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# Performing *phronesis*: On the way to engaged judgment

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## Abstract

Practical wisdom and judgment, rather than seen as ‘things’ hidden inside the mind, are best talked of, we suggest, as *emerging* developmentally *within* an unceasing flow of activities, in which practitioners are inextricably immersed. Following a performative line of thinking, we argue that when practitioners (namely, individuals immersed in a practice, experiencing their tasks through the emotions, standards of excellence and moral values the practice engenders or enacts) face a bewildering situation in which they do not know, initially at least, how to proceed, the judgment they exercise emerges out of seeking to establish a new orientation to their puzzling surroundings. They do so through actively trying to be in touch with their felt emotions and moral sensibilities, while attempting to articulate linguistically the feelings experienced in order to get a clearer view of relevant aspects of the situation at hand. Coming to a judgment involves moving around within a landscape of possibilities, and in so doing, being spontaneously responsive to the consequences of each move, and assessing which one (or combination of moves) seems best in resolving the initial tension aroused in one’s initial confusion.

## Keywords

Emotions, judgment, *phronesis*, practical reason, practical wisdom, tacit knowledge

## Introduction

Since the branch of philosophy on which we are at present engaged is not, like the others, theoretical in its aim – because we are studying not to know what goodness is, but *how to become good men*, since otherwise it would be useless – we must apply our minds to the problem of *how our actions should be performed*, because, as we have just said, it is these that actually determine our dispositions. (Aristotle, 1955: 93, authors’ emphasis)

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The purpose of this article is to explore the exercise of judgment and practical wisdom in organizational settings. This is an important topic to focus on since, as Vickers (1984) has noted some time ago, insofar as organizational members, at all levels of the organization, have some ‘discretion’ in what they do (and they always have), the exercise of judgment is not only inevitable but important (p. 244). This insight, for long of relatively marginal interest in organization and management studies, has been taken up recently by several management scholars, who have identified ‘good judgment’ and ‘wise decisions’ as one of the most important features in leaders’ roles (Tichy and Bennis, 2007: 94; see also Antonacopoulou, 2010; Chia and Holt, 2007; Clarke and Holt, 2009; DeRose and Tichy, 2012; Kessler and Bailey, 2007; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 2011; Nonaka and Toyama, 2007; Ramsey, 2013; Sliwa and Cairns, 2009).

As so often happens in organization and management studies, however, ‘judgment’ and ‘wisdom’ are often used to stand for self-contained ‘entities’, namely, concepts that reflect individual mental states or psychological traits (Finch, 1995: 33; Harre and Gillett, 1994; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). It is not uncommon, for example, to read or hear phrases such as ‘he is a wise man’, or ‘she is a good judge of character’. The trouble with such entitative talk is that it requires that we ‘look at’ human experiences from outside and mirror them in our concepts (Chia, 1996; Tsoukas, 2003: 611). Such an approach fails to bring with it any in-detail sense of what the ‘things’ it names ‘look like’, ‘sound like’, ‘feel like,’ and so on, within the different situations in which it is used, that is, what it is *in* the situated performance of our actions that leads to them being described as ‘wise’ or as exhibiting the features of ‘good judgment’. Importantly, it also fails to bring to our attention the nature of the distinctly felt, bodily awareness of the *qualities* of the activities involved in the carrying out of judgment.

Using an entitative language makes it easy for one to make a ‘category mistake’ (Ryle, 1949), since concepts are taken to obscure that ‘not merely [...] some performance has been gone through, but also that something has been brought off by the agent going through it’ (p. 125). In other words, entitatively used, concepts merely designate the *outcomes* of essentially a dynamic back and forth process, unfolding *within* the relations between a person and their surroundings. However, for people to achieve these outcomes, they must in some way be *trying* to achieve them: ‘A person’s performance is described as careful or skilful’, says Ryle (1949),

if in his operations he is ready to detect and correct lapses, to repeat and improve upon successes, to profit from the examples of others and so forth. He applies criteria in performing critically, that is, in *trying* to get things right. (p. 29, authors’ emphasis)

In other words, such ‘tryings’ only result in appropriate achievements if quite a number of different strands of influence, many involving practitioners’ attention to the developing nature of details in their surroundings, are intertwined in an appropriate manner.

