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Action Inquiry: Interweaving Multiple Qualities of Attention for Timely Action

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This chapter describes action inquiry, a kind of social science that can generate timely action. First, action inquiry studies not just the past, but also the present and future. Second, it is a form of research that is conducted simultaneously on oneself, the first-person action inquirer, on the second-person relationships in which one engages, and on the third-person institutions of which one is an observant participant. Third, it generates not just single-loop feedback that incrementally improves a stock of knowledge, but also double- and triple-loop transformations of structure, culture, and consciousness that influence ongoing interaction. The chapter describes how first-person action inquiry in the present explores four distinct but interweaving 'territories of experience,' which sometimes feel mutually aligned and sometimes dissonant. It further describes how second-person action inquiry on the emergent future crafts four distinct but interweaving 'parts of speech' to generate increasing shared vision and inquiring collaborative practice. It then offers and analyzes a few minutes of first- and second-person collaborative inquiry to illustrate these ideas. The chapter closes by introducing a third-person generalizable theory, and some of the quantitative empirical evidence supporting it, that describes how individuals, organizations, and science itself can transform to the point of practicing ongoing timely inquiry and action.

Developmental action inquiry (Fisher and Torbert, 1995; Torbert, 1976, 1987, 1991; Torbert et al., 2004) offers both a holistic approach and specific analytic tools to combine inquiry and action in the accomplishing of specific objectives, in the testing of one's

data, interpretations, and assumptions, and in seeking to live one's life most fruitfully, valuably, and justly with others.

Developmental action inquiry is a process for searching, not just to distinguish between valid and illusory patterns in data from the past, but also for patterns and incongruities between strategy and performance in the present, as well as among possible visions, strategies, and specific goals for the future (Ogilvy, 2002; Senge et al., 2004; Torbert, 2000b, 2002). Also, developmental action inquiry studies not just things and practices outside the inquirer (third-person objects and practices), but also the inquirer's own changing practices, ways of thinking, and quality of attention (first-person research on 'my'-self), as well the interactions, norms, governance, and mission of the specific persons and groups with whom one is working or playing (second-person research on 'our' commun[ication]al process) (Chandler and Torbert, 2003).

Just as third-person quantitative and qualitative research seek validity through triangulating among different third-person methods, so does the developmental action inquiry approach offer the opportunity for triangulation among first-person subjective research methods (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Foldy, 2005), second-person intersubjective research methods (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1994), and third-person objective research methods (McGuire et al., 2007). The goal is to inquire into and transform personal and social experiences *in a timely way* within three domains: the domain of objective, instrumental results; the domain of intersubjective ethical and political interactions; and the domain of subjective aesthetic and spiritual disciplines (Wilber, 1998). *The encompassing aims in action inquiry are to increase one's own and others' capacity to appreciate and cultivate transformation, integrity, mutuality, justice, and sustainability for ourselves, for our groups, and for our institutions.*

This type of experiential/empirical triangulation is accomplished, not primarily by adding to a third-person body of consensual knowledge through articles like this (although such work can play a part), but rather more by the growing capacity of the acting system (whether person, team, or nation) to experience and be in a productive and mutually emancipatory dialogue with difference, diversity, and incongruity in each event, *as is timely*. This occurs, in turn, through inquiry-based first- and second-person actions in the present and for the emerging future (as will be illustrated below) that treat ongoing experience at any given time as either harmoniously consonant, or as dissonant in one way or another, leading to adjustments. In the frequent case of experienced dissonance, there are four choices: 1) deny or externalize the dissonance (by far our most common minute-to-minute, day-to-day procedure as individuals, communities, and institutions); 2) to treat the dissonance as *single-loop feedback* (leading to a change in *practice* if the intended result is not being achieved); or 3) *double-loop feedback* (leading to a transformation of *strategy*); or 4) *triple-loop feedback* (leading to a change in quality of *attention*). (Complexity theory offers a different, but not incompatible, theoretical language for describing emergently complexifying (and de-complexifying) self-organizing *in medias res* by children; but the complexity theory approach offers little as yet in the way of first- and second-person tools for intentional adult action inquiry; Fischer and Bidell, 2006.)

