

Leadership, personalization and high performance schooling: naming the new totalitarianism

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In bringing together two important contemporary preoccupations, namely the development of new approaches to leadership and the push to ‘personalization’, this paper argues against the poverty of much contemporary work on personalization. In its stead it proposes an approach to leadership and management grounded, firstly, on a particular view of how we become persons and, secondly and commensurately, on a particular view of education and human flourishing. It offers a four-fold typology and practical framework severally identifying ‘impersonal’, ‘affective’, ‘high performance’ and ‘person-centred’ approaches to leadership and management. Having considered the first two it goes on to explore the third and most dangerous organizational type, the high performance learning organization, which currently dominates much of contemporary advocacy and practice. It then argues for what it suggests is a more satisfactory alternative, the person-centred learning community. Having acknowledged the dangers of what it calls ‘the soulful turn’ in leadership and management it then sketches out some of the key features of what it takes a person-centred approach to be.

Introduction

There is significant acknowledgement in influential quarters that the dominant intellectual and practical frameworks of school effectiveness and school improvement are no longer sufficient to assist our understanding and guide our daily work. The kind of enthusiastic engagement with learning required of a 21st century ‘knowledge society’ has not emerged to any significant degree from a system designed primarily to ensure compliance and exert control. Not only is performativity diminishing of our humanity, it is, as many of us have for many years been at pains to point out, unlikely to produce the kinds of results it anticipates and requires. Transformation, not improvement, is to be the order of the day and knowledge creation and networking, not central control, are to be the key agents of its realization (Hargreaves, 2003; but also see Frankham, forthcoming)

Whilst the English government’s response to the need to create a new momentum linked to new ways of working has in some fundamental respects been less

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imaginative and principled than that of their Welsh counterpart, there have, nonetheless, been some glimmers of hope. Arguably the most prominent of these has been the high profile commitment to ‘personalized learning’, which at first glance and on first hearing seems to have within it a much needed return to concerns for the wider, human purposes of schooling that give education its enduring significance and satisfaction.

In ‘Personalization and the practical necessity of philosophy’ I begin by suggesting that the potential and promise of personalization are likely to remain unfulfilled, primarily because we resolutely refuse to take our intellectual obligations sufficiently seriously. I further suggest that this unwillingness to acknowledge the requirements of responsible enquiry perpetuates and deepens the malaise that currently afflicts our education system in general and our approaches to leadership and management in particular. The second section of the paper, ‘Putting philosophy to work’, develops the groundwork of a model that attempts to explain and oppose the increasing betrayal of the present and suggest a more just and more fulfilling alternative. In the third section, ‘The organizational and communal orientation of schools’, I offer a four-fold typology and practical framework severally identifying ‘impersonal’, ‘affective’, ‘high performance’ and ‘person-centred’ approaches to leadership and management. Having considered the first two of these I go on in section four, ‘Naming the new totalitarianism’, to explore the third and most dangerous organizational type, the high performance learning organization, which currently dominates much of contemporary advocacy and practice. In the penultimate section five, ‘Beyond the betrayal of the high performance learning organization’, I argue for what I take to be a more satisfactory alternative, the person-centred learning community. Having acknowledged the dangers of what I term ‘the soulful turn’ in leadership and management, I sketch out some of the key features of what I take a person-centred approach to be. I conclude in section six by affirming the importance of a view of human being and becoming to any debate about personalization. Inevitable disagreements will thus be substantial and real and as such will make important contributions to a healthy democratic polity.

Personalization and the practical necessity of philosophy

If a first glance at the widespread championing of personalized learning is largely positive, a second glance often proves otherwise; at any rate the momentum of our initial optimism begins to falter a little. We learn that whilst ‘The school of the future must have personalised learning as its starting point’ (Stewart, 2004), engagement with practitioners, academics and policy-makers (Johnson, 2004) revealed two things: firstly, that ‘There was a consensus that there was a lot of confusion out there about what personalised learning meant’ and, secondly, that ‘despite the lack of clarity, the phrase is spreading like a virus through the system, with schools advertising for teachers with experience and understanding of personalised learning’ (Stewart, 2004). If we add to this the simultaneous embrace of confusion and

enthusiastic engagement with the results of recent research revealing serious flaws in the much vaunted utilization of learning styles (Coffield *et al.*, 2004), our pace begins to slow considerably. If we further add Martin Johnson's perception that whilst there may be benefits from certain interpretations of personalized learning, there may equally be significant problems associated with the continued commodification of individual academic success, we cannot be other than fitful in our desire to push ahead. Schools as agents of social stability and communal well-being seem to Johnson to have no place in the personalization agenda. Finally, if we add to this mounting negative ambiguity and elusiveness Roy Hattersley's, sadly still accurate, observation that in the field of secondary education 'the government has no philosophic compass with which to guide its policies' (Hattersley, 2004, p. 31), it seems wise to take stock in a more considered way than seems to have been possible thus far.

Roy Hattersley's remarks about the government's lack of 'philosophic compass' go to the heart of the malaise not just of this government's secondary school agenda, but of its wider education policy (see Fielding, 2001a, especially pp. 8–13, for a similar argument, regrettably as true five years ago as it remains today). Despite vibrant recent pamphlets by Charles Leadbeater (2004a,b, 2005), a very substantial ongoing contribution from David Hargreaves (2004a,b, 2005a–c), some fine work by Jean Rudduck and colleagues from East Sussex schools (Rudduck *et al.*, 2005), some insightful, cautionary notes from the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme (Pollard & James, 2004) and some recent very imaginative thinking by people like Matthew Horne (2006), the rootless and sometimes contradictory imperatives of government departments pushing 'personalization' not only reveal an intellectual indolence unworthy of Labour's rich history of committed educational reform, they presage a wider and deeper crisis which this paper seeks to understand and to which it tries to respond. Whilst some of the work emerging from the personalization agenda is without doubt potentially radical and has much about it that is both motivating and engaging, like contemporary public debate, much of it chooses to construct a world free from the intellectually contested realities of our history and our hopes.¹ Unless we take the trouble to think things through at a more than immediate level then the dominant policy context of economic neo-liberalism and the prevailing intellectual motifs of performativity will ensure 'personalization' binds us more securely and more comfortably to purposes we abhor and practices we come to regret. Unless the seismology of contemporary debate on personalization has the patience and persistence to attend to the tectonics of intellectual and cultural movement it will not register much of what matters and mistake the perfunctory for what is of profound significance or, in the words of Russell Jacoby's withering critique of Theodore Roszack, 'illustrate the renewal of banality under the brand of a new profundity' (Jacoby, 1977, p. 8).

