

Conversation with Bill Torbert

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RV: I'm really interested in having conversations with people who are doing things that, for me, feed into the idea of an integral approach to leadership. And an integral approach to leadership, it seems to me, is one that is very much concerned with questions of development. And what I'm hoping to do in this interview involves three stages. The first stage is to have you talk a little bit about the role of action inquiry in your work. When I look at materials you have on your web site it is very clear that this has been the heart of your work ever since you were a graduate student. I would like to talk about your perspectives on leadership and leadership development. Third, I'd like you to talk about your current work because you mentioned it has something to do with time, and I'm fascinated to discover what that might be.

BT: Great.

RV: You were a student of Chris Argyris and the whole idea of action inquiry has been central to your work. What is unique about your work in action inquiry?

BT: Although it is definitely true that Chris is a central influence in my life, and that is because he clearly was concerned with putting action and inquiry together, it's also true that at the same time as I met him at Yale I also got to know Bill Coffin, the Yale minister. He's sometimes called the white Martin Luther King, was very involved in the Civil Rights movement, was one of the first Freedom Riders, and later stood in the opposition to the Vietnam War.

There should be a relationship not just between social science theory and professional action, but also between spiritual inquiry and political acts. Chris was relatively conservative, not spiritually oriented and not politically oriented. Bill Coffin was more radically oriented.

And at the same time I was getting to know, not what we think of as philosophy

today, but real Socratic inquiry where you are taking action in the conversation and having an influence on one another, almost an alchemical influence. At the same time I found my way into the Gurdjieff Work. This direct spiritual work is a work on attention. Through Plato, Bill Coffin and the Gurdjieff Work, I had a sense that the kind of action inquiry I wanted to do was not only professional in nature, but personal, spiritual and political. It was meant to affect my every waking moment.

All of those were playing a role when I started to inquire further into Yale and the graduate program with Chris Argyris. I took an intervention theory course with him years before he wrote his intervention theory and method book [**Intervention Theory and Method**, 1970-ed.] and years before he had come up with the name action science. In fact, it was my 1976 book, **Creating a Community of Inquiry**, about the Yale Upward Bound Program that I had founded that first introduced the term action science.

I went into the doctoral program in Individual and Organizational Behavior with the understanding that I could study myself trying to take some action in some way. This turned out to be leading the Yale Upward Bound program: creating it and getting the original grant for it. When it turned out that there was nobody of a proper age to lead it, the Yale people let me do it at the tender age of 22. I was not intervening in a large, Fortune 100 corporation, which was more typical of Chris's work. I was engaged in a very incendiary interracial situation that had a political element to it. It had a profound educational element in it in that the students in my program had never had a good experience in school before. I was working with people who really didn't necessarily share my sense of rationality at all.

RV: What I'm getting as I'm listening to you is already an integral flavor to the way you're engaging with the world or at least with a notion of action inquiry. Not only were you doing an inquiry into the context -- the systems, the environments around you -- but you were also engaged in conscious self-development, a process that could only happen in that context.

BT: Exactly. It seemed to me that the people who ought to be most affected by an action were the initiators of the action. Even though the intent was also to have an influence over somebody else, if you didn't see yourself as learning and transforming through the action, then it seemed to me you were almost certainly off base in a profound way. I'm not coming up with the way in which I knew that at the time except for the fact of all these different influences.

I read Plato's Symposium about Alcibiades who later became the leading general during the Peleponissian Wars. He was the great corporate raider of the third

century BC, moving his allegiances back and forth between Athens, Sparta and Persia, trying to create a just environment in a situation in which none of the states seemed just to him. And there he was, as a student of Socrates, saying that only Socrates could make him feel his nothingness. This seems to me to be the place from which all possibility begins -- the meeting of the inner and the outer in the moment when, listening beyond one's ego, one feels one's nothingness. This is the actual experience of what we're now calling integral.

RV: Was it there in the meetings between Socrates and Alcibiades implicitly or explicitly?

BT: Quite explicitly. Gurdjieff said that the resolution between free will and necessity is that we have the possibility of free will. In ordinary light we don't really exercise free will because we're moved around by all these forces, not just external forces that are studied in social science but psychic, archetypal, cosmic forces as well.

