here, is “teacher as learner,” drawing on the notions of humility and, from Zen Buddhism, “the empty cup” metaphor.

12 The environment or context envisaged here and in which the learning dynamics of concern apply most directly are the classroom setting or lecture theatre—that is, in situations where teachers and students interact face-to-face. While the concepts, principles, and practices discussed here should be of interest and relevance to teachers employing virtual, technology-mediated instruction, their incorporation poses unique and different challenges. While such instruction may moderate, diminish, or obviate the impact of presence, that discussion is beyond the scope of this paper and should be the focus of separate investigation. Readers are referred to Smith (2006) who entertains these issues in her article on best practices in distance education.
added). In “Tools for Transformation,” one of Gesell’s (2006) recommendations for improving team performance is to “focus on the present.” Staying in the present, he explains, involves: resisting “the urge to plan, evaluate, or anticipate what others will do”; responding “in the moment and only to what is available”; and keeping our “minds open and focused on what is happening rather than on what is expected or desired” (pp. 16 – 170; emphasis added). For teachers this means that one cannot be spontaneous and fully in the moment if “scripting” your own or your students’ thoughts, words, or actions. The same, of course, could be said of students who may be so busy trying to manage the perceptions of them held by teachers and other students (to look and sound smart) that they fail to be fully present and authentic. Impression management is hard work and could reasonably be expected to impede being and flow, and the richness of experience they have to offer.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) himself characterised flow as focused and intense concentration on the present, on the “here and now,” where action and awareness are merged, and distractions are excluded from consciousness. He notes that self-consciousness disappears and there is little worry of failing: “we are too involved to be concerned with failure or to worry about how we look” (pp. 10 – 11). This comes about, he believes, because there are clear goals and immediate feedback in flow circumstances, and because of a balance between the challenge and the agent’s competence and confidence.

In “Being Present at your own Life,” authors Gunn and Gullickson (2003) affirm the preceding notions on presence, and identify some of the distracters that impede it, including anger, resentment, worry, anxiety, second-guessing, guilt, and desire for approval. Their recommendation for becoming more frequently and fully present is patience: “staying easy and alert as things unfold” (p. 14). They continue that we must:

- drop our expectations of what should be or has been;
- stop comparing things to what has happened before or to what someone else has done or is doing;
- eliminate or dampen the urge to exert effort or control (“The more effort and control we try to apply, the more we limit the number of possibilities available to us.”)
- learn to remain calm as this allows us to connect with and stay connected to our own internal resources and others around us when we need them most.

Students are at their best when they can be inventive, resourceful, and adaptive; when permitted – encouraged – to go where they haven’t gone before and maybe even where the teacher has not gone. When they are willing and able to do that, they are ready for the real world.

**THEORETICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND**
Teaching As Being draws on a range of philosophies and sciences increasingly linked\(^\text{13}\), but seldom amalgamated and incorporated in the literatures on teaching and learning. These are brought together in this next section, which briefly examines and integrates ontology, existentialism, phenomenology, epistemology, pedagogy, and Eastern philosophy and wisdom into one coherent set.

**Ontology.** Ontology is the study of the nature of being. As a science, ontology involves observation and representation of phenomena; its task is to reveal the type and nature of the phenomena under investigation (Scholz, et al, 2006).\(^\text{14}\) With “being” in the title of this paper and the quintessence of Teaching as Being, reference to ontology is mandatory and at least a minimum understanding of ontology essential.

Ontology’s concerns are existence and meaning: what does it mean to be? Teaching as Being is, then, clearly an ontological notion or expression. One is a teacher, which accords identity and everything that goes along with it. This is contrasted with teaching (as “to teach”), which is an active, doing endeavour. One may teach (and, presumably, teach technically well) without being a teacher. One may also be a teacher and seldom experience being as intended here. Moreover, teachers and non-teachers alike can experience Teaching as Being—more than a state of mind or consciousness, a state of body-mind (Shefy and Sadler-Smith, 2006) where the teacher is in touch with her deepest self and intimately connected with those she is teaching. Teaching as Being is more than identity, ego, role, skill, knowledge, or technique. It is full presence and engagement, the experience of them, and the efficacy and fulfilment that such being-in-the-moment enables.