To avoid making category mistakes, rather than simply characterizing a particular action or person, it is more preferable – since it captures more of the complexity of the process at hand (Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001) – if ‘categorically based knowing’ is balanced with ‘perceptually based knowing’ (Weick, 2007: 18). For Weick, such a balance is achieved when scholars adopt the ‘e-prime mind-set’ (p. 18) in their theorizing, which helps them take in more context, situational specificity and agency.

Weick provides an illuminating example from his own research to illustrate the ‘e-prime mind-set’. He writes,

[In adopting the e-prime mindset] I’m not allowed to say ‘Wagner Dodge *is* a taciturn crew chief’. Instead, I’m forced to be explicit about the actions that went into the prohibited summary judgment. Now I say

things like, ‘Wagner Dodge surveys fires alone, issues orders without explanations, assumes people see what he sees, mistrusts words, overestimates the skills of his crews’. When I’m forced to forego the verb to be, I pay more attention to particulars, context, and the situation. I also tend to see more clearly what I am *not* in a position to say. If I say that Dodge overestimates the skills of his crews, that may or may not mean that he is taciturn. It depends on other concrete descriptions of how he behaves. (Weick, 2007: p. 18; italics in the original)

In other words, taking a performative approach – namely, focusing on situational details, exploring felt emotions and the actions they prefigure, and looking for particular sequences of actions and how they interactively unfold – is more likely to balance categorically based and perceptually based knowing and, thus, provide a richer picture of the exercise of judgment ‘from within’.

Very much in line with Weick’s comments above, Billig (2013) also notes that writers in the social and human sciences, after having described a circumstance in which a particular person *does* something, often move to using the relevant verb in the passive voice – thus omitting the actual human agent doing the action – and then go on to *name* the activity in question as a ‘thing’ (albeit with agentic powers).

In this article, we try to heed Weick’s and Billig’s advice and treat the concepts of ‘wisdom’ and ‘judgment’ performatively. Thus, in at least some of our writing below, we will try to follow the unfolding *contours* of the first-person experience of a particular person facing a particular dilemma in a particular situation. Our aim is to try to help readers ‘enter into’ the initially chaotic nature of that person’s experience, in order to see the exploratory twists and turns she needed to undertake in gradually coming to an understanding of a *possibly* wise line of action in resolving it.

Consequently, following Wittgenstein (1953), we will be using the concepts of ‘wisdom’ and ‘judgment’ retrospectively to pick out certain *aspects* in certain kinds of human activities that matter to the practitioners involved. We pick them out because something special seems to have been at work within such activities, when performed in particular situations, that brought people to act for the better rather than the worse in these situations – to do the right thing. To say of an act *after* it has been performed that it required ‘judgment’, or that the person performing it was ‘wise’ is, unfortunately, to utter empty words – for such an utterance does not direct us beyond the outcome of the action to examine what was going on in the processes leading up to the person coming to the judgment in question, or in them coming to act wisely. We are left in ignorance as to how, in the course of its performance, people considered the relations of their act, both to its surroundings and to their own identity (i.e. its relations to the kind of person they take themselves to be or are trying to be).

In this article, drawing on converging insights from Wittgensteinian, (neo-) Aristotelian, and pragmatist philosophy and psychology, we aim to bring to rational visibility the inner, experiential, unfolding journey made by practitioners who, at first, find themselves in a bewildering situation, within which they initially know not what to do, but in which they come to resolve on a best or right line of action, which gradually (like achieving a visual fixation and focus) becomes clear to them. Our aim is to pursue a ‘performative’ line of inquiry (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011) that takes seriously into account the lived experience of those involved in the exercise of judgment. Such an approach helps fill in what is currently missing in current explorations of ‘judgment’ – the felt emotions and sensed bodily movements of organizational members when they encounter circumstances in which they, momentarily at least, do not know how to go on. A performative approach is important, since most approaches to judgment take the latter to be a primarily cognitive activity, typically modelled on decision making (see, for example, Tichy and Bennis, 2007; Kahneman, 2011: Ch. 2).