In this chapter we describe and then illustrate the theory and practice of action inquiry. We start with first-person action inquiry in the moment and the associated analytic tool, the four 'territories of experience'. We then move onto second-person action inquiry and the associated analytic tool, the four 'parts of speech'. Next, we include an illustration of interweaving first- and second-person action inquiry. From there, we move to third-person action inquiry and two of the associated analytic tools, developmental theory and the Leadership Development Profile. Finally, we offer an example of a decade-long research

project that interweaves first-, second-, and third-person in the service of organizational transformations, showing quantitatively how strong the association is between the intensity of the first- and second-person action inquiry processes in an organization and the likelihood that the organization in fact transforms as intended. Throughout, we must try to remember that these are but a very few illustrations of 81 possible kinds of research ($3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 3$ [first-, second-, and/or third-person research voice, studying first-, second, or third-person practice, in the past, present, or future, with single-, double-, or triple-loop feedback/learning]).

FIRST-PERSON ACTION INQUIRY IN THE MOMENT

Let us now explore a closer view of first-person research by examining a generally quite unfamiliar form of research (even though it has existed as a form of spiritual practice in a great many cultural traditions): namely, practicing triple-loop meditation-in-action (Trungpa, 1970), or consciously acting in a way that simultaneously inquires into the current awareness-mind-body-situation interaction. This requires deliberate reflection and awareness expansion while engaged in outer action (Schön, 1983), a seemingly simple idea (but definitely a difficult practice) that warrants a brief digression. The dominant technical-rational mode of thought that characterizes the late 20th and early 21st century is based in a separation of mind and body that implies a separation of action and inquiry. We analyze and plan and then, based on that analysis, we act. We then analyze the results of the action and prepare to act again. This is the cycle at the heart both of most action research and most formal, academic inquiry (e.g. plan scientific experiment, collect data that tests hypotheses in single-loop fashion, etc.).

But action inquiry does not start from this separation of analysis and action, this separation of mind and body, this linear approach to inquiry. That is not to say that such off-line reflection is not useful, but simply that action inquiry is based in a holistic understanding that also tries to act and inquire *at the same time*. In this sense it is philosophically based in a craft, design, or artistic process tradition that generates productivity, transformation, and emancipation (Argyris et al., 1985; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Schön, 1983), rather than in a modern technical-rational tradition that generates mechanically or electrically caused enhancement of productivity. Like any craft or artistic process, action inquiry has tools and techniques. But just as painting is more than mastering the skills of composition, brush stroke techniques, and so on, action inquiry is fundamentally about the aesthetic whole of generating timely action, which is different from and not the sum of the techniques used to create that whole. Bearing this in mind, one tool or analytic technique for the practice of first-person research in the present moment is the effort to inquire into the four territories of first-person self-awareness as one acts.

Four territories of experience

The four 'territories of experience' described in Table 16.1 include: 1) *the outside world*, 2) *one's own sensed behavior and feeling*, 3) the realm of *thought*, and 4) the realm of *vision/attention/intention* (Torbert, 1972; Torbert et al., 2004). These four territories of experience are not mere analytic categories, but rather are all phenomenologically accessible territories of experience that exist simultaneously and continuously (see discussion of how each of us in our own first-person research can test this fundamental claim in Torbert, 1991: ch. 13), and that can potentially yield data and feelings of fit (*consonance*) or of incongruity (*dissonance*) as they become known to an acting system (through its *assonance*) in real time. Usually, in daily life, we take our attention and our categories of thought for granted, and apply them to judging what actions to take and what observations to make of the outside world. In action inquiry, we attempt to question all these taken-for-granted processes:

Table 16.1 *Four territories of experience of an individual person*

1)	the outside world	objectified, discrete, *interval* units, of which 'I' am actively aware when 'I' notice the color and manyness of what 'I' see or the support the outside world is giving me through the soles of my feet (focused attention)
2)	one's own sensed behavior and feeling	processual, *ordinal* rhythms in passing time, of which 'I' am actively aware when I feel what I am touching from the inside, or when I listen to the in-and-out of my breathing or the rhythms and tones of my own speaking (subsidiary, sensual awareness)
3)	the realm of thought	eternal *nominal* distinctions and interrelations, of which I can be actively aware if my attention 'follows' my thought, if I am not just thinking, but 'mindful' that I am thinking (witnessing awareness)
4)	vision/attention/intention	the kind of *noumenal* vision/attention/intention that can simultaneously interpenetrate the other three territories and experience incongruities or harmonies among them

Into which territories am I listening now? What am I hearing from the world beyond me? Am I acting from clear intent? Am I speaking in a language, tone, and rhythm that permits us to move toward shared intent and alignment? Am I discovering signs of our alignment or lack of alignment in your responses?