Heidegger is the quintessential ontologist (although there is reason to place him as an existentialist, as well, and as a phenomenologist (see Waugh, 2004). Without going to the original source, for instance Heidegger’s Being and Time\(^\text{15}\), much of Heidegger can be understood by reviewing applications of his philosophy in such works as Bolle (2006), Dall’Alba (2005), Hyde (2005), and Sewchurran (2008). Interestingly, ontology takes centre stage in Courvisanos’ (2006) article on human agency in novelty and innovation.

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\(^{13}\) Ikehara (1999), for example, links gestalt therapy, organisational learning, holism, and existential phenomenology. Hays (2007a) assembled a range of theoretical and philosophical frameworks in his portrayal of organisational wisdom. Nicolaides and Yorks (2008) present an epistemological thesis on lifelong learning that integrates construction of meaning, complexity theory, experiential learning, and enquir. Goleman’s (2003), Ricard and Thuan’s (2001), and Wheatley’s (1999) books, all referenced under complementary readings, bring together “new science” concepts and traditional wisdom principles and practices to help us understand human behavior.

\(^{14}\) A second (less metaphysical) understanding of ontology is that it is concerned with the basic categories of things and their relationships. Thus, you will see ontologies used in or as knowledge structures (see, for example, Linstead and Brewis, 2007, or Baqir and Kathawala, 2004).

In *Teaching as Being* students are encouraged to be and to become. They are not merely seen as one side of the transaction equation and limited by outmoded pedagogical notions, including adhering to a strict instructional regime and mastery of specified content as assessed through standard examination or performance under prescribed conditions. In the *Teaching as Being* classroom, the ontology of being a student is rewritten. What it means to be “a student” or “a teacher” is turned on its head with students being much more active in setting and conducting the learning agenda and teachers taking on more supportive and facilitative roles. Students’ being is limited only by their potential to become and the teacher’s capacity to “let learn,” (within time constraints of the semester and other parameters that cannot [yet] be altered).

**Existentialism.** Where ontology is about being, the fundamental concern of existentialism is meaning. Where does meaning come from and what is the value or place of meaning? Other concerns of existentialism are identity and purpose. Why exist and how? A central tenet of existentialism is that meaning is individual and conferred by human beings, and a critical aspect of this is the notion of choice. Things that people care about having, knowing, doing, or being are choices. In choosing the things we care about, we imbue meaning to our existence. In addition to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, other early and prominent existentialists include Husserl, Sartre, Camus, Jaspers, and Marcel. Heidegger may also be considered to be an existentialist.

Since choice is important, it follows that freedom, or free choice, is likewise important, and this is a strong undertone amongst existentialists\(^\text{16}\). Existentialism stresses individual experience (Ikehara, 1999) and authenticity (Cohen, 2003; Jackson, 2005). Having the freedom to choose and making free choices are tantamount to authenticity or “being real.” This is of central importance to *Teaching as Being*. Not only is authenticity crucial to rich experience and relating, as discussed previously, but the *Teaching as Being* classroom embodies freedom and choice. While total equality and absolute freedom are seldom fully achieved, the existential classroom is as democratic and empowering as possible. Unnecessary limits removed, students can experience themselves, each other, and their teacher more authentically. They may move the course and its instructor, and one another; they may become new, more complete individuals.

\(^{16}\) Hartman and Zimberoff (2003), in their impressive overview of existentialism and its place in therapy, identify five pervading themes, generally applicable to *Teaching as Being*, one of which is this notion of freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of our choices. The additional four are: Meaning is found in the living of each moment; expression of ones humanity is manifest in passionate commitment to purpose and values; openness to experience affords the greatest fulfilment of potential; and in the ever-present face of death we find commitment to life. There are, by the way, clear parallels between their work and the Buddhist psychology of Brazier (2003), one of the complementary readings.
**Phenomenology.** Phenomenology is the interpretive study of phenomena: what things mean to people and how we make sense of the world. The phenomenon or object of study might be an emotion, relationship, situation or event, or idea. What sets phenomenology apart from many other scientific disciplines or approaches is that it centres on the actor’s own perspective: how the world is experienced. Like existentialism, phenomenology stresses individual experience and interpretation. This being the case, everyone will have his or her unique interpretation of a given phenomenon.