The roots of our crisis go considerably deeper than the failure of our current 'high performance' model of schooling and the 'personalization' phase with which it currently seeks to redress its worst effects and more obvious failings. Our crisis is as much a crisis of the human person as it is a crisis of economic effectiveness and

overly-instrumental schooling. It is not primarily a crisis about engaging and motivating young people within the context of formal schooling (e.g. ‘personalization’ and the ill-fated Tomlinson review) or a crisis of diminishing capacity (e.g. workforce reform) or indeed a crisis about our systemic capacity to generate and spread innovative practices throughout this, or any other, set of arrangements (e.g. networked learning). It is fundamentally a crisis about human sociality, about our human being in the world. It thus returns us as much to ontological questions and to questions of educational, social, political, moral and religious significance as it does to questions of technique and the mechanics of accomplishment. Uncertainty about what we take education to be for mirrors the wider and deeper crisis about the kind of society we wish to sustain and create, the kinds of activities that enhance human flourishing and assist us in living our lives wisely and well. It is thus in an important sense a philosophical crisis, a crisis about meaning and purpose and the nature of our emerging humanity.

Putting philosophy to work

If schools are to continue to exist well into the 21st century they need to be more fulfilling, more creative and more humanly attentive places than they have been thus far in their very chequered histories, both for those who teach in them and for those who are required to attend them. This necessitates at least two things: firstly, a better understanding of the internal workings of organizational life and, secondly, a framework within which the larger concerns of schools as places of learning and being can be analysed and understood.

Initially, my approach to these matters is to go deeper than schooling to excavate the bedrock of our social and communal being in the world. That is to say, my inclination is to try to understand at a fundamental level what it is that comprises the very elements of our humanity, what is significant in our being and becoming persons. This is, in other words, both an ontological task—‘what is it about our relationships with each other that constitute our different modes of human being?’—and an axiological task—‘what kinds of judgements, what valuation do we attach to different kinds and combinations of those basic elements of human sociality?’

Here I draw on the work of the Scottish philosopher, John Macmurray, arguably the greatest currently neglected 20th century philosopher of the English speaking world whose radical reappraisal of philosophy remains an inspiration and a resource for those of us who regard agency, identity and community as the defining philosophical and practical problems of our epoch. For Macmurray, and for me, human beings are essentially relations:

The self is one term in the relation between two selves. It cannot be prior to that relation and, equally, of course, the relation cannot be prior to it. ‘I’ exists only as a member of the ‘You and I’. The self only exists in the communion of selves. (Macmurray, 1933, p. 137)

Furthermore, there are two fundamentally different, but related and interdependent, modes of encounter with other persons that define our being in the world. These are what Macmurray calls 'functional' relations and 'personal' relations, and it is in developing our understanding of the proper nexus between the two that Macmurray provides his account of human interrelatedness and fulfilment.

Macmurray on the functional and the personal

What, then, does Macmurray have to say about 'functional' and 'personal' relations? How are they to be distinguished and how do they relate to each other? Macmurray suggests that 'functional' or instrumental relations are typical of those encounters that help us to get things done in order to achieve our purposes. Indeed, functional relations are defined by those purposes. When I buy a train ticket to travel to the seaside my relationship with the person that sells me the ticket has solely to do with an exchange of money and a subsequent right to travel from A to B on the train. We do not reveal our deeper fears and aspirations to each other. In contrast, 'personal' relations exist in order to help us be and become ourselves in and through our relations with others and part of that becoming involves our mutual preparedness to be open and honest with each other about all aspects of our being. In these kinds of relationships, as for example in friendship, we do of course do things together. However, these joint activities or encounters do not define the relationship; they are expressive of it. Going by train to the seaside is not the purpose of our friendship; the day out is an expression of our care for and delight in each other.

Of course, distinguishing between the functional and the personal as key elements in understanding our sociality and our distinctively human nature is not unique to Macmurray. Many writers have argued for similar distinctions, often with similarly laudable intentions of helping us to name an imbalance or a problematic, e.g. work dominating our lives, exams displacing the wider purposes and processes of schooling, and set it right. What Macmurray helps us to do, which golden means and checks and balances do not, is develop a more searching and more subtle account of the interrelationship between the two which is linked to a distinctive philosophical anthropology.

For Macmurray the interdependence of the functional and the personal is both inevitable and desirable. The functional provides the concrete, instrumental means by which the personal expresses itself. If I care for you that care achieves practical expression as much through the rudimentary provision of daily necessities as it does through special acts of kindness. Community, another frequently cited example of a personal rather than a functional mode of human relation, expresses itself, or in Macmurray's words, 'gets hands and feet' through the practical arrangements we enter into to express our shared humanity and the creativity of our differences.

Just as the personal needs the functional to realize itself in action, so too the functional needs some element of the personal to achieve its purposes. Except in very extreme cases which require us to act as if we were machines or adopt a role

which overrides the kind of personal engagement we have been alluding to, human beings' engagement in functional activity trades on their understanding that wider human purposes validate and animate their conduct, how they go about getting things done.