First efforts toward a triple-loop, first-person 'super-vision' that interpenetrates and embraces the other three territories of experience typically generate paralyzing self-consciousness of the teenage sort and are quickly forgotten. How to cultivate an ongoing, non-judgmental first-person awareness of how we are acting in the larger world is key to development, both personally and organizationally, and is itself a first-person inquiry practice for a lifetime. To listen to others as they speak, rather than just internally planning our own next comment, is hard (that is why we interrupt one another so often). To listen to 'myself' and the entire situation as 'I' speak is still harder. If we wish to become serious about such skills, we will seek the help of second-person communities and third-person traditions dedicated to such spiritual/aesthetic/educational research/practice methods. Examples of third-person traditions that through second-person tutelage introduce individuals to profound forms of first-person research range widely, from the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises of the Jesuits (Coghlan, 2005) to the Hindu Ramakrishna's disciples (Kripal, 1995), to the Buddhist lineage of Trungpa (1970), etc. Following the next section, a short 'case' will provide a more concrete sense of both the first- and second-person aspects of the four territories of experience.

SECOND-PERSON ACTION INQUIRY IN THE EMERGING-FUTURE

Now let us explore how second-person conversation during a team meeting or at a family dinner may be more or less action-inquiry-oriented depending on its degree of openness to inquiry into its own status as an ongoing activity. Speaking is the primary and most influential medium of action in the human universe – in business and politics, in school and in science, among parents and children, and between lovers. Does a given conversation go on without testing its own efficacy until it is interrupted by accident (e.g. the phone ringing), or by pre-arrangement (e.g. class time is over), or by someone's exit? Or is there regular inquiry about whether the participants understand one another's comments (typically generating single-loop changes in what one says to get the point across)? Is there also occasional double-loop inquiry about whether other conversational strategies may improve the creativity of the conversation? Is there ever triple-loop inquiry into the basic premises of

the conversation and the possibility of reframing them?

Disciplined practice in recognizing and generating four parts of speech – framing, advocating, illustrating, and inquiring – roughly corresponding with the four territories of experience, has been found to transform practitioners' efficacy in some 30 years' experience of various communities of action inquirers (e.g. Argyris and Schön, 1974; Reason, 1994; Rudolph et al., 2001/2006; Torbert, 1976, 2000b). 'Inquiring' finds out about the outside world territory of experience. 'Illustrating' tells stories about actions. 'Advocating' mentally maps the world. And 'framing' suggests how the conversants may focus their attention overall amidst the current dilemma/opportunity/activity. Table 16.2 offers fuller definitions and examples of the four parts of speech. In general, disciplined action inquirers find that they become increasingly effective in their speaking when they increasingly balance and integrate the four 'parts of speech' in seeking to assess and artistically give voice to the unique confluence of patterns in each current situation. You can test these claims in your own conversational experiments, especially if you can get a small group of two or three colleagues or friends to meet for an evening once a month just to practice ways of speaking in difficult conversations (McGuire et al., in press; Rudolph et al., 2001/2006).

Obviously, as we are treating them here, the four parts of speech are primarily kinds of moves or practices. But the 'framing' and 're-framing' part of speech alerts us to the possibility of changing 'the name of the game' – of redesigning norms, myths, and even the very mission of the conversation-relationship-project – of going beyond single-loop change to double- and triple-loop change.

AN EXAMPLE OF FIRST- AND SECOND-PERSON ACTION INQUIRY

The following illustration of attending to, and speaking from, the four territories of experience comes from a participant's journal during a week-long conference on 'Integral Epistemology' at the Esalen Institute in December 2005. It describes, from a first-person perspective, a few moments of first-person research during an intense conversation among some 20 senior academics and spiritual practitioners – the conversation itself an example of second-person research. The topic of that conversation was admittedly 'rarefied': whether a shared 'integral epistemology' about the nature-body-mind-attention continuum can be articulated. But the interest here is to trace, as one reads, the writer's attempt to evoke how his attention moves among the four territories of experience seeking to discover timely spoken action. Then, too, the four territories of experience can be thought of as just such an attempt to articulate the nature-body-mind-attention continuum. We suggest reading the following journal entry twice, the first time reading just the italicized journal, the second time pausing to review our parenthetical, analytic comments which are not italicized):

Richard Baker Roshi, co-founder in 1966 of the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center and founder in 1972 of the Green Gulch Zen Practice Community, continues in 2005 to presence as a powerfully-built, bushy-black-eyebrowed tower of silence and assertion, at least as I observed him during our four days together at the 'Integral Epistemology' workshop at the Esalen Institute.