Husserl (1859 – 1938), mentioned previously as an existentialist, was one of the original phenomenologists. He, and a successor, Schutz (1899 – 1959), were amongst those who introduced phenomenology, a movement still gaining interest today. Phenomenology appears recently in a range of studies. See Metcalfe and Game (2008) for an interesting paper on teaching and learning focusing on dialogic pedagogy, which incorporates phenomenology, making reference to some of the most influential phenomenologists, including Hegel, Sartre, Buber, and Merleau-Ponty. Bolle (2006) writes on “existential management,” referencing Heidegger and his view that people are continually designing themselves anew (becoming). Existentialism and phenomenology are often linked as in Olivares, et al’s (2007) framework for understanding leadership experiences, and in van den Berg’s (2002) study on teachers’ meanings.

**Epistemology.** Epistemology is the theory and study of knowledge, including generating, integrating, and using knowledge (Scholz, et al, 2006). Epistemology is experiencing a high point currently with continuing interest in Knowledge Management and organisational learning (see Cook and Brown, 1999; Gueldenberg and Helting, 2007; and Hall, 2005, for interesting KM and OL applications), and explains part of the rapid growth of Communities of Practice (Gherardi, et al, 1998; Hays, 2007b).

*Teaching as Being* is less concerned with knowledge than many expositions on teaching and learning might be because being is emphasised over knowing and doing. Most classrooms are predominated by epistemology (what is knowledge (and, thus, what needs to be learned)) and pedagogy (what is the best way to teach), leaving scant room for being.

Nevertheless, being a teacher presumes a certain base of knowledge and skill. Also implied in teaching and learning is that students acquire knowledge and skill. Epistemology, then, remains an important element of the *Teaching as Being* classroom and, thus, of this paper. What is learned and how remains a concern of teachers, students, administrators, parents and guardians, employers, and other stakeholders, issues taken up in Kumar’s (2006) article on constructivist epistemology. Boyles (2006) presents an essay on epistemology and classroom practice that is relevant, here, as is Hung et al’s (2006) article on constructivist epistemologies in learning communities. Gherardi et al (1998) consider the relational nature of learning. They describe it as ontological (what they refer to as people “being-in-the-world”) and epistemic (abstract knowledge).
Teaching and learning for “real-world” and potential problems – the uncertain and ambiguous; the best solution amongst imperfect alternatives; for problems impacting diverse stakeholder groups, all wanting something else – poses challenges to teachers and learners alike. Few people are really comfortable and effective in unpredictable situations, a condition exacerbated by years of education being a certain way, where roles are clearly defined and expectations reinforced through word and deed, not to mention the systems upholding them, such as workloads and promotion criteria, course requirements and sequencing, course outlines (syllabi), and exam schedules. Instructional activities that allow and develop the skills of discovery and experimentation are steps in the right direction (Prince and Felder, 2007), especially when the answers or strategies for discovering them are not “givens.” In this regard, work being done in education and professional development on ambiguity, tension, paradox, and contradiction seems fruitful (Axley and McMahon, 2006; Lewis and Dehler, 2000; Hays, 2008; Nelson and Harper, 2006). Dey and Steyaert’s (2007) insightful paper on the failings and promise of management education is particularly germane to Teaching as Being. They note that the wisdom of teaching (and learning) involves downplaying competence and expertise in favour of ideas, invention, and imagination. In particular, the authors suggest that wisdom is “holding back,” not subscribing to one right answer, but allowing for “whatever might come up” (p. 455).

**Pedagogy.** Pedagogy is the science of education, and may be thought of as the art and practice of teaching. Pedagogy includes and often refers to educational theory, teaching strategies and approach, and instructional methodologies. As education is concerned with learning, pedagogy also covers learning theory and aspects of the learner, such as learning styles (Boström and Lassen, 2006) and developmental stages. It was once in vogue to distinguish pedagogy from andragogy, a concept popularised by Malcolm Knowles in the 1960s. The distinction was thought important because of differences in the way children and adults learn, and, thus, how they should be best taught. Exposure to adult learning theory and, more importantly, to professors demonstrating if not embodying andragogy in practice, undoubtedly influenced the author’s own approach to teaching. Andragogical teachers allow students much latitude in defining what and how they will learn, serving as facilitators and resource persons. They appreciate that learning is a life-long endeavour, and work to enhance learners’ capacity to continue learning. They want students to become fulfilled through learning, instead of wanting to fulfil curriculum requirements. That said, there is nothing, per se, about pedagogy or andragogy that is or leads to Teaching as Being. Teachers and students may or