Beyond balance: towards a personalist dialectic

What is distinctive and of considerable significance in John Macmurray's work is not just his insistence on the interdependence of the functional and the personal but the particular answer he gives to the nature of that interdependence. For Macmurray, whilst the personal is through the functional—concern, care, delight become real in action through practical expression—crucially the functional is for the sake of the personal. Thus, economic activity (the functional) is only legitimate insofar as it helps us to lead more fulfilled lives (the personal); politics and the fight for social justice (the functional) are the servants of communal flourishing (the personal). Within systems of compulsory public education, schooling (the functional) is for the sake of education (the personal); within schools themselves, administrative, management and other organizational arrangements (the functional) are for the sake of a vibrant and creative community (the personal). What is crucial to remember here is that each depends upon the other; their relationship is reciprocal and any attempt to obliterate one or the other or deny their distinctiveness and integrity is bound eventually to fail. In Macmurray's words

They are opposites, with a tension between them. They are inseparable and limit one another. They are essential to one another and form a unity. Any attempt to fuse them or absorb one into the other will fail because they are opposites. Any attempt to separate them will fail because they limit one another. Any effort to run them parallel with one another without relating them will break down because they form an essential unity. (Macmurray, 1941, p. 5)

I find Macmurray's distinctions and his person-centred anthropology both inspiring and helpful. His account of the relation between the functional and the personal identifies what is of fundamental importance in our struggle both to understand and develop our humanity; it offers a convincing account, both descriptive and normative, that has substantial explanatory power; it also offers a much-needed emancipatory tool (see Fielding, 2000) with which to critique current developments like personalization, not only in education, but more widely across the range of our social and political encounters and aspirations. There are, however, a number of points that are understated or implicit in his writing that I think are worth pursuing more overtly. In my work with schools and in my attempts to think through how things might get better and more fulfilling for all concerned I have extended aspects of his thinking and developed my own typology which is intended to offer an emancipatory framework within which to take forward our work in ways which are more faithful to our educational intentions than current models allow.

Extending Macmurray: the unity of ends and means

What Macmurray found so objectionable at the beginning of the 20th century, namely the suffocating legacy of Victorian conformism in which our 'station and its duties' confined our humanity and condoned the presumptions of privilege within the boundaries of role and regulation, remained an issue throughout that century and remains an issue for us today. Whilst the deference of duty and acceptance of one's allotted place in a fixed social hierarchy was blown to pieces in the trenches of the First World War, the stratification of our lives and our desires in the interests of the powerful and the privileged persists, albeit through the disciplines of the market and governmentality, rather than through the heavy, all-too-visible hand of church, school and state.

The personal is as subservient to the functional as it has ever been. On the one hand, social and political movements which overtly sought to reverse this relation (communism, socialism and anarchism) either betrayed those aspirations, were sidelined by the imperatives of neo-liberalism or have yet to gain a significant platform in the popular imagination. On the other hand, the increasingly voracious appetite of that global market presides over the destruction of communities and the destabilization of national economies whilst the post-modern individualism of the 'self-constructed' consumer is shaped by the deeper collective interests of trans-national corporate ambition.

In order to take forward both the naming of and opposition to the kind of developments I have briefly articulated above and to try to develop an alternative perspective and an alternative way of working I have begun to augment and extend Macmurray's line of thinking and argue that not only is the functional for the sake of the personal and the personal achieved through the functional, but the influence of the personal on the functional is transformative of it: the functional should be expressive of the personal. Ends and means must be inextricably linked; the means should themselves be transformed by the ends by which they are inspired and towards which they are aiming. The functional ways in which we work together in schools to achieve personal, communal and educational ends should be transformed by the moral and interpersonal character of what we are trying to do.

Organizational and communal orientation of schools

Taking the ontological and axiological building blocks of John Macmurray's position I have constructed a four-fold typology² comprising schools as 'impersonal organizations', as 'affective communities', as 'high performance learning organizations' and as 'person-centred learning communities' that sees schools and other organizations as differently oriented towards these basic assumptions (see Figure 1).

I look briefly at the 'impersonal' and 'affective' orientations and their approach to leadership and management before concentrating more fully on their 'high performance' and 'person-centred' counterparts which more directly address issues central to the personalization agenda.

Schools as Impersonal Organisations	Schools as Affective Communities	Schools as High Performance Learning Organisations	Schools as Person-Centred Learning Communities
<i>The Functional Marginalises the Personal</i>	<i>The Personal Marginalises the Functional</i>	<i>The Personal is Used for the Sake of the Functional</i>	<i>The Functional is for the Sake of / Expressive of the Personal</i>
Mechanistic Organisation	Affective Community	Learning Organisation	Learning Community
Community is Unimportant / Destructive of Organisational Purposes	Community has few Organisational Consequences or Requirements	Community is a Useful Tool to Achieve Organisational Purposes	Organisation Exists to Promote Community
Efficient	Restorative	Effective	Morally and Instrumentally Successful

Figure 1. Organizational and communal orientation of schools

The impersonal organization

The first two orientations, namely the ‘impersonal’ and the ‘affective’, take diametrically opposite stances on the relation between the functional and the personal. The impersonal standpoint is that the functional marginalizes the personal, which it sees as largely irrelevant and counter-productive of the core purpose of the school or business. It results in a predominantly mechanistic organization that is primarily concerned with efficiency. It would typically be dominated by role relations and the prominence given to procedures.

With regard to leadership and management, an example from the world of commerce applies equally well to public as to private sector practice. In John Roberts’ (1984) prescient and insightful examination of different management practices within sales departments of adverting companies/outlets his account of Dave’s approach still has a contemporary resonance 20 years later. To Dave

As a manager what mattered was how people performed—their sales figures; their person—their feelings and beliefs—were only obliquely relevant to this performance, and therefore Dave could see no ‘advantage’ in finding out more about the people he worked with. Indeed, knowledge gained in personal relationships might actually interfere with his ability to make ‘objective’ decisions. (Roberts, 1984, p. 290)

An impersonal approach to management and leadership is one that tends to valorize management over leadership. It clearly separates roles and persons and is guided more insistently by the former than the latter. Evidence from social science research and the contemporary development of a reliable evidence base of ‘what works’ is seen as a first and often overridingly important source of justification and guide to

development. The organizational architecture of the school would favour departments or teams focusing unremittingly on what were seen as the core instructional/teaching purposes of schooling. In small schools functional collaboration between individuals would invite a bounded or transient unity of task or target if the improvement plan or temporary external pressure required it. Professional learning would be seen as the responsibility of individuals within the context of collective necessity. Formal, named continuing professional development (CPD), often through external courses or school based sessions typify a concern for enhancing delivery with maximum efficiency.