RV: I'm reminded of the quote that you have to become somebody before you can become nobody. This speaks to the role of consciousness and awareness before one can become one with God or whatever.

BT: Or Gandhi's now much bandied about phrase "We need to become the change we wish to see in the world."

RV: Yes. And so was that really what you were about as you were doing this Upward Bound work, that you were trying to become the change that you wished to see in the world?

BT: I didn't think those words at that time. But I guess the answer is yes, because first of all I thought it's just too late in world history for another prophet of the future. I have got to do whatever it is I think is right, rather than just write books about it. That was a very important reason for wanting to start the Upward Bound program. I didn't feel very confident. I just knew I couldn't do it any other way.

RV: That reminds me also of a quote from an interview Michael Toms did with Sir Lawrence Vanderpost, about 1994, in England: "At the moment people are saying as if they're bewildered, why haven't we got any great leaders. Why haven't we got another Churchill? Why haven't we got another Roosevelt, or somebody to show us the way?: And he says, "Well it's simply because nature is telling us it's projection. The age of leaders has come and gone. Every person must be his or her own leader now. You must remove your projection and contain the spirit of our time in your own life and your own nature, because to go the old way and follow your

leader is a form of psychological imprisonment. We want to be emancipated from that age, and the answer is to profoundly reappraise your realms of government and everything else."

BT: Right. I was very determined when I started Upward Bound to do it in this incredible collaborative way with the staff and not be a traditional leader and so forth. The first week of school we went out to a camp an hour out of New Haven with the students and tried to create the constitution of the school with them. It was chaotic.

RV: In the best sense, perhaps?

BT: That's right, because one of the things I realized afterwards was that we had 60 students and I had learned all the students' names in the first 48 hours. We were all running around trying to get everybody to have a meeting and nobody would go to bed at night and so forth. The outcome was that we all knew each other very well. It did have some positive elements of chaos in it. We did actually create a number of fundamental rules for the school. But these were kids who had never lived a "rule-ly" life in any sense of the word. We struggled all summer, but we did cut the New Haven high school drop out rate in half the next year for two primary reasons. One, the kids began to have some hope in themselves because somebody cared about them. Two, we learned that most of them needed glasses. They were having a lot of their trouble reading simply because they couldn't see the words, although there were many other problems, too.

RV: In the spirit of the integral perspective what did you learn about yourself in that process?

BT: One of the things that I couldn't understand is why the staff needed so much attention. I thought I was paying them to take care of things. It was completely astonishing to me, but a very important learning. I couldn't take the staff for granted and assume we were all on the same side and were going to the same place or that the kids were the only focus of attention.

As the director, my primary focus needed to be the staff. I needed to create a real team that could work effectively with the students. People told me after my first summer -- my best friend told me -- "You don't get people's loyalty. You don't understand that you need to befriend the staff, not just the students." I was sort of a beloved fellow but one who was viewed as being completely visionary and not really effective in these incredibly tense circumstances.

The other thing that I learned over two years is that you can't start out in a pure

collaborative mode because, in fact, most people aren't prepared to collaborate. This creates a terrific irony for leadership. It must work toward collaboration or else there isn't significant human development and you don't end up with an effective organization. But you can't mandate collaboration.

This gradually led me, as I went to SMU after finishing at Yale. I worked with 400 students at a time trying to get them to become entrepreneurs. Of course the students didn't want to do much except drink, go to football games and live on Daddy's money.

We learned to create what I eventually called liberating disciplines. This was a form of organization structure that did give guidance to people, but in such a way that they had to develop skills to guide themselves. The more they developed those skills, the less they got guided. They could work themselves out of being directed by other people if they wanted to. That was my biggest political discovery ever. I have been sort of sad that it hasn't been picked up at all by anybody else, because in a way I think I actually figured out how to do Marx's Dictatorship of the Proletariat in a way that would end up with liberation rather than tyranny.

RV: It sounds like you've laid the foundation for a developmental perspective in suggesting that there are stages, layers, needing to be established in order for higher levels or layers to thrive.

BT: Right. I first discovered that, by looking back at the Upward Bound program and seeing stages in the organization's development. Only after working out a theory of that did I come back and see that, of course, most of the theory that already existed was about individual development. They were really parallel. Both things are true. This eventually leads one to the idea that the notion of timing is critical to effective action, because you have to have a sense of the developmental logic of the systems, of the people and of yourself. That will determine what's right about the leadership action at a particular time, rather than some ideology that tells you what's right at all times.