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17 Note that andragogy (as spelled by Knowles, himself) is more frequently spelled “andragogy” and, hence, from this point, will be spelled with an “a”. Sources on andragogy/adult education include Brookfield (1988), Knowles (1990), and Merriam and Caffarella (1991); and more recently Kessels and Poell (2004) and Notten (2002).
may not achieve flow, but it is not the educational approach that makes it happen. In fact, flow states and the richness of experience and efficacy they permit are generated outside or beyond instructional method. They cannot be explained by or achieved directly through adherence to technique. Rather, they are facilitated by “letting go” and allowing. They are attained through being—a state the awareness of which can be developed and the pathways learned over time, but not so much taught as a pedagogical content or process.

*Eastern Philosophy and Wisdom.* The author has been studying and attempting to apply Eastern philosophies and practices for twenty-five years. What began in youth as martial arts training (initially Hapkido) has become a life-long quest for deepening understanding and appreciation of “the way,” as understood in Taoism and “the middle way” in Buddhism. This quest includes studies in several martial arts, as well as Tai Chi and Qigong; a stay in Tibet with visits to Buddhist monasteries; the reading of several dozen books on Eastern philosophies and religions, and a gradual incorporation of their theory and practice in everyday life, scholarly activities of teaching and writing, and management consulting. With about 2500 of history and development, this short section cannot do justice to the ancient and important wisdom of the set of Eastern philosophies and religions that include Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and others. Rather than an awkward attempt to identify and elaborate on core features of Eastern philosophy, and in keeping with their teachings and those of the existentialists and phenomenologists, the author will provide a personal, experience-based interpretation.

The main lesson for me has been that there is a truth “out there” and in me—in each of us—that remains for the most part clouded by our own egos and delusions. Access to truth (or reality) is possible for each of us, but takes continual practice and discipline. “Staying the course” of this practice is what is meant by “the way,” which is attention to compassion, moderation, and humility. Keeping in mind the middle way—a path between extremes—serves as a constant reminder to indulge myself neither in self-criticism nor self-aggrandisement, both which interfere with “seeing things as they are,” including myself.

Nirvana, which basically means enlightenment or liberation, is the state of being that we can attain when we have detached ourselves completely from ego, defences, wanting, and identity. I may never be able to let go entirely, but I value that I am a work in progress; I am becoming. As a part of becoming, or gradual improvement and progress along “the way,” reflection has become a central facet of my life. Reflection helps me remain conscious of what I am and am not doing, to know how well I am keeping to “the way” and when, why, and how I lose my bearing. My training and studies
have all emphasised the importance of awareness or mindfulness.\textsuperscript{18} I am much more aware these days of others, my surroundings, and myself as I encounter and engage the world. Reflection contributes to mindfulness, and mindfulness provides substance on which to reflect (Hays, under review). Liu (2003) goes a step further, asserting that: “Through reflection on our actions in the world we gain insight into our core being” (p. 23), a message targeting the heart of Teaching as Being.

Much of my martial arts training and many of the teachings I have heard and read concern force (as in life force) or energy (Chi or Qi). There is “a flow of the universe” and a force behind the natural order. Human beings are at their best (most natural) when aligned with the flow and character of nature. You see this is as the notions of “softness” and yielding in martial arts. The Chinese speak of “wu wei,” or effortless action, and “pu,” or simplicity and receptiveness. Mastery is not simply or exclusively a matter of single-mindedness or effort: when you have exhausted yourself trying hard, you might find that overlooked doors open themselves to you. Or, when you relinquish fixation on a particular objective or strategy, more important ends may become apparent or more effective ways of attaining it (them) may reveal themselves. Either your objective or the path you take, or both, may need changing. For me, and for Teaching as Being, it’s a matter of finding and going with the flow.