The affective community

In contrast, the affective³ standpoint valorizes the personal at the expense of the functional. It is animated by an inclusive, restorative impulse rather than by the sifting, sorting and segregating predilections of efficiency. Its intense concern with the individual needs of young people results in little time or patience for the functional or organizational arrangements needed to translate the warmth and deeply held emotional commitments into practical realities that help young people learn in a variety of ways.

An affective approach to management and leadership is one that tends to valorize leadership over management. The emphasis would typically be on maternal/paternalistic relationships in which the experience and wisdom of the senior partners in the organization dominate the culture and provide the often tacit parameters within which daily work is done and decisions are arrived at. Meetings and the paraphernalia of memos, forms and data are largely, and preferably, absent and only activated spasmodically and in response to substantial, often external, need. Organizational structures would tend to rely on the pattern and expectation of custom and practice, often of a benignly hierarchical kind. Its holistic predilections encourage face to face arrangements, continuity of relationships and a celebratory dynamic that honours interconnection and interdependence. CPD would typically be workplace oriented, often linked to mentoring or collegial forms of engagement and invariably driven by personal interest or communal initiative.

Naming the new totalitarianism

The two orientations particularly relevant to this paper concern the school as a high performance learning organization and the school as a person-centred learning community. Both share a commitment to young people's achievement, but take very different stances towards how that achievement is conceived and how it is best realized within the context of a school.

Emotional labour and its alternatives: countering the discourses of deceit

At first glance these two modes, both of which apply as much to business and commercial contexts as to schools, seem very similar and it is that apparent similarity, or at least the sometimes extreme difficulty in telling the two apart, that suggests there may be important underlying issues to address. In essence we are talking about one mode which says ‘have a nice day’ as part of a human relations mantra and another mode which is genuinely welcoming and engaging of us; one mode which uses extra time for tutorials to jack up test scores and another that places personal encounter through dialogue at the very heart of its daily educational processes and intentions; one in which the new sanctioning of creativity and personalization is primarily the servant of the same narrow standards agenda and another in which creativity and the engagement with young people as persons is the harbinger of a much richer, more demanding fulfilment of education for and in a democratic society. They are worlds apart; their felt realities are utterly at odds with each other. And yet, it is not always clear which frame is dominant, whose purposes are being served, whether we are the victims of those whose interests are quite other than those we would applaud or whether we are part of something which is likely to turn out to be fulfilling and worthy of our support. In sum, it is not clear whether personalization is a seductive rearticulation of corporate insinuation or a genuinely different orientation to what we do and how we might do it.

In earlier work I have developed an account of each of these two forms which have been largely undifferentiated in their internal articulation of the dominant modes I ascribe to them. However, recent work in sociology, educational research and business literature suggests that there may be two discernable sub-forms within each mode that draw attention to features of organizational and communal relatedness that may well be significant. In the case of the high performance learning organization I suggest a manipulative mode and a totalitarian mode, both of which, in their different ways, treat personal forms of human relations as the servant of wider functional ambitions and intentions. In the case of the person-centred learning community I suggest an aspirational mode and an expressive mode, both of which treat functional engagement as the servant of personal relations and communal aspirations.

High performance learning organization: manipulative mode

Much of the literature on performativity emphasizes the extent to which it entails a denial of the personal, how through the ‘emptying out’ of social relationships which are left ‘flat’ and ‘deficient in affect’ (Lash & Urry, 1994, p. 15; cited in Ball, 2003, p. 224) any sense of caring for each other or for the young people with whom we work is marginalized or eradicated altogether. Thus, Stephen Ball’s insistence that, ‘Performance has no room for caring’ (Ball, 2003) echoes the suggestions by John Smyth *et al.* (2000), p. 140) that the ‘primacy of caring relations in work with pupils

and colleagues' is now an anachronistic aspiration quite out of kilter with contemporary times.

Much of this rings true to me. Certainly, the activities and worth of the school as a high performance learning organization are dominated by outcomes, by measured attainment. Its form of unity is collective, rather than personal or communal. The significance of both students and teachers is derivative and rests primarily in their contribution, usually via high stakes testing, to the public performance of the organization. Stephen Ball was surely right when, referring to teachers, he suggested that 'Increasingly, we choose and judge our actions and they are judged by others on the basis of their contribution to organisational performance, rendered in terms of measurable outputs' (Ball, 2003, p. 223). Much the same seems to be true for students. Increasing amounts of field data reveal students complaining that the school is only interested in them because they are the likely bearers of A* grades (Fielding, 2001b) or, as Stephen Ball so aptly put it 'It is not so much what the school can do for its students, but what the students can do for their school' (Ball, 1999, p. 99).

There is, however, something important that is missing from this indicative account of performativity. Part of the power of contemporary performativity rests on its acceptance not of a hollowed out ontology awaiting the fabrications of performance, but of its managerial reconstruction through the simulacra of care. Insofar as the previously cited remarks of pupils complaining about their personhood being reduced to an instrumental value (or severe lack of it) are unusual, it is an indicator of the power of high performance learning organizations to ensure compliance through a sophisticated psychology of emotional assent. As either a student or a member of staff in the high performing school your contributions are enhanced through your carefully managed 'ownership' of what others desire for you.

The high performing school is an organization in which the personal is used for the sake of the functional: community is valued, but primarily for instrumental purposes within the context of the marketplace. (Some) Parents and (some key players in) the community are listened to—on particular occasions for particular purposes. Staff retention issues begin to prompt rudimentary thinking about the quality of their working lives.