RV: I noticed in your 1993 book, **Sources of Excellence**, you are focusing on business leadership. What was it about business leadership or organizational leadership that attracted you?

BT: When I got here to Boston College as Dean of the MBA program, I realized that I was engaged in a traditional leadership function. At the same time we were trying to educate leaders. At that point I began to look at business leadership and political leadership in a more disciplined way than I had before. But it 's hard to say exactly when it began because in a way it goes back right to Bill Coffin. I was

excited by him, because he was a leader who was both intellectual and practical.

My 1991 book, **The Power of Balance**, has a whole chapter on philosopher kings and queens. I discuss six contemporary leaders, most of whom are not that well known and who exhibited a capacity for developmental leadership and effect. The 1987 book, **Managing the Corporate Dream**, is also heavily focused on business leadership.

RV: In Sources of Excellence you indicate that you were doing what you called "a highly critical re-reading of modern history and economic theory from a perspective that speaks about and attempts to illustrate an unusual process of upstream leadership that is set properly to complement productive, goal-oriented downstream leadership." Could you say something about this concept?

BT: The ultimate idea about action inquiry is to be both in action and inquiry at the same time. Our attention normally runs downstream. We're attracted to a topic for some reason or other, maybe because of our own intention. It passes through our thought, into words and gestures and out to another person. That's the way attention normally flows. I call that the downstream flow of attention. The upstream flow is back from "What am I seeing," "What kind of reaction am I getting from the outside world." Are my actions in fact appropriate and having the influence I intend them to? I first question whether my performance at the bodily visible level is adequate. I might change that. That would be single loop learning. At the same time the response questions my overall structure or strategy, my action logic. I may need to do some double loop learning and change the way I'm going about this whole thing or what I imagine is really happening. Then, finally, if I'm open enough to it, there could be a question that flows all the way back. This is triple loop feedback that goes back to the way I'm attending in the first place. That's the upstream direction. A great upstream leader is one who re-galvanizes people's vision and questions the way in which they have been seeing things. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are the two great Presidents for creating the vision of union and recreating the vision of union in the midst of action.

RV: By moving into triple loop learning, aren't you getting into the question of meaning and identity?

BT: Absolutely. I think both double loop and triple loop do. I see any developmental transformation as a double loop change. The action logic of the person or the system changes. And in your early action logic is your identity. It's the quality of the later action logics that they recognize that any particular structure I'm working in isn't necessarily my identity. My identity is actually in the ongoing action and inquiry into a particular action logic.

RV: When you speak of action logic what model are you referring to?

BT: It's the phrase that I've come to use for what other people call developmental stages. I think the notion of stages is very abstract and raises all sorts of problems about it, especially at the later developmental action logics. The latest action logics aren't stage-like in their nature. They don't capture you in the way the earlier ones do. In Kegan's notion of subject and object, in each movement towards a later developmental position you take the action logic you were formerly subject to and turn it into object. You manipulate it by yourself. This moves us to a place where we can be so alert and awake that we recognize that our every thought is simply an expression of a particular action logic. We're not caught by any of our action logics or we're caught for shorter periods of time. We're able to swim back upstream again. We experience that part of the problem we just created was by getting identified or stuck in a particular action logic.

RV: In the book that you co-wrote, **Personal and Organisational Transformations**, what I might have thought of as stages, like Opportunist, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever, Individualist, Strategist, Magician, these are all different kinds of action logics.

BT: Yes, I like this theme a lot better. A lot of the earlier works have words like stages, but that's what I mean. In my understanding of each of these action logics, they aren't simply mental logics. They encompass your action repertory and, at the same time, limit or widen it, depending on the quality of the action logic.

RV: What is the relationship between action logics and vMememes in Spiral Dynamics?

BT: I think there's a close relationship. I think we're looking at the same phenomena and seeing them very nearly the same.

RV: Is there something that differentiates this work from Spiral Dynamics?