It should be stressed that our task is not to say what coming to a judgment (or ‘making judgment calls’ as Tichy and Bennis (2007: 94) have it) in itself actually ‘is’, or how ‘practical wisdom’ as

such can be obtained, since we would be committing then the same category mistake we have criticized entitative thinking for. Our task, rather, is to explore *how*, in practical terms, activities which we are prone to describe as having been ‘wise’, or as having been ‘well judged’, are actually *performed*. What are the twists and turns, the imaginative exploration of possible steps forward, the assessment of their appropriateness, the gradual articulation of the inner landscape of available possibilities and so on, all *like*? This is the central question we tackle in this article.

The paper is structured as follows. We begin with a first-person account of a junior doctor who found herself in a bewildering position, needing to figure out what to do. We reflect on this account as we go along. We discuss, next, certain Wittgensteinian notions that are relevant to the case at hand, followed by an exploration of Aristotle’s ‘*phronesis*’ and the process of practitioners’ engaging in it through embodied agency. Next, the process of exploring possibilities in coming to a judgment and the role of felt emotions in this process are discussed by drawing on pragmatist philosophers. We conclude by bringing the strands of the argument together and reflecting on how the exercise of practical wisdom may be learned.

## Shaleni’s dilemma

We consider below the case of Shaleni,<sup>1</sup> a junior female doctor working as an anaesthesiologist in a state South African hospital, and her journey on the way towards wanting to act wisely.

Two months after starting her job, on the shift she was working, Shaleni experienced the following:

At about 4 am on Saturday morning an exhausted operating team received a stab-heart patient. The patient presented intoxicated and was brought in by his wife who admitted to stabbing him. We rushed the patient to theatre as an exhausted theatre team with complex emotions began to work. As a junior anaesthesiologist I belonged to a team of three members. The other two members were senior registrars about to qualify as consultants. With minimal anaesthesia the patient was operated on in a dire attempt to save his life. As the cardiothoracic surgery continued, the relatively stable patient began to deteriorate rapidly. I was asked to contact the senior registrar who had stepped out of theatre briefly. As I approached the doctor’s room I noticed that the door was ajar and, through the narrow opening, I could see what appeared to be the senior registrar injecting himself with a syringe of some unknown substance. In a state of shock I froze. I walked away but continued to observe him as he discarded the syringe and ampoule. I walked back to theatre unable to comprehend what I had seen and accounting the experience to the fact that he was self-administering antibiotics or another therapeutic drug.

He joined us in the theatre and I heard him tell the matron in charge that he would need two more ampoules of Pethidine for the patient. This was a senior registrar who was about to qualify in six months as a consultant anaesthetist. I refused to allow my mind to speculate and when there was a moment free I checked the bin for the discarded ampoule. It confirmed what I had expected, namely that he had in fact injected himself with Pethidine – a scheduled drug for the treatment of postoperative pain but known for its high addictive potential. This meant that the senior registrar was using drugs illegally whilst being on duty under the assumption that the drugs were being used for patients in theatre.

Clearly, all of a sudden, Shaleni found herself in a bewildering position. What should she do? This is a perplexing situation calling for judgment: that is, on the one hand, weighing in the balance an uncountable number of relevant issues, and, on the other, ‘taking a stand’ (Clarke and Holt, 2009; Luntley, 2005; Sternberg, 2000; Vickers, 1983, 1984). How should she, as a doctor, as a person, sensing that ‘something is not right here’, go about it? For more, much more, than merely being a technically good doctor is at issue here: she must sustain the ‘standards’ (once she can get them clear on this occasion) of her profession.

In figuring out what to do, Shaleni does not engage in a mere intellectual activity. She feels the situation, she is shocked, she agonizes what to do. What does a (junior) doctor do in such circumstances? What should *I* do? She needs to draw not so much on her medical knowledge as to consult her ethical compass (Trevino et al., 2014). This is a vivid example of judgment as Aristotelian ‘phronesis’ (typically translated as ‘prudence’ or ‘practical wisdom’): the goal of practical reason is to undertake appropriate action, in particular circumstances (Van Hoof, 2006: 65–66).