The Complementary Readings section includes a range of texts that address various aspects of Eastern teachings. Drawn from a growing body of literature that incorporates and applies Eastern philosophy in Western contexts, the following references are illustrative, interesting, and relevant: complexity and social systems (Jones and Culliney, 1998); counselling /group process (Forester-Miller and Gressard, 2004); education (Brady, 2008); leadership (Hinterhuber, 1996; Korac-Kakabadse, et al, 2002); management development (Shefy and Sadler-Smith, 2006) and management education (Clawson and Doner, 1996); management theory and practice (Saha, 1992; Weymes, 2004); organisational behaviour (Durlabhji, 2004); organisational wisdom (Hays, 2007a); strategic management and ba (Nonaka and Toyama (2007); and virtual team leadership (Davis, 2004).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Instructional skill, methodology, and content expertise may be necessary to effective teaching and learning, but are insufficient in producing deep, transformative learning or enabling rich experiences of learning amongst teachers and students. Teaching as Being represents a way of being in the classroom for both teachers and students that is qualitatively different than likely to exist in the typical conventional classroom. This unique way of being promotes deep, transformative learning because it

\textsuperscript{18} As an example of the incorporation of meaning and mindfulness in martial arts, Liu (2003) writes that “meaning requires intentional personal action” and that mindfulness practice or “being intentional in what we do on a moment-by-moment basis… requires that we be aware of the choices we make—and of the circumstances surrounding these choices” (pp. 22 – 23).
rests in intense and authentic engagement with issues that are meaningful to the current lives of
students and teachers and that are relevant to the real world outside of class and after graduation.

The following propositions draw on the literature review and empirical research conducted for this
paper, and represent bases for further study.

1. Teaching and learning are not just tasks dealing with specified content (learning objectives) more
or less effectively. They are experiences, more or less positive. They need not remain merely
transactions, but can become transformations. Teaching often becomes a mechanistic, transactional
process. Teaching as Being conceives of teaching and learning as more than (or other than) efficiency
and contractual fairness. It is an experience, and the experience matters. A positive experience is an
investment into the future for both students and teachers. The more profound the experience, the
deeper and more transformative the learning.

2. The experience of teaching and learning can be described and assessed. More positive experiences
can be distinguished from the less so. Both teachers and students can and do assess and describe the
experience. While readers may take issue with the way conventional teaching is described herein or
dispute the merits or very existence of Teaching as Being, the two have been clearly distinguished.
Many readers, having read this article, would, for example, be able to describe and distinguish the two
in their own words.

3. The quality of the learning experience influences (a) not only what is learned but also (b) how
teachers and students think about learning, which impacts on other current and future learning
situations. The richer the experience the more likely the learning and the more receptive the learner
becomes to other learning. Learning situations can be enriched and sustained by invoking presence,
agency (Alkire, 2005; Bandura, 1989; Bleiker, 2003), and authenticity, important states of being.
These elements operate as virtuous cycles. The more they are kept in awareness, modelled, and
practiced in the classroom, the more potent they become. One way to keep them in awareness is to
actively reflect upon and dialogue about their use.

4. The learning experience of both teachers and students is mediated by teaching style and
instructional methodology; and, thus, making learning situations more encouraging and rewarding is
within our control. Pedagogical expertise should be considered the foundation for Teaching as Being,
a higher-order or transcendent form of teaching producing enhanced efficacy and experience of
teaching, not the terminal state. At the same time, over-reliance on technique, media, or even content
knowledge can undermine learning and the experience of learning. Being, it is proposed, may be more
effective than knowing or doing.
5. The learning experience of students (and, thus, impacting on teachers’ experience) is mediated by learning style or orientation. It seems reasonable to assume that some students will be more receptive to and learn from ontological-existential teaching than others, based on experience, orientation, and level of development. Little is known about the conditions that would make a student more or less receptive. This is an area ripe for investigation.

6. What and how students learn in the *Teaching as Being* environment is qualitatively different than in more conventional classrooms. This is measurable. Learning is probably deeper, more individual, and of a higher level of complexity.

If nothing else, *Teaching as Being* emphasises that you get out of teaching what you put into it. What’s new about that is the fact that what you put into it is less a matter of skill, method, and efficiency and more a matter of who you are—your being. This is the genuine you, the “real deal,” not the fabricated professional who fits the standard bill. You’ve left your ego and other trappings at the door, and stepped into the cauldron, ready to “mix it up” with your students and together “go with the flow.”