BT: We're gradually exploring that through people like Susann Cook-Greuter, who is really looking at the way they work methodologically. I've read some of the stuff. I'm unable to find the real core of the research base of it, even though I've looked a bit. I've looked at some stuff about the original work and it 's just hard to find the original data, but when I read about the different colors, they're similar in some ways and different in some ways. Don Beck and Jenny Wade are both now talking about there being two ways of moving from the conventional to the post conventional: an adaptation of the feminist work on individual achievement vs. a more communal orientation. I haven't been able to find empirical support for that myself. In my work it seems that it is progressive. What I call the Expert is the

more tightly bound, more archetypically masculine perspective. The Achiever is a slightly more feminine, relational position. They have their sequence working a little bit differently at that point. Their blue seems to me to be very, very, very close to my Diplomat. Green seems to be very close to what we are now calling the Individualist, the position in between Achiever and Strategist that we hadn't differentiated for a long time, even though it can be differentiated in the scoring system.

RV: In the book you actually link them together.

BT: Yes. We're doing another edition and we're going to break out the Individualist some more along with the parallel organizational stage that we'll probably call the Social Network.

RV: We're bandying around a couple of terms that I want to check to see what the quality of meaning is for you. The two terms are leader and leadership. What is the relationship between those two terms in your mind? Are they the same? Is one just the larger picture of the other or what?

BT: First, I think it is good to separate the notion of leader or leadership from any particular role in an organization. A CEO may or may not function actually as a leader. There has been a lot of discussion of the distinction between management and leadership or a manager and a leader. An Achiever can be an effective manager and a Strategist can be an effective leader. A Strategist in any position in an organization is likely to take leadership. And a Strategist is also someone who recognizes that you don't want to isolate leadership in a single person, so the Strategist will tend to try to create a collaborative situation in which multiple people can exercise leadership, whatever their formal position. By contrast, an Achiever and the earlier action logics will tend to see leadership more hierarchically and will tend to identify themselves as the leader in an exclusive way rather than as a leader who can facilitate more general leadership.

RV: There may be a pattern of meaning associated with leadership at each of the action logics.

BT: Oh, definitely, that's right! I do think that. One of the sentence stems we added to the Loevinger Sentence Completion Test, because there were no sentences relating to managers, is a sentence stem which says, "A good boss ..." It would be fascinating to do an article just on what Diplomats say about the boss compared to what Experts say vs. what Achievers and Strategists say. One of the things you find is that at the later action-logics, people don't like the notion of boss. And so they'll often pick an argument with the beginning of the sentence

stem.

RV: I remember when I did it I think my response was something very brief, something like, "A good boss is no boss." What have you learned about the performance of CEO's looking through these lenses?

BT: I think they are the vortex of the paradox of leadership. Given what I've learned, I believe that the CEO is tremendously important because there are people of all action logics in his or her organization. It's not going to cut the mustard to simply be lovey-dovey and advocate collaboration. It just isn't enough. There are emergencies and there are times when the CEO has to put their ass on the line, partly because other people won't do it and partly because people are projecting their needs for leadership onto the CEO.

There is this constant movement back and forth between performing in a way that earlier stage people will recognize as leadership and performing in a way that gradually involves the entire organizational system so that the members of the organization evolve out of those early action logics. I remember when I came here and wanted to lead a major change in the MBA curriculum (which eventually turned the curriculum into an action oriented one rather than merely a bunch of separate courses and separate disciplines). I had no credibility at the outset.

One of the first things I did was unilaterally send out a memo saying, "It has come to my attention that professors fail students in courses and then change the failure later to an Incomplete by allowing the student to do something more in order not to get a failure." I said, "It's perfectly legitimate to give somebody an Incomplete when you have negotiated with the student and they can't finish the course and you agree that they will do something after it's over. You hand in your Incomplete and when they finish you change the grade. There is a grade change form for that. But if a student has simply failed and has failed to make an agreement with you about how to complete the course, then that's a Failure. There will no longer be any changes of failures into Incompletes."

I was only reasserting a University policy, but I did it unilaterally. It was nonsense. There is a bottom line here in terms of basic quality. It made people respect me; it was little things like that. And then we had a big emergency. I had my first student meeting when I was hoping to make friends with the students and get to know people. I had come in the middle of a semester and they virtually had placards out denouncing one particular teacher from a minority population. The teacher was just really fundamentally inadequate, but once a person is teaching a course you can't usually change them during the course.