With regard to leadership and management, the manipulative mode of the high performance approach is one with which we are now very familiar. Drawing once again on John Roberts' fine study 'The moral character of management practice' (Roberts, 1984), in apparent contrast to the acknowledged coldness and distance of Dave's approach to management, his colleague Val had significantly more developed, apparently responsive relationships with her staff. However, the differences between Dave and Val were much more superficial than they at first appeared. As Roberts observed:

in other ways, Val seemed very similar to Dave, and this similarity lay in the *motives* that informed their different styles. Both of them were seeking to *control* staff; it was just that Dave felt that relationships would interfere with his capacity to manage, whereas Val sought to manage her staff *through* relationships. (p. 294)

As Val herself described it:

I'm not going to get anything out of them unless I do have that relationship. But they all know they've got to produce results. They're all a means to an end.

The phrase 'manage *through* relationships' is instructive: it exposes the instrumental, manipulative intentions behind an apparently personal approach. This is again exemplified later in the study where Val's interest in a particular member of staff (Christine) is, in Roberts' view, 'motivated by her concern to improve her sales results, to control her work, rather than expressive of her commitment to Christine as a person. (Roberts, 1984, p. 296). Though developing close relationships with her staff, Val's understanding of those she worked with

was not valued for its own sake, nor did Val let the closeness of her relationships with staff lead her into a sense of personal moral obligation to them. Instead, . . . Val sought merely to use her understanding as knowledge that would allow her to act in ways that would improve her performance. (p. 297)

High performance learning organization: totalitarian mode

My own view is that much of what has been described in the previous sub-section sails very closely indeed to the wind of domination. What I am about to describe gets caught up directly in winds that are much stronger, totalitarian winds that beach us on shores that, apparently benignly, deny our identity altogether.

Examples of these developments, identified almost elegiacally by Andreas Wittel (2001) as 'network sociality', go well beyond the blurring of personal and professional boundaries which, for example, Jill Blackmore's work helped us to understand. It is not just that 'For many teachers and headteachers, the line between the professional and the personal is increasingly blurred due to the emotional demands of the job and the invasion of personal time and space' (Blackmore, 1995, p. 51).

There is evidence that we are moving beyond a neo-Foucauldian 'governmentality' in which the post-modern self is constantly reconstructed within the internalized parameters of performativity and the external requirements of persistent targets and incessant audit. In the advanced phase of high performance learning organizations the threat is not just of a willingly embraced confinement in which the personal is used for the sake of the functional. Rather, the functional and the personal collapse soundlessly into each other. Eschewing its earlier crudities, the sophistication and productivity of human resource management now seeks control through the organic absorption of the one into the other.

As Andreas Wittel's recent work pointed out, it is not just that 'Personal relationships are becoming more important in the economic field for the simple reason that more practitioners see them as a highly valuable business resource' (Wittel, 2001, p. 54). This kind of instrumentalism is a familiar feature of the high performance learning organization. There is a shift taking place at a much more

fundamental level. Work is now much more playful and yet, as he so tellingly points out, 'the purpose behind this integration of playfulness in work is to perform better. . . . The assimilation of work and play corresponds with the blurring of boundaries between work and private life, between colleagues and friends' (pp. 54 and 69). His argument is that what we are seeing here is something that might turn out to be 'the paradigmatic form of late capitalism and the new cultural economy' (p. 71). This is 'characterized by the assimilation of work and play . . . [and the] . . . increasing commodification and the increasing perception of social relationships as social capital and . . . a move from having relationships towards doing relationships and towards relationship management' (p. 72).

If he is right then there is good reason to be concerned. Those who encourage and benefit most from the collapse of the personal and the functional into each other are those whose interests control the businesses that champion these working practices. I see no trace of playful innocence in these developments. The dangers of the kind of developments that Wittel described suggest that 'personal capture' is unlikely to be solely via the bludgeoning requirement of a modernist management insistent that its employees' 'habits of mind' conform to the vision of the CEO (see Willmott, 1993; Fielding, 2001c). Instead, its ludic counterpart accomplishes the same intention through the pleasurable dissolution of boundaries; distinctions and oppositions that are seen to impede a more holistic utilization of our creative selves are no longer legible to us. Hybridization becomes hermaphroditization: the wider corporate context loosens our grip on our capacity to discern what matters most and most of what matters.

Beyond the betrayal of the high performance learning organization

Whether the high performance learning organization, like capitalism and as a 21st century articulation of it, will continue to renew and reconfigure itself I do not know. But I do care. I care because it is fundamentally corrosive of human flourishing. Performativity is only the latest of many expressions of what is, at best, an exploitative ontology diminishing of our humanity and what is, at worst, a totalitarian/totalizing incorporation of our human being into a project whose purposes are as intentionally opaque as its power is overwhelmingly debilitating.

If the impulse behind the ESRC seminar series 'Challenging the orthodoxy of school leadership' to which this paper contributed is to continue to develop a wider resonance in our field we not only have to name what is fundamentally wrong with contemporary developments in education and in business, we also have to suggest alternatives that do not rest on the same set of flawed assumptions. The challenge we face is to name and repudiate performativity in all its various guises and to construct a sound theoretical base with a companion empirical narrative that uses a more compelling discourse to tell of alternative realities.

In this section of the paper I try, through the notion of a person-centred learning community, to do just that. The philosophical anthropologies that distinguish the

high performance learning organization and the person-centred learning community could not be more stark. As we have just seen, in the 'manipulative mode' of the high performance learning organization the personal is used for the sake of the functional and in its 'totalitarian mode' the personal and the functional collapse into each other, enabling the intravenous hegemony of the functional through the bloodstream of joyous, managed self-fulfilment. In direct contrast, within the 'intentional mode' of the person-centred learning community the functional is for the sake of the personal and in its more developed 'expressive mode' the functional is expressive of the personal.

Person-centred learning community: intentional mode

In its intentional, emergent mode the person-centred learning community is guided by its commitment to the functional arrangements and interactions of the school being firmly committed to wider human purposes. Certainly, the functional is genuinely felt to be for the sake of the personal, but, for a whole range of local and circumstantial reasons, the emphasis is on adapting traditional and more familiar arrangements to try to encourage and extend the school's basic commitment to the development of a learning community.