Esalen, with its farm, its perfectly manicured organic gardens, its experimental elementary school, its daily sunset over the Pacific, its nude baths, its Tantric atmosphere of unreservedly friendly free choice, and its fine master classes in the various disciplines of the nature-body-feeling-mind continuum, strikes me as a contemporary Narnia – even in the way that it clings invisibly to Big Sur's plunging coastline, beneath the cement columns of one of Rt. 1's many graceful bridges on the winding stretch between St. Luis Obispo and Monterrey.

I began my acquaintance with Roshi Richard deeply suspicious of him because of his, as it seemed to me, unconcealed authoritative power mixed with his shadowy past, when he was accused, not without evidence, of messing with money and women in the community (Note author's haphazard <u>thoughts</u> on reports of the Roshi's <u>past actions in the outside world</u>, apparently clouded by pre-judgment and unclear <u>intention</u>). *As the conference proceeded, I could*

Table 16.2   *Four parts of speech (adapted from Tarbert et al., 2004)*

Framing   refers to explicitly stating what the purpose is for the present occasion, what the dilemma is that you are trying to resolve, what assumptions you think are shared or not shared (but need to be tested out loud to be sure). This is the element of speaking most often missing from conversations and meetings. The leader or initiator assumes the others know and share the overall objective. Explicit framing (or reframing, if the conversation appears off-track) is useful precisely because the assumption of a shared frame is frequently untrue. When people have to guess at the frame, they frequently guess wrong and they often impute negative, manipulative motives ('What's he getting at?').

For example, instead of starting out right away with the first item of the meeting, the leader can provide and test an explicit frame: 'We're about halfway through to our final deadline and we've gathered a lot of information and shared different approaches, but we haven't yet made a single decision. To me, the most important thing we can do today is agree on something … make at least one decision we can feel good about. I think XYZ is our best chance, so I want to start with that. Do you all agree with this assessment, or do you have other candidates for what it's most important to do today?'

Advocating   refers to explicitly asserting an option, perception, feeling, or strategy for action in relatively abstract terms (e.g., 'We've got to get shipments out faster'). Some people speak almost entirely in terms of advocacy; others rarely advocate at all. Either extreme – only advocating or never advocating – is likely to be relatively ineffective. For example, 'Do you have an extra pen?' is not an explicit advocacy, but an inquiry. The person you are asking may truthfully say, 'No' and turn away. On the other hand, if you say 'I need a pen (advocacy). Do you have an extra one (inquiry)?' the other is more likely to say something like, 'No, but there's a whole box in the secretary's office.'

The most difficult type of advocacy for most people to make effectively is an advocacy about how we feel – especially how we feel about what is occurring right now. This is difficult partly because we ourselves are often only partially aware of how we feel; also, we are reluctant to become vulnerable; furthermore, social norms against generating potential embarrassment can make current feelings seem undiscussable. For all these reasons, feelings usually enter conversations only if the relationship is close and risk is low, in which case there is little likelihood of receiving corrective feedback. The other time when feelings enter conversations is when they have become so strong that they burst in, and then they are likely to be offered in a way that harshly evaluates others ('Damn it, will you loudmouths shut up!'). This way of advocating feelings is usually very ineffective, however, because it invites defensiveness. By contrast, a vulnerable description is more likely to invite honest sharing by others ('I'm feeling frustrated and shut out by the machine-gun pace of this conversation and I don't see it getting us to agreement. Does anyone else feel this way?').

Illustrating   involves telling a bit of a concrete story that puts meat on the bones of the advocacy and thereby orients and motivates others more clearly. Example: 'We've got to get shipments out faster [advocacy]. Jake Tarn, our biggest client, has got a rush order of his own, and he needs our parts before the end of the week [illustration].' The illustration suggests an entirely different mission and strategy than might have been inferred from the advocacy alone.

You may be convinced that your advocacy contains one and only one implication for action, and that your subordinate or peer is at fault for misunderstanding. But in this case, it is your conviction that is a colossal metaphysical mistake. Implications are by their very nature inexhaustible. There is never one and only one implication or interpretation of an action. That is why it is so important to be explicit about each of the four parts of speech and to interweave them sequentially, if we wish to increase our reliability in achieving shared purposes.

Inquiring   obviously involves questioning others, in order to learn something from them. In principle, the simplest thing in the world; in practice, one of the most difficult things in the world to do effectively. Why? One reason is that we often inquire rhetorically, as we just did. We don't give the other the opportunity to respond; or we suggest by our tone that we don't really want a TRUE answer. 'How are you?' we say dozens of times each day, not really wanting to know. 'You agree, don't you?' we say, making it clear what answer we want. A second reason why it is difficult to inquire effectively is that an inquiry is much less likely to be effective if it is not preceded by framing, advocacy, and illustration. Naked inquiry often causes the other to wonder what frame, advocacy, and illustration are implied and to respond carefully and defensively.