Through a series of conversations he agreed to step down and somebody else volunteered to step in. In three days I had gotten a change in the teacher through a completely consultative and collaborative process, but still, completely led by me. Those early incidents began to give people confidence that I would take action in real cases for relatively just outcomes and that I couldn't be pushed around too much. Slowly, slowly over the next year we developed a collaborative team that eventually persuaded the faculty to pass this curriculum.

RV: Oh. All of this has led to some findings as you've applied these to doing your research. You've actually had some findings about CEO performance. Could you summarize those?

BT: Well, the findings we're talking about right now come from a post hoc study. Several of my collaborators, including the Harthill group in England -- David Rooke is my co-author on the main study -- and I had done a number of consulting engagements, many of them over a period of several years. We were interested in seeing whether we could help organizations transform more than once. Of course, these were all cases in which we had been invited in by somebody, not always at the initiative of the CEO. Sometimes it would be somebody else in the organization who took the initiative, usually somebody at the vice-presidential level. In a number of cases, it was the CEO.

Just the fact that they were interested in this kind of work indicated that, on average, they might be slightly later action logic than you'd expect to find in the general population. We did ask them, on a voluntary basis, if they and their senior teams would like to get feedback on the sentence completion tests. So all the CEO's and most of the members of their teams took these and received feedback on them.

What we found was that half of the CEO's measured at the Strategist stage. This is characterized as more mutually oriented and more timing oriented. It is more oriented towards action inquiry without necessarily knowing the word, but just more able to do first and second person inquiry as well as more formal third person inquiry, say about their competitive situation.

Half of the CEO's were at an earlier action logic: one diplomat, two experts and two achievers. After several years we felt quite effective with them, but we realized when we started to talk about it that there were several cases where we had not been effective. We decided to do a study of it.

We got three of us who had been deeply involved to identify the organizational stages, which had never been quantified before. We had paragraph descriptions of

them as well as quite a few case illustrations. We all knew these ten cases that we had been involved with quite well. Three of us each independently tried to use our knowledge of the organizational stage theory to make judgments about whether they had transformed or not, and how much.

We were first of all delighted to discover that we had very high reliability on the findings and basically agreed on all ten cases. In one case we had a disagreement about just how many transformations had occurred. So we had a more than .9 reliability on that. What we found was that all five of the CEO's who were at the Strategist action logic had been associated with successful transformations, on average two successful transformations. All the cases where there was no transformation, and the one case in which there was regression, were associated with CEO's who were at earlier action logics than the Strategist.

Another interesting point we didn't make in the article was that all the consultants measured at the Strategist or later than Strategist logic. The one who measured at a later than Strategist action logic was the only one who was associated with CEOs who were not yet Strategists but who nevertheless supported organizational transformation with the help of the consultant. That seems to suggest that perhaps a very late action-logic consultant can actually bridge the dilemma of a CEO who really isn't up to fully modeling the collaborative role. Somehow, this consultant can influence that CEO to get involved in changes that permit other people to start developing in the organization. But that was just one consultant and two CEOs. This doesn't have a lot of weight as a quantitative finding.

RV: Was there any link between these transformations and the bottom line for these companies?

BT: Oh, absolutely! We studied that separately. The bottom line, the position in the industry and the reputation of the company all changed very, very positively for the companies that had positive transformations. The two that simply didn't transform were more or less treading water and may be slightly worse off at the end in terms of bottom line and industry standing. The one that regressed experienced tremendous negative effects on industry position and even some ethical issues. In that one, by the way, the consultant resigned from the job because of the repeated incapacity to have any influence. In the end the CEO resigned.

RV: Was there comparability of intervention methodologies across the cases?

BT: In a general there was a strong compatibility. I've just done another sort of analysis of this where I now have this model of 27 different types of action

research. I've been counting up how many different kinds of action research get used in different cases, and I applied this to the earlier study of the ten organizations. There wasn't any kind of precise comparability because the methods really were tailor made for each separate situation. However, always a part of the intervention at some point would be to try to develop a culture where every meeting at the senior management level had all members of the meeting exercising the leadership role (as they became adept with this they would take this approach to their subordinates and so on down). This goes back to our question of leadership. We were really trying to develop a distributed sense of leadership in a formal way. We created five or six or seven different leadership roles and then they would get gradually rotated around the team over a period of several years.