The organizational architecture of the school is heavily influenced by the acknowledged values and aspirations that express its distinctive character. Wide-ranging formal and informal arrangements amongst staff and between students and staff ensure many voices are heard and engaged. Pastoral and academic arrangements relate to each other synergistically with the needs of young people as persons providing the touchstone of aspiration and the arbiter of difficulty or conflict of interest. CPD is wide ranging in both its processes and its substance. Often collegial, occasionally communal, it is enquiry driven and learning oriented, e.g. encouraging hermeneutic or critical approaches to action research.

Person-centred learning community: expressive mode

In its more fully developed, expressive mode the person-centred learning community is one in which the functional is expressive of the personal, structures and daily practical arrangements having within them distinct traces of person-centred ways of being. Invariably one sees the development of organizational forms that deliberately establish a sense of place, purpose and identity within which emergent, fluid forms of learning are encouraged. The revival of schools within schools and more integrated, co-constructed approaches to curriculum, together with wide-ranging use of the community exemplify commitment to more exploratory modes of being and development. Such schools deliberately develop more participatory, less hierarchical forms of engagement and decision-making. Distinctions between pastoral and academic become more problematic and ultimately less significant. CPD embraces more explicitly dialogic, even narrative forms of engagement, such as action learning

sets and self-managed learning groups, and boundaries between status, role and function are increasingly transgressed through new forms of radical collegiality, e.g. the students as researchers movement.

The 'soulful turn' in leadership and management

What are we to say about leadership and management in a person-centred learning community? Perhaps one of the first things to point out is that it is sometimes very hard to discern the difference between the personalized rhetoric of the high performance learning organization and the genuinely intended realities of the person-centred learning community. The colonization of emancipatory or liberating discourse by those who intend their opposites is a familiar phenomenon, particularly, though by no means exclusively, in the fields of leadership and management in the world of commerce.

Of equal concern is an approach now gaining ground in the USA which, whilst not malign in its intentions, sometimes lacks the intellectual rigour or research orientation to guard against external abuse of its advocacy or the dangers of internal self-deception and over-reliance on the rhetoric of good intent. One might call it the 'soulful' approach to leadership and management. By way of illustration I briefly explore the work of two writers championed by Michael Fullan (2001); they are Roger Lewin and Birute Regine (Lewin & Regine, 2001) whose *Weaving complexity and business: engaging the soul at work* (originally entitled *Engaging the soul at work*) offers an interesting attempt to grapple with some of these difficult issues.

The early pages of their book acknowledge that 'genuine relationships based on authenticity and care' are still 'uncommon in the business world' (p. 9) where there is, to their discomfort, 'a denial . . . a stark omission of the importance of people and valuing them for not only the revenues they bring in, but simply as human beings' (p. 11). Their argument is two-fold. Firstly, if we look at the key lessons being learned from the application of complexity theory in science to the world of business we see that relationships, particularly those based on mutuality, become central rather than peripheral in the work of many successful companies. For them, 'To engage the soul at work is to see people as people, not as employees. It is to assume an intention of goodwill on their part. . . . It is to believe in them, not just the numbers' (p. 16). Secondly,

in the context of complexity science, care, . . . enhances relationships and in turn enhances companies' creativity and adaptability. . . . These companies are all very successful in traditional bottom-line terms, not *despite* being human oriented, but rather, as many CEOs we talked with argue, *because* of it. (Lewin & Regine, 2001, pp. 10, 13)

Creativity, adaptability and productivity emerge from what they term a 'human-oriented' approach to leadership and management.

There are some genuine attempts in the book to acknowledge and work through some of the tensions and dilemmas their preferred approach posed for the

commercial organizations they studied, but in the end their work disappoints as much as it excites, largely because they fail to face up to some of the key issues any person-centred approach needs to acknowledge. Firstly, their research base is uncertain and too prone to adulatory testimony. Secondly, they do not confront the kinds of issues to which writers like Richard Sennett rightly draw our attention, e.g. flexibility and adaptability as sources of oppression rather than development. Thirdly, the collapse of management and leadership into facilitation or, as Lewin and Regine put it ‘cultivation’, sidesteps issues of responsibility, authority and power. Fourthly, there is no acknowledgement of the totalitarian dangers of ‘aligning individual abilities and values with shared purpose’ or of ‘a concerted effort to engage people, not in a superficial way, but fully, the whole person—their feelings, their thoughts, their aspirations—and get them on board in an uncertain journey’ (Lewin & Regine, 2001, p. 257). Fifth, there is no attempt to get beneath the surface advocacy of ‘relationships’ or ‘care’ and really examine their multi-layered, contested realities. Lastly, they have no capacity whatever to acknowledge their own situatedness in a wider social and political system that denies much of their advocacy: thus their championing of ‘sustainability and the fifth relationship’ (with the natural environment) sits uneasily alongside the global activities of US capitalism and their internal reluctance to take responsibility for their disproportionate consumption of the world’s finite resources.

Arguably as important as the specific problematics outlined above are the more profound weaknesses of conception and ideology that their account betrays. As I have argued elsewhere in my critique of Senge’s work (Fielding, 2001c), there is a deeply myopic set of presumptions about the nature of society, hierarchy and the purposes and problematics of organizations, about what Martin Parker so elegantly called ‘the breathless hyperbole of global capitalism’ (Parker, 2002a, p. 7). These presumptions go unremarked and remain unargued and unencumbered by any discernable engagement with critiques of similar kinds of advocacy, such as post-Freudian psychology and humanistic approaches to management, that emerged in the second half of the 20th century. In one of the most eloquent and incisive of these critiques Russell Jacoby (see Jacoby, 1977, especially ch. III ‘Conformist psychology’) argued that concern for things like ‘authenticity’, ‘becoming’, ‘love’, ‘being’ and ‘freedom’ are secured only by the effective dismissal or marginalization of injustice and oppression: ‘An unjust reality is spiritualized away; with some persistence, everyone is or can be free’ (Jacoby, 1977, p. 51). As he said of Maslow, ‘add soul to misery and injustice and they turn soulful and virtuous’ (p. 52) or as he later said of Carl Rogers, the presumption that “‘the Person’ existed in a no-man’s land of free-floating interpersonal relations, and not a society that threatens to reify the last spontaneous movements’ (p. 64) is naive in the extreme. The humanist school of psychology is ultimately a betrayal because ‘In the eagerness to find humanity, it is seen everywhere, forgetting and so perpetrating the social manufacture of inhumanity. . . . Proposed is not the dissolution of dehumanization but its humanization. . . . The blindness towards the reality that desensitizes, the fixation on incidentals, expose the ideological content of the sensitivity’. (pp. 66–67)