If we are inquiring about an advocacy we are making, the trick is to encourage the other to *disconfirm* our assumptions if that is how he or she truly feels. In this way, if the other confirms us, we can be confident the confirmation means something, and if not, then we see that the task ahead is to reach an agreement.

see that, even when Richard disclosed personal stories in friendly openness, I interpreted them as self-aggrandizing (note a slight disentanglement of thoughts from outer world behavior, now recognized as two different territories of experience). *His style of rhetorical certainty certainly seemed to grate with the overt humility of my action inquiry style. (Of course, as I listened, I could*

hear also how my own issues about marriage and money and the exercise of power heightened my sensitivities to Richard's past, not to mention my possible sense of competitiveness with a man of about the same age and length of awareness-practice [Further disentangling of <u>thoughts</u> from <u>intentions</u>, with inquiry into conflicting <u>intentions</u>].

Our joint inquiry into the question, 'How do we know what we know about the nature-body-mind-attention/intention continuum?' had been convened by Esalen's Aslan, founder Michael Murphy, who looks a good 15 or 20 years younger than his actual age of about 75 and acts a good 30–40 years younger. Jay Ogilvy, one of the founding futurists of Global Business Network, and Jeff Kripal, Rice University's Chair of Religious Studies, facilitated a group of 20 who ranged from young art historian, Marcia Brennan (Modernism's Masculine Subjects 2001, Painting Gender, Constructing Theory 2004), to Sam Harris (author of the currently best-selling The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason 2005), and to Richard Shweder (a University of Chicago Distinguished Professor and cultural anthropologist).

For me, one critical, potentially-transformational moment in our joint inquiry came at mid-week. Roshi Richard had remarked on how the attention constitutes event-spaces as activities, such as the living room we 20 were then sitting in – with some of us attuned to the pink sunset glinting on the Pacific (the <u>outer world</u> territory), others attuned to the hills and valleys of our conversation (our own <u>behaviors</u> territory), and still others attuned to the framed photographs around the room, which showed it as a site for other very different activities at other times (body work, Japanese calligraphy, and so forth). He added that holding an intent in the present (<u>attentional</u> territory of experience) to constitute this or that kind of event-space can influence the emergent future.

This remark reminded me of an experience of a slightly different sort that I often have when planning a future event. I have learned that my earliest inclinations to plan the detailed agenda for an event are often driven by anxiety and produce only uncreative lists of issues to be addressed. Thus, I've learned to relax and not-take that first bait, but instead to let the question go until it returns again and again (entering own private territory of <u>thought</u> and remembering the double-loop experience of learning a new strategy for future planning). A time comes when the mind spontaneously produces a vision/fantasy of the deep-purpose-of-the-event-realizing-itself. Often, I have thereafter treated this image as the unifying creative thread with which to stitch the entire event-cloth, including the general rhythms of others' creative participation and influence. But in recent years, rather than grabbing such an event-pearl, I have sometimes continued with the presencing practice of

listening into the undifferentiated nature-body-mind-attention continuum, until a waterfall-like cascade of creative ideas and intuitions related to the event begins (Note another instance of <u>first-person double-loop</u> learning of a new future planning process which seems to introduce a <u>first-person triple-loop</u> learning process [the 'waterfall-like cascade']). From this cascade, I eventually choose various droplets to aid my listening, interpreting, and acting within the event-time itself.

NOW suddenly seems like a moment to speak, to help Richard disclose more of his approach, to encourage others to share any experiences they have of working with the emergent future, and to help me shape the next-day-forthcoming space/time-event when my work will become the focus of conversation. I share a taste of my experience (<u>illustrating his idea</u>) with Richard and the group, and I ask Richard, 'Do you have such experiences, or different ones, or how do you interpret mine?' (<u>inquiring into others' thoughts</u>). He shoots me a sideways glance, creates a brief pause by rearranging his legs (a non-verbal <u>re-framing</u> that draws the attention to him), and says, 'I try to pause til the last moment … and then discover which way I move without premeditation (<u>advocating his idea</u>) – like the old saying, 'When you come to a fork in the road … take it!' (<u>illustrating his idea</u>). The brevity and unfathomable surprise of this riposte draws a hearty round of laughter from the group.