RV: You would have a rotating Chair at the meeting, for example, and things like that.

BT: Exactly right! You'd have the meeting Chair, the agenda creator, the process manager, the assessment person who would provide at the end of the meeting a little instrument or a little five minute debriefing. You'd have somebody in charge of projects that were supposed to be completed by the team in between meetings. This would smarten things up and get people feeling like you got results from meetings. People got a lot of feedback about their leadership capacities. That's just one of a dozen or more types of action research that were conducted in each organization. Participation in taking the sentence completion tests and receiving feedback was a common one, and so on.

RV: Are there any kind of guiding principles of what effective leadership is or what organizations need to do to develop leadership?

BT: In **Sources of Excellence** I say there are four leadership virtues. They correspond to this notion of four territories of reality: the outside world, one's own performance, one's action logic and the capacity for attention or vision. Visioning is one of the leadership virtues. That's obviously not particular to me. A lot of people have said it, but I'm talking about generating increasingly wide and deep visioning throughout a family, organization or society that goes beyond quantitative development (e.g. larger market share) to include qualitative development (e.g. a triple bottom line that integrates environmental, social, and economic sustainability).

The second virtue I call empowering, which is also no new thing but it doesn't just mean empowering other people. I speak of it as exercising power in an appropriately vulnerable, mutuality enhancing, transforming way.

The third leadership virtue I call timing. I speak of artistry in action -- performance that weaves together the immediate, the long term and the eternal.

RV: That's beautiful. And the fourth?

BT: The fourth virtue I call schooling. Creating learning organizations where adults simultaneously learn and produce.

RV: There are two things that I really wanted to have you comment on before we're through. One is it seems to me that there is really a quality of the artistic in what you're doing with action inquiry because you not only do the academic thing, but you also seem to include other kinds of models and perspectives -- poetry and art, for example. Will you talk about that? And then I would like to go on and get into the timing piece a little bit.

BT: They're not disconnected. A timely performance is an artistic performance. It can't be generated by rules. It can't be generated by generalizations. It has to be mediated by an awareness that is connected to movement in the moment.

Sources of Excellence is a series of lectures. It was a live performance. In the middle of the book is a series of pieces of art that I displayed at the lectures. I was trying to embody the ideas, not just talk about them.

Before I came to BC I spent two years creating another organization called the Theater of Inquiry. That was meant to help me develop my capacities for artistic performance and at the same time create an environment that really raised a question with people as to what they ought to be doing at each moment. That created a frame that was not a frame. It was a frame that could not be taken for granted in various activities. But there were various different activities, an Action Workshop in which when you came into the room you didn't know whether you were supposed to sit or stand. I wanted to introduce people to keeping an ongoing upstream questioning alive at the same time as achieving downstream results.

RV: It sounds like method acting.

BT: It had a relation to that, I suppose. We had another activity called The Business/School for people who wanted to start their own businesses. We started our own business as a way of teaching people how to start a business. Another kind of activity was a series of Public Performances in which the first act was a presentation to the audience, sometimes by several actors as well as me. Then the second act was a series of exercises performed with the audience. The third act was a conversation about what the hell all of this meant. Each one was a rather

tense event because each one was totally unique. There was an effort not to create a coercive environment for the audience. It was an intense developmental event because audiences come expecting to be entertained relatively passively. We transformed that expectation. There had been this group called the Living Theater in the late sixties and early seventies that sort of attacked audiences, exposed themselves and forced them to do things. I said, "No, that's not the kind of leadership that I want to model or that I want to generate." I was searching around for how to do this.

RV: Where did you do this?

BT: It was here in Boston. I had come back from California. I had twin sons and I didn't have a job at the time. Luckily I eventually got this Graduate Deanship at BC. In the meantime I made a little money doing this other thing. The theater performances were at the Harvard School of Education in their nice Longfellow Hall. I had a sculptor friend who let me use his studio for my action workshops. I begged, borrowed and stole basically.

RV: You were very much being an entrepreneur.

BT: Well, yes, and not a very successful one from an economic point of view, but we survived.

RV: From what I understand about entrepreneurs it takes them about eight tries or more to be able to be successful.

BT: That's right. My next entrepreneurial role was as a pagan Graduate Dean in a Jesuit graduate school.

RV: Wonderful.

BT: It worked better that time. I've been at BC for 23 years.