Working towards leadership and management in a person-centred learning community

Of course, the kind of challenges Jacoby's work posed to Lewin and Regine apply equally well, at least at first glance, to my own discourse of person-centredness. How then might one begin to characterize an approach to leadership and management that takes seriously some of the specific concerns I have expressed about the 'soulful turn' in leadership theory and the more general critique of an advocacy that seems to fall foul of much that Jacoby had to say?

There are a number of specific responses and recommendations with which to close this paper, but before doing so I want to acknowledge the difficulties posed by certain kinds of left critique and reflect back different kinds of challenge, also from a left-wing perspective, that will help us develop a shared problematic about how we move forward positively in the context of already existing, increasingly global forms of 21st century capitalism.

Jacoby was, of course, quite right in reminding us of the fundamental dangers of interpersonal, social and political forms of engagement that deflect attention away from the deeply unjust nature of the world in which we live. But he is also right in his insistence that 'efforts must remain continually alive to the tension between the "personal" and the "political" without abdicating either or reducing one to the other' (Jacoby, 1977, p. 117). Whether we come at this through debates within, for example, political theory or educational philosophy and care theory (see in particular Noddings, 1999) or via some other pertinent conjunction, my own view is that we must acknowledge the legitimacy of standpoints that underscore the interdependence of fulfilling interpersonal relations, social justice and the nature of the good life.

For me this implies two conditioning requirements of any suggestions for action: the first is that they have within them, individually or in combination, reference to normative structural and organizational change that insists not only on the integrity of ends and means, but also on the actual experience of persons in community as the ultimate arbiter of their legitimacy; the second is that their advocacy of personal and interpersonal flourishing not only acknowledges and understands the persistence of power, but also sets in place arrangements that guide its egalitarian realization. In other words, leadership and management that takes social justice seriously have also to take seriously the dispositions and instantiation of care that ultimately provide the telos towards which social justice aspires: in Macmurray's words 'All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action for the sake of friendship' (Macmurray, 1957, p. 15).

I offer five points with regard to leadership and management within the context of a person-centred framework which seem to me to be particularly pertinent at this juncture. No doubt the list could be longer and more cogently and extensively argued. Nonetheless, my hope is that they resonate in ways which make their further pursuit engaging, worthwhile and sufficiently disruptive of the status quo to worry those who defend its legitimacy.

Integrity of means and ends. The first has to do with the necessity of uniting means and ends, with the functional as expressive of the personal. It is both an overarching aspiration and a practical imperative. Of its many expressions within the context of leadership and management perhaps the most pertinent in our current circumstance have to do with the practical insistence, both in daily work and future planning, of an essentially educational interrogative voice confronting the managerial inclinations of contemporary schooling. How do we resist the reduction of rich notions of education as the development of good persons to thin notions of an impoverished, crudely instrumental schooling? How do we develop forms of engagement with colleagues, students, staff, parents and community that are reciprocal, emergent and inclusive? And how do we develop a legitimate discourse of the personal? How do we tell our stories in a language that names what we care for and opposes what is corrosive of our human being? The wasteland of current discourse, blighted by the dishonesty and pseudo-precision of performativity cannot do that work for us. We have to construct a counter discourse together with others who share our values and our aspirations.

Permanent provisionality. One of the starkest differences between schools operating within high performance rather than person-centred orientations concerns the contrasting timeframes and pressures that condition their work. Essentially episodic in their rhythm and rationale, market-driven approaches valorize contract, clarity and closure (Sennett, 2003, p. 221) over the more subtle and enduring person-centred orientations of collegiality, ambiguity and openness. Whilst high performance discourse articulates and enacts the truculent, often spurious, precision of targets and delivery (Fielding, 2001b), commitment to person-centred approaches requires a more patient, no less purposeful, no less grounded narrative at the heart of which lie dialogue, collective reflection and the restless necessity of a permanent provisionality. The challenge for school leadership is to further develop occasions and opportunities in which both the formal and informal rhythms of daily work and the more special rituals and emblematic circumstances of communal encounter include discursive and dialogic spaces for students and their peers, for staff and students working together, for the staff themselves and for the wider school community.

Radical collegiality. It seems to me that the emergence over the last 10 years or so of what I have called the 'new wave' student voice movement (Fielding, 2004b) also has a legitimate claim on the attention of person-centred leadership. In contrast to high performance approaches, the student voice operating in person-centred mode is explicitly and engagingly mutual in its orientation towards widely conceived educational ends that will often include measurable results but are not constituted or constrained by them. It is about students and teachers working and learning together in partnership, rather than one party using the other for often covert ends (see also Fielding, 1999). Within a person-centred learning community issues of power and hierarchy are at once more transparent and less secure than in other organizational orientations and the place of values explicit and central rather than

peripheral or opaque. Whilst not eradicating either hierarchy or power, the centrality of negotiation, the foregrounding of values and the willingness to work through their consequences in an iterative way, the explicitly exploratory nature of what is undertaken and the tolerance of ambiguity and unpredictability do a great deal to address both in a recursive, ongoing way.