I pause too, accepting the response silently, allowing the conversational rhythm of successive queries by others and responses by him to continue. Inside, however, I feel emotionally split between my continuing commitment to listening to the conversation and a sense of disappointment (dissonance within territory of own <u>feelings/behavior</u>). I feel he and I and we have missed an opportunity for further enlightenment (a sense of incongruity between the territory of <u>feelings/behavior</u> and the territory of <u>intention</u>): for I have been speaking of this progressive skill in empty-mind myself, intending to invite more than a well-rehearsed quip and a return to our prior speech-rhythms in response. Would it have made a difference if I had inquired of the rest of the group rather than Richard? Probably. (Single-loop feedback to self re: potentially more effective behavior.)

On the other hand, I discover over the next days that Baker Roshi's 'old saying' repeatedly reverberates within my present attention (triple-loop feedback) – such as the moment before 'my' session, when the scholar of Mircea Eliade, who is scheduled to comment on my article after me, suddenly proposes he go first: I pause imperceptibly at this fork, and then we reverse the planned structure on the spot, putting me more dramatically than before in the posture of first-person action inquiry in the present. Thank you, Baker Roshi, for transmitting, not so much an insight as a practice.

THIRD-PERSON INQUIRY AND DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

Practicing first-person action inquiry in the moment and second-person inquiry for the emergent future may be complemented and sharpened by increasing familiarity with a broadly generalizable third-person developmental theory, applicable analogically to persons, to organizations, and to types of science, and testable through first-, second-, and third-person research methods (Torbert, 1991; Torbert et al., 2004). This developmental theory can both describe behavioral structures in the past and prescribe liberating structures-disciplines-designs for the future, whether we are engaged in the temporal structuring of a single meeting, a several-month project, a marriage of many years, one's entire career, or an inter-generational institution.

PERSONAL, INTERPERSONAL, AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL ACTION-LOGICS

Table 16.3 offers a very brief overview of individual and organizational developmental action-logics, as these have been described in much greater detail elsewhere (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Torbert, 1976, 1987; Torbert et al., 2004; Wilber, 1999). An action-logic or theory-in-use is an internally coherent system of beliefs that we may not be fully aware of ourselves, but that directly shapes our actions and is difficult to transform (Argyris and Schön, 1974; Bachrach et al., 2000; Wilber, 1999). Each developmental action-logic can be reliably measured and has been found to be highly correlated with specific business actions and results (Merron et al., 1987; Rooke and Torbert, 1998, 2005). Here, we highlight only a few key points about the overall theory.

First, each later personal and organizational action-logic includes all the options and capacities of the earlier action-logics, plus new ones, gradually self-organizing to the point of ongoing action and inquiry that spans the four territories of experience. In other words, the theory outlines the successive design-for-practice principles that any person or social system can potentially learn. As Table 16.3 suggests, a person gains some sense of control over the outside world to get what one wants in the very short-term at the Opportunist action-logic. Next, during the sometimes painful evolution to the Diplomat action-logic, one gains some sense of control over one's own behavior to meet one's routine weekly and monthly obligations, as well as to act within the norms of one's valued friendship circles. Then, if one makes the journey to the Expert action-logic, through engaging with craft disciplines, one gains some control over the world of thought and of the time horizons (3–18 months) necessary to complete projects. A great victory of the Achiever action-logic is that it coordinates the prior three action-logics and welcomes single-loop feedback, reliably permitting the person or team to plan, perform, test outcomes, and change performance to reach a goal. A further victory, won through transformation to the Individualist and Strategist action-logics, is an opening to double-loop feedback whereby the person's or organization's whole action-logic may transform, if the current strategic assumptions are not working (Merron et al., 1987; Fisher and Torbert, 1991). Transformation to the Alchemist action-logic (Torbert, 1996), wherein the system treats each moment as a new inquiry about how to distribute its attention through the other three territories of experience, permits one to test and recalibrate on a moment-to-moment basis, through triple-loop feedback, whether one's own and others' sense of lifetime mission, strategies, actions, and outcomes are aligned.

Second, transformation to later action-logics cannot be caused simply by external forces, but rather require an interaction between initiatives by the transforming system and challenging/supporting conditions in the environment. Consequently, people and organizations do not necessarily develop to later action-logics. In

Table 16.3 *Parallels between personal and organizational stages of development (adapted from Torbert et al., 2004)*