RV: Great. So then what is this about time? I know you were just doing a workshop in England. You were talking about doing something around time while you were there, and you've brought up the subject of timing a couple of times during this conversation.

BT: We had a wonderful seminar in England, at Bath, with their Center for Action Research and Professional Practice that Peter Reason and Judy Marshall direct.

Peter is one of the co-authors of the Handbook of Action Research, which came out

two years ago. He and Judy Marshall have been wonderful collaborators with me, with one another, with their students and with a lot of other people over the years. He is a wonderful person who brings people from different disciplines together. "Cooperative inquiry" is one of his phrases and "participatory world view" is one of his concerns. But in any event, I raised a question with the 30 people who were there: "Let's have each of us think about an occasion when we think we exercised timely action, or an occasion that is upcoming when we desperately want to be timely. What does it mean?"

We had a great conversation about why I care about it so much. Well, because I think first of all that all of our life and with all of our knowledge, if we understood it correctly we 'd be aiming toward the present moment instead of trying to have absolute certainty about the whole world. What we would want is to be wakeful and attuned to the present situation and provide the best leadership we possibly can in it. That kind of knowledge isn't a "Well this is the answer to everything" kind of knowledge. It is a live inquiry in the moment. I understand that we're trying to create a greater intensity of action inquiry in each moment rather than a greater certainty that will cover all moments.

RV: I understand that from the point of view of awareness, consciousness and development that we can only take action and be powerful in the moment. However, we can have intuition, imagination, and so forth. That allows us to tentatively anticipate the future as well as to learn from the past. So there is a role for memory, as distorted as it may be, as well as a role for intuition.

BT: Absolutely, but their role is to aim toward the present. We want to remember the past for the purpose of seeing the patterns leading up to the present moment, that is, what kind of pattern we're performing in, what game we're playing now, actually. We want to bring a new possibility to life in this moment based on what we want for the future.

RV: Our aspirations.

BT: Based on our aspirations or our intentions. This idea of 27 different kinds of action research is that there are nine kinds of research in the past, nine in the present and nine in the future, but they all come back into the present which is at the center of it. We want to know our intentions for the future in order to know how to act now.

RV: I've heard Fred Kaufmann say something to the effect that consciousness is a critical business skill and it sounds like you're saying something like that.

BT: One doesn't know what one is doing without it. One doesn't know how far one is from knowing what one is doing without it. One must be conscious of how limited one's awareness is in order to inquire deeply enough in the present, in order to find out what needs doing. What's the priority?

RV: You had this dialogue about time and orientation to time in England. What was your take away from that experience?

BT: I'll get a chance to really find out what my take away was when I get on my email, because I invited them all to write up their experiences. Then I will share the data with everybody in the place. There was a videotape of the event and I guess a transcription will be made of it. In some ways I haven't even begun to assess the take away. We really engaged the questions that you and I have just opened up here about the past and the future and the present and how they relate to one another. We also discussed how some of the women were arguing that by stressing intention I was occluding attention, and that attention is receptive and intention is projecting and that I was being too masculine.

I certainly didn't disagree with the point. The need to awaken a finer and deeper attention is a critical need, and part of what that attention is for is to determine one's own intention. My notion is that these three qualities of time that we call past, present and future, really are three distinct dimensions. When we talk about past we're really talking about the durational quality of time or the linear quality of time.

When we're talking about the present, we're talking about a dimension orthogonal to linear time, the eternal now. It's not a quality that we experience all the time. Most of the time we're not even aware we're in the present, we're not aware that we can cultivate the experience of duration and the experience of the eternal now through an active listening. The third dimension of time, the future, is the volume of all possibilities. To research the future I have to research the volume of possibilities. That means I have to get outside any limiting frames based on my past. This is a daunting notion.

RV: Is there a challenge at each of those different action logics around each of those three?

BT: What happens up until the Strategist stage is that people take their action-logic frames for granted as the very nature of reality itself. They may have moments of experience that could be named "eternal now," but they don't know what to make of them, they don't know anything about cultivating them particularly, and they don't even have a sense of the importance of duration. Most

people's thought is categorical in the sense that there are some things that are always right to do and some things that are always wrong to do. The notion that there is something right for a particular time is a notion that only begins at the Strategist stage. That's when people become interested in history the things that lead us to think the way we do now, lead our families to be the way they are, or lead our country to be the way it is. A really serious thought about that affects the person thinking, his or her own life and destiny. It affects professional thinking about history, which of course anybody at any stage could do. It is only at the later action logics that time becomes more important than space, that mind becomes more important than matter. At the earlier stages matter is felt to be more significant than time. What already exists determines what is going to be.