Narrative, a 'sense of sustainable self' and the emergence of democratic public spaces. If Richard Sennett is right in his view that 'short-term capitalism threatens to corrode... character, particularly those qualities of character which bind human beings to one another and furnishes each with a sense of sustainable self' (Sennett, 1998, p. 27) then that is an issue that needs to be addressed by those in management and leadership positions within the school. If we take seriously the questions he asks, namely 'How can long-term purposes be pursued in a short term society? How can durable social relations be sustained? How can a human being develop a narrative of identity and life history in a society composed of episodes and fragments?' (p. 26), part of our answer lies in the nurturing of spaces, both formal (e.g. through action learning sets and critical friendship pairings) and informal (e.g. through continuities of relationship and encounter) where teachers can legitimately place the pressure of their daily work within a less fragmented context of mutually supportive engagement, companionship and enquiry.

These more bounded, sometimes more intimate, more dialogic spaces can also be complemented by the development of a wider, more public, more democratic narrative that is richly textured and multivocal and one that is inclusive of young people as agents in the development of their own and each others' futures. What we now require is the emergence of significant occasions when young people, not just adults, lead dialogue with their peers and with staff, where students and staff involved in radical work encourage the school, or sections of it, to begin to engage as equals, as co-enquirers in and co-contributors to understanding how as a community it helps its members to live good lives together. In taking these aspirations forward we also need to look to the radical traditions of education in our own countries (for recent work in the context of England see, for example, Fielding, 2005a,b in a special double issue of the journal *Forum* devoted to 'Reclaiming the radical tradition in state education').

Problematizing leadership. Finally, as a communal, emancipatory way of being in the world, person-centred education must inevitably be restless about contemporary, perhaps even all, understandings of leadership and management. Like Martin Parker, 'I do not believe there is only one best way for human beings to do organization' (Parker, 2002b, p. 218) nor, like him, do I believe that the usual presumptions of hierarchy are inevitable or desirable. There is, for example, 'no necessary structural reason why the co-ordinators (of any complex organization) should be given higher status and reward positions within the organization. Indeed, they could simply be seen as another part of the organization, no more or less functional or central than other parts.' (p. 220)

The intellectual and practical legacy of both leadership and management has within it much we should be wary of. Maybe the best we can do in the meantime is legitimate that restlessness in ways which force us to ask hard questions, often in ways which are discomfiting and problematic and always in ways that take us back to fundamentals which, in the spirit of post-structuralism and post-humanism (Willmott, 1998), should themselves be unsettled by 'the subversion of closure' (p. 93) or, in my own terms, by a permanent provisionality born of lived experience and the felt necessity of care.

Conclusion

If we are to try to understand and deal with the dilemmas and challenges we face, not just about an inevitably evanescent personalization agenda, but about our nature as persons and the kinds of cultural and structural conditions that enable our flourishing within formal educational contexts, then we have to take our intellectual responsibilities a great deal more seriously than the prevailing anti-intellectual, ahistorical culture of the present allows. Our professional and academic failure to adequately address these matters is leading us, albeit unwittingly, down a totalitarian path along which we have already travelled some distance. Far from ushering in a new era of joyous engagement with the creative adventure of learning, personalization, in at least some of its forms, deepens and extends our malaise. There are already signs that within the so-called transformation agenda social capital, collaboration, networking and personalization are becoming the delivery agents of high performance schooling ushering in a new era of increasingly sophisticated, increasingly dubious forms of influence and control. In its most advanced manifestation personalization is set to become the forerunner of 21st century totalitarianism, promising individual attentiveness and fulfilment at the cost of the very self it seems to so ardently celebrate.

This does not have to be so. Personalization not only has within it the capacity to counter much that is unjust, unkind and pernicious in our formal education system, it also has the capacity to explore and develop forms of engagement and ways of learning that contribute to a wider and deeper human flourishing than the present currently affords us. What I have argued for in this paper is an approach that takes a considered, explicit view of what it is to be and become a person. This view of personhood was then linked to a typology of school orientation and commensurate approaches to leadership and management. In advocating a person-centred approach my hope is that the values and assumptions that underpin it resonate with many of those who work in and with schools. For those holding different values and thus, quite properly, preferring different approaches we will at least be clear about the nature of our disagreements. That is as it should be. What we must avoid at all costs is a specious commonality of ambient hyperbole or mute indifference.

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Notes

1. In a recent response (Fielding, 2006) to what I see as some of the key issues thrown up by the personalization debate I argued, only a little over-zealously, that whilst personalization potentially has much to offer us via the thoughtful work of people like David Hargreaves, Matthew Horne and Jean Rudduck there are at least 10 reasons why one should look at it with some scepticism. These are that it in its current forms it tends to be ahistorical, superficial, insular, technicist, conservative, individualistic, hyperbolic, episodic, calibrated and vacant: ahistorical, because it has no interest in or knowledge of the past; superficial, because it attempts no substantial account of how we become persons; insular, because it fails to draw on any intellectual or professional traditions outside England and the USA; technicist, because its preoccupation with a 'what works' mentality marginalizes ethical, social, political and educational considerations; conservative, because there is no fundamental rethinking of the wider social and political system in which we find ourselves; individualistic, because its preoccupation is with individual choosers with little account taken of the claims of wider social allegiance and the common good; hyperbolic, because much of the advocacy has a tendency to be overblown and clichéd; episodic, because there is a marked absence of personal and communal narrative and any sense of the importance of making meaning of our lives; calibrated, because the language of targets and delivery foreground the imperative of measurement and thus too often marginalizes the emergent and the exploratory; vacant, because dominant approaches to personalization invite us all, particularly teachers, to fill in the blanks in the name of participation and engagement, leaving research and the traditions of intellectual enquiry blinking in bemusement on the sidelines. Insofar as these worries are well founded, personalization is the agent of intellectual and educational poverty.
2. See Fielding (2004a) for a more fully worked philosophical articulation of the theoretical basis and operational consequence of this typology.
3. My thanks to Simon Claridge for helping me to move from more judgemental earlier versions of this mode. In previous work I have used the term 'sentimental' to describe this category. In earlier drafts of this paper I have also tried out 'therapeutic'. I would welcome further comments from anyone who feels this typology is worth developing.

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