Personal development	Organizational development	
Impulsive Impulses rule behavior	**Conception** Dreams about creating a new organization	multiple, distinctive impulses gradually resolve into characteristic approach [e.g., many fantasies into a particular dream for a new organization]
Opportunist Needs rule impulses	**Investments** Spiritual, social network, and financial investments	dominant task: gain power [e.g. bike riding skill, capital] to have desired effects on outside world
Diplomat Norms rule needs	**Incorporation** Products or services actually rendered	looking-glass self: understanding others' culture/ expectations and molding own actions to succeed in their [e.g. a marketable product] terms
Expert Craft logic rules norms	**Experiments** Alternative strategies and structures tested	intellectual mastery of outside-self systems such that action = experiments that generate new ways of doing business
Achiever System effectiveness rules craft logic	**Systematic productivity** Single structure/strategy institutionalized	pragmatic triangulation among plan/theory, operation/ implementation, and outcome/evaluation – single-loop feedback acted upon unsystematically but regularly
Individualist Reflexive awareness rules effectiveness	**Social network** Portfolio of distinctive organizational structures	experimental awareness that diverse assumptions may complement one another both for inquiry and for productivity
Strategist Self-amending principle rules reflexive awareness	**Collaborative inquiry** Self-amending structure matches dream/mission	self-conscious mission/philosophy, sense of time/place, invites conversation among multiple voices and reframing of boundaries – double-loop feedback occasionally acted upon
Alchemist Mutual process (interplay of principle/action) rules principle	**Foundational community** of inquiry Structure fails, spirit sustains wider community	life/science = a mind/matter, love/death/transformation praxis among others, cultivating interplay, reattunement and continual triple-loop feedback among purpose, strategy, practice, and outcomes
Ironist Intergenerational development rules mutual process	**Liberating disiciplines** Structures encourage productivity and transformational learning through manageable conflict and vulnerable power	

samples of highly educated managerial and professional adults in different institutions, almost all between 25 and 55 years old, adding up to a total of 4310 as measured by the well-validated Leadership Development Profile, we find 5 percent scored as Opportunists, 12 percent as Diplomats, 38 percent as Experts, 30 percent as Achievers, 10 percent as Individualists, 4 percent as Strategists, and 1 percent as Alchemists (Rooke and Torbert, 2005). (It should be noted that many persons operating primarily at early action-logics experience occasional later action-logic moments or temporary states. Indeed, recognizing and cultivating such states through first- and second-person research can contribute to developmental transformation; Torbert and Fisher, 1992.)

Third, the personal action-logics alternate between those that are more agency-focused (Opportunist, Expert, Individualist) and those that are more relationally-focused (Diplomat, Achiever, Strategist). Likewise, the organizational action-logics alternate between those that tend toward centralization (Incorporation, Systematic Productivity, Collaborative Inquiry) and those that tend toward de-centralization (Investments, Experiments, Social Network). In the case of both individuals and organizations, the tension of these opposites declines at the later action-logics because those action-logics are increasingly win-win, both/and, paradox-welcoming, difference-friendly, transformational-not-static action-logics.

A fourth key quality of developmental theory is that the early action-logics up through the Achiever/Systematic Productivity action-logic do not recognize themselves as assumed and transformable frames around activity and thought, but rather treat their (unrecognized) assumptions as the very bedrock of reality (Torbert, 1991). Thus, these early action-logics assume everyone shares the same 'reality' and that significant deviations from one's own judgment represent lack of proper training, incompetence, or evil. Consequently, the early action-logics treat power as fundamentally a matter of unilateral enforcement in favor of the familiar and against the strange, with some peripheral inquiry whereby the strange may occasionally be transformed into the familiar. By contrast, the empirically rarer later action-logics treat power and inquiry as equally fundamental and recognize that only forms of mutual, transformational power generate double-loop and triple-loop learning; unilateral power is powerless to do so.

LEADER ACTION-LOGIC AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

According to these theoretical distinctions among developmental action-logics, we would expect that organizational leaders and consultants who measure at the later action-logics (e.g. Strategist, Alchemist), and who are themselves open to double-loop, transformational learning, will be more likely to succeed in supporting individual, team, and organizationally transformative learning than leaders and consultants at the earlier action-logics. Several third-person empirical studies statistically support this prediction (Bushe and Gibbs, 1990; Foster and Torbert, 2005; Rooke and Torbert, 1998). Likewise, we would expect that organizations exhibiting later action-logic qualities (e.g. Collaborative Inquiry, Liberating Disciplines) would be more likely to support individual transformation among their members than organizations at earlier action-logics. Once again, several statistical studies support this prediction (Manners et al., 2004; Torbert, 1991, 1994; Torbert and Fisher, 1992).