RV: That brings me to what may be our closing notion. That has to do with the question of development itself. Do you see people actually moving between these action logics in a lifetime? Do people who are Achievers, for example, become Individualists? Do Individualists become Strategists, and so forth? Or is that really something that is quite difficult to do?

BT: It's certainly difficult to do. In the general populations that we've measured the modal stage is the Expert stage. This implies that for most people most development stops after high school. Most people never do make another developmental transformation

On the other hand, we've measured people who have made developmental transformations and I know their stories because I've known them well for years. I have seen people move from one stage to another over a period of time. When I was a Dean at BC and running the action effectiveness program we would take the top 10-12 students each year (the best students would apply for it) and make them consultants to the next year's first-year students. The first-year students would work in teams and would have to do various things together, each person taking different leadership roles, etc.

The people who volunteered for the consulting role went through a really intense process over both years. Almost 100% of them transformed from one action-logic to another, although almost none of the other students in the MBA program did. Our first year program, part of whose point was to help people transform, wasn't powerful enough. It took the second year and the sort of minority who were intrigued enough and already moved enough by the process to want to engage in it more. They by in large did transform.

For years we had an alumni group that wanted to continue working together. It was made up almost entirely of people who had been in this consulting role. Again,

we found that over a 3-5 year period a number of them transformed according to the measure and according to our experience of them.

RV: I have a hypothesis that probably most of the people who are reading this are going to be either Achievers or Individualists, with maybe some Strategists and Magicians thrown in, and if there's an Ironist out there I want to know who it is.

BT: They won't tell you.

RV: They won't tell me, right. For those Achievers and Individualists who aspire to some of these lofty heights, do you have any advice for them?

BT: I do think it is tremendously helpful to become familiar with this theory, because it does lay out some of the markings of a path that seems to be consistent across religious traditions and so forth. There is a path and knowing a little bit about it helps. But then, you know you can't just read books and you can't just go to groups and talk about it. You have to engage in first person and second person research. You have to get engaged in some kind of personal discipline: meditative, martial arts. You have to get engaged in some kind of second person discipline where it really counts -- some kind of dialogue or team that's really trying to do something, where there are real problems and you have to try to bring your first person research, your meditation or martial art, to the second person setting. You have to be trying to do the three types of research, first, second and third person, subjective, intersubjective, and objective research. You have to be trying to do them. Not everybody does it by being a social scientist obviously. Some people do them through the crafts and the arts, dancing and theater.

RV: Is there anything that either you have published or that you would recommend that someone look at that describes this in more detail?

BT: There's huge numbers of things on the practice of development. Anybody who is reading your stuff knows the major authors of developmental theory, at least the contemporary ones.

It is very important to find an oral tradition, to find mentors as you read about developmental theory. As you read about late action-logic leaders in *The Power of Balance* (which is out of print, but available by e-mailing me), ask yourself whom you know who seems late stage. Students will write about a leader in the company and say, "I see him every now and then and he's just like you described the Strategist." They give a very convincing description of how this person acts in meetings and so forth. I say, "Go and ask that person to be your mentor." That sort of person loves that request even though they are very busy and probably

three ranks above you. "Go and ask them." Well, most people never get up the guts to do it. But to me that's been the key for me. I went to these people who were way beyond me, Bill Coffin and Chris Argyris. And I just got engaged with them. I think that's an important thing for people to do.

RV: Having that leader in a developmental sense in our own lives is really important. It's like taking leadership in your own life. You do it in relation to a leader who has demonstrated already how to do it.

BT: When I got to be 21, I thought that I now needed 21 years of adult education.

RV: Is there anything I haven't asked you that you wish I had?

BT: Well, it's wonderful, you know, you're such a great interviewer. You can see I just go wild and I expect you to rein me in. I've loved how you have managed to stay on point and weave a pattern into the conversation as I go wild. I just want to really appreciate how much fun this has been.