*Teaching as Being* is an invitation and reminder to “be there,” to engage fully in the learning experience, and to value and cultivate the experience so that it is rich and enriches the lives of all involved. This invocation is as applicable to students as it is to teachers. While teachers may have first responsibility in creating the conditions of *being* in the classroom, part of *becoming* entails students coming to understand and appreciate their own selves and to value the unique and particular nature – the humanness – of those around them. When students graduate from a course that truly and substantially embodies *Teaching as Being*, they will be more aware and appreciative of who they are, and what they and their counterparts have to offer. They will feel more able and willing to contribute in their own way. They will want to make a difference and feel able to do so. They will see themselves and their teacher as real people, all who have meaningful parts to play, in the classroom and beyond.

**REFERENCES**


Hays, J. (under review). The team learning pyramid: dialogue, reflection, and mindfulness.


Complementary Readings

Books that have made a deep and lasting impression on the author, and that chiefly support and complement the themes addressed in Teaching as Being.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Being</th>
<th>Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are doing, active, busy; responsible for success of each activity and their—and their classmates’—learning.</td>
<td>Teacher is doing, active, busy; responsible for success of each activity and the learning of all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher is attuned to what <em>might</em> be done, and how to capitalise on each passing moment, and how to enrich each topic and activity.</td>
<td>Teacher is attuned to what <em>must</em> be done, maximising efficiency of each passing moment, ensuring each topic and activity are the best uses of everybody’s time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher democratic with students having much say in how things are run.</td>
<td>Teacher authoritative; decides most matters, and is more directive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching tends to be more conversational and facilitative.</td>
<td>Teaching tends to be more lecture-based and didactic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction is omnidirectional, students interact frequently and intensely with one another, as well as with the teacher.</td>
<td>Interaction tends to be question and answer, between student and teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All are seen as resources, students and teacher.</td>
<td>Teacher seen as main resource.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual students and groups of students alternate as focal points, as well as the teacher.</td>
<td>Teacher is main focal point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class management loose and informal.</td>
<td>Class management rather formal, and can feel restrained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda based around general objectives and outcomes desired, but flexible. Departures the norm.</td>
<td>Agenda fixed with respect to objectives, activities, and timing. Departures seen as exceptions and problematic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles-based – what’s important are the underlying principles and how they can be adapted within and by the class.</td>
<td>Content-based. Whatever the content is it must be covered. What’s important is what was planned to be instructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic flow to material, with topics and intensity rising, falling, and shifting almost as if they have “a life of their own.”</td>
<td>Logical flow to class (material) delivery. Sequence and progression important. Instructional design mastered. Delivery best practice “by the book.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher tends to be spontaneous and extemporaneous, doing “what comes naturally” and capitalising on “the learning moment.”</td>
<td>Teacher tends to be planned and methodical, ensuring what needs to be covered is covered, more or less according to plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons often greater than the planned content might suggest; opportunities to integrate, reinforce, and extend material are rife. There tends to be lots of “big picture.”</td>
<td>Lessons generally consistent with the lesson plan and cover designated content. The picture stays within the frame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning tends to be very active and experiential. Students take part in instruction.</td>
<td>Learning tends to be more passive. Students receive instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students assessed as to the level they show deep understanding by applying the material in a variety of contexts.</td>
<td>Students assessed in accordance with the specified material and generally in a format resembling the way it was taught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher “mixes it up” with students.</td>
<td>Teacher keeps a safe distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class is like a community or team. Everyone gets to work with one another to get to know each other.</td>
<td>Class is more regimented and purposeful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons (indeed significant portions of a semester) may seem chaotic, disorganised, lacking in structure and clear direction, and devoid of “content.” Students may not know what is expected of them or what they are learning.</td>
<td>Lessons are well-organised, with clear structure and direction. Students know what they are expected to learn and how they will be assessed. There is little ambivalence, ambiguity, or equivocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class may drift “off assigned / planned topic;” class can fall behind on scheduled material.</td>
<td>Class stays on topic and on task. Schedule is adhered to as if it were a contract.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1.* Comparison chart of “being” and “doing” showing general contrasting distinctions / tendencies.
Figure 1. Presence: awareness and engagement.