One study employing many interweaving first-, second-, and third-person action research methods shows that CEOs' and lead consultants' developmental action-logics account for an unusually large 59 percent of the variance (significant beyond the .01 level) in whether or not the 10 diverse organizations have positively transformed their action-logics (as measured by three trained scorers working independently and achieving .9 reliability) (Torbert et al., 2004: 112ff, 221ff). To be more specific, seven of the ten organizations successfully transformed, including all five of the organizations guided by CEOs measured as Strategists. By contrast, of the five organizations guided by CEOs measured at pre-Strategist action-logics, only two transformed. At the same time, three of the four lead consultants were measured as Strategists and the fourth as an Alchemist. The Alchemist consultant was the lead consultant in the only two cases where pre-Strategist CEOs were associated with successful organizational transformation. Thus, this consultant can be considered qualitatively more successful than the Strategist consultants.

We suggest that this result (accounting for 59 percent of the variance) is so much stronger

than is usual for purely third-person science because the independent variable itself (the third-person Leadership Development Profile score of a person's action-logic) concerns the relative capacity of an individual to interweave first-, second-, and third-person action inquiry and to cultivate transformation in self or others through single-, double-, and triple-loop learning. Thus, it becomes conceivable that interweaving first-, second-, and third-person research, theory, and practice in the social sciences may dramatically improve their capacity to explain variance.

A later count of types of action inquiry initiatives tried by each of the ten organizations during the study confirms that the higher the combined CEO/Lead-Consultant action-logic score the more types of action inquiry the organization tried. For example, all ten CEOs took the Leadership Development Profile and received feedback about their performance (*third-person research on first-person practice in the past*). Also, all ten organizations engaged in senior management strategic planning with consultative support (*second-person research on third-person practice in the future*). Nine of the ten organizations participated in a senior management team self-restructuring (*second-person research on second-person practice in the future*) (the exception, in this case, was the one organization that regressed to earlier action-logics).

Only the seven organizations that successfully transformed created: 1) enhanced leadership roles for all senior team members (moving from a primary focus on departmental or divisional leadership to become a company-wide executive team) (enhancing each member's *first-person research on first- and second-person practice for the future*); 2) regular feedback on each senior team member's leadership effectiveness (*second-person research on first-person practice in the past*); and 3) distributed and rotated distinct leadership responsibilities within the team (e.g. agenda-planning, meeting management, inter-meeting follow-through, etc. – *second-person research on second-person practice*).

Also, the CEO/Lead-Consultant combinations associated with successful organizational transformation were: 1) most active in seeking out competitive information on industry practices (*first-person research on third-person practice in the past*); 2) most active in leading industry-wide associations in influencing public policy (*second-person research on third-person practice for the future*); 3) most active in offering frequent feedback to, and welcoming it from, senior team members (*first-person research on second-person practice and second-person research on first-person practice, in the present*); and 4) in offering developmental mentoring to senior management team members (*first-person research on second-person practice for the future*).

In these brief and distant mentions of different possible types of first-, second-, and third-person, the reader can begin to imagine how these different action inquiry disciplines may reinforce one another and increasingly create a climate for voluntary, mutual transformational practice within an organization. Of course, the sample size of the reported research is small. As more practitioners adopt such interweaving research disciplines and measures, the sample size can grow.

CONCLUSION

Action inquiry brings together action and inquiry by using multiple qualities of attention to embrace the complexity of our world. By consciously working with the ideas of first-, second-, and third-person research; first-, second-, and third-person practices; research on past, present and future; paying attention to the four territories of experience and to single-, double-, and triple-loop feedback among them, the four parts of speech, and the developmental action logics of self, projects, and organizations – well it's overwhelming to write (and we might guess read) about it, let alone try to do in practice. Worthy, perhaps, of a lifetime of inquiry? The illustrations of first- and second-person

action inquiry during the Esalen conference and of the first-, second-, and third-person action inquiry over many years with the ten organizations offer some grounding and possibility for beginning practice.

We close simply by suggesting that action inquiry is a practice and as such is as much a voluntary, subjective, aesthetic choice and a mutual, inter-subjective, ethical commitment as it is an intergenerationally-sustainable, objective, epistemological science. However briefly, we have tried to analytically describe the mechanics of different brush strokes, the science of colors, and the theory of balance, knowing full well that painting isn't merely a matter of mechanics and theory. However, it is useful to know these things if one is going to paint. Action inquiry suggests a more explicit awareness of one's own practice than a traditional romantic image of a painter does – perhaps an Escher-like awareness, not of hands drawing themselves, but of us enacting our lives among others. An all-encompassing practice, perhaps, but a practice nonetheless, with all that suggests of discipline, study, and evolving voices within oneself and within one's evolving communities of inquiry.

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