For Aristotle, action is appropriate when it is based on intellectual knowledge *and* is driven by the desire to perfect one’s skill, that is, to say to adhere to the ‘standards of excellence’ that are required for the skill to help realize the ‘internal goods’ it is directed at achieving (MacIntyre, 1985: 197; see also Moore and Beadle, 2006: 371). Practical reason is exercised in particular, ever variable circumstances, whose salient features must be grasped for a particular action to be prudent – hence the vital importance of perception for phronesis. As Aristotle (1955) notes, ‘prudence apprehends the ultimate particular, which cannot be apprehended by scientific knowledge, but only by perception’ (no. 1142a27–1142a29). Phronetic practitioners, therefore, are those people who have developed a refined capacity to intuitively grasp the most salient features of an ambiguous situation and to craft a particular path of response, in their search for a way out of their difficulties, while driven by the pursuit of what is good for their practice.

While the importance of phronesis – ‘[knowing] how to exercise judgment in particular cases’ (MacIntyre, 1985: 154) – has been recognized by a number of management scholars (see Nonaka and Takeuchi, 2011; Nonaka and Toyama, 2007; Hartman, 2006), its performative aspects have been seriously under-explored. Phronesis has been mainly seen as a branch of knowledge, juxtaposed to *episteme* (science) and *techne* (craft), rather than as the embodied, open-ended exercise of engaged judgment (Nussbaum, 1999). Approached performatively, the question is how engaged judgment is *accomplished* rather than how it simply differs from other types of knowledge. In discussing Shaleni’s dilemma, we seek to address this question.

It might be argued that Shaleni’s dilemma is somewhat unusual and that, at any rate, it is one that belongs to the realm of business ethics alone. After all, it is not that observing senior doctors (or professors or managers, for that matter) taking drugs while at work is a particularly common experience. However, finding ourselves not knowing (like Shaleni) which way to go while confronting a puzzling situation is pretty common in organizational life and public policy (see Badaracco, 2002; Vickers, 1983, 1984; Weick, 1995, 2001, 2004). Cases abound. From how best to regulate the banking system or how to handle effectively the escalating financial crisis in the Eurozone, from how to respond to an awkward but important supplier to how to handle a ‘political’ colleague, from how to quell a fast growing fire or to land an engine-less passenger plane in the Hudson river, these are all situations calling for judgment. In other words, the need for judgment arises precisely because we confront an inherently indeterminate world, in which we cannot avoid taking a stand.

Moreover, a phronetic view of judgment shows that even those mundane cases of organizational life (such as Vickers’ (1983: 42–47) supplies manager having to decide how to handle a particular supplier), not involving ethical matters at first glance, turn out to implicate notions of goodness, insofar as practitioners are driven to act by the desire to improve the performance of their skills for the sake of realizing the ‘internal goods’ of their practices (Moore and Beadle, 2006). Prudence is inherently ethical (Chappell, 2009: 104–110; Van Hoof, 2006: 70). As Aristotle (1955) remarked, ‘one cannot be prudent without being good’ (p. 1144a36).

## Difficulties of the intellect and difficulties of the will

Returning to Shaleni’s predicament, what are the striking features in her account?

First, she is a member of a practice (medicine), namely, an organized constellation of socio-technical activities through which certain 'internal goods' are realized by its members, in the course of trying to achieve certain 'standards of excellence' (MacIntyre, 1985: 187; Moore and Beadle, 2006: 371).

Second, she is located in the 'periphery' of her practice (as a junior doctor), on her way to full participation to it (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Third, she experiences a particular emotion – shock – upon witnessing an unusual event, namely seeing the senior doctor injecting himself. She has seen something not only totally unexpected but, possibly or probably (which she has not yet determined), unprofessional and unethical.

Fourth, to continue her work, Shaleni puts her emotion momentarily on hold, suspends her initial suspicion and regains composure. She rejoins the flow of work and begins to try to articulate *what* in fact she had witnessed, without, however, eliminating her feelings of shock and the accompanying suspicion she has formed.

Fifth, when the operation, or at least her role in it, is completed, she returns to the incident, seeking to check the veracity of her suspicion. And finally, having verified her suspicion that the senior doctor was actually using drugs while on duty, she now wonders what to do with this piece of knowledge.

These features are typical of cases practitioners find puzzling, difficult, awkward, to various degrees – cases in which, to quote Wittgenstein (1953, no. 123), practitioners do not know their 'way about' within the puzzling circumstance. Note that Shaleni's difficulty is not of an *intellectual* kind. She is not confronted by a *problem*, such as, for example, how to overcome a particular 'technical' difficulty in her medical practice relating, say, to the dose of anaesthetic she needs to administer to a particular patient or putting a central line into a patient (Gawande, 2002), which might call for a more robust decision-making framework in the form of a check-list, more refined theory or better calculations. Her difficulties, rather, are of another kind – they are *orientational* (or *relational*) difficulties (Shotter, 2008), to do with the *ways* we relate ourselves as whole persons, not merely as Cartesian intellects, towards events occurring around us, in the course of our practical activities in the world. These ways determine *how* we see, *how* we hear, perceive and value particular events and experiences occurring in our surroundings.

Wittgenstein (1980a) introduced the distinction between intellectual and orientational difficulties as follows:

What makes a subject hard to understand – if it's something significant and important – is not that before you can understand it you need to be specially trained in abstruse matters, but the contrast between understanding the subject and what most people *want* to see. Because of this the very things which are most obvious may become the hardest of all to understand. What has to be overcome is a difficulty having to do with the will, rather than the intellect. (p. 17e)

A difficulty of the will (an orientational or relational difficulty) refers, then, to how we *spontaneously* respond to features in our surroundings by bringing specific expectations and anticipations to bear in determining how next to 'go on' with our activities within them. We experience such difficulties when faced with an indeterminate situation, in which we cannot at first make out *what* it is that is important to us.

To the extent that each new circumstance we encounter is in some degree indeterminate (Tsoukas, 2005: 106; Vickers, 1984: 244), this is not unusual, for in becoming a member of a practice, one learns to experience one's situation in terms of already existing distinctions – collective self-understandings – concerning the execution of tasks, notions of competence, orientation to time, the exercise of authority, and so on, which are all constituted through the normative use of

language (Taylor, 1985: 54–55). Practitioners are thus initiated into a practice by learning to enact relevant distinctions in practice, with each new experience enlarging one's 'grammatical' (Wittgenstein, 1953) sense of what their proper usage is (Benner et al., 1999: 30–47; Polanyi, 1962: 101) – namely, the sense of what in the future can *possibly* follow on from one's hitherto experiences.

We thus come to experience certain situations initially as difficulties, to the extent that, both as mature persons and as trained members of a practice, we have already come to embody certain expectations and anticipations as a consequence of our learning certain *ways* of doing things (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2011: 322–325). It is when the flow of our work is disrupted and we become disoriented, not knowing how next to 'go on' (Wittgenstein, 1953, no. 154), that we feel we face a difficulty (Spinosa et al., 1997: 22–23).

Gawande (2002) gives a vivid account of dealing with difficulties in his initiation in medical practice. Through dealing with particular incidents of patients, initially under the supervision of, and later in collaboration with, more experienced members of his practice, the trainee surgeon was learning to use the key categories implicated in a surgeon's job. Through his participation in this practice he was gradually learning to relate to his circumstances 'spontaneously' (Wittgenstein, 1980b, vol. II: no. 699), that is to say, unreflectively: to use medical equipment, to recognize certain symptoms, to relate to colleagues and patients, to form certain expectations. The needles and how to use them in patients' chests, the X-rays and how to read them, and his relationships to others were not objects of thought for him, but 'subsidiary particulars' (Polanyi and Prosch, 1975: 37–38) – taken-for-granted aspects of the normal contextual setting in all its recognizable stability and regularity.

As Wittgenstein (1969: nos. 471–479) aptly noted, the basis of a sociomaterial practice is *activity*, not knowledge; *practice*, not thinking; *certainty*, not uncertainty (see also Spinosa et al., 1997; Schatzki, 2005, 2012). With the help of more experienced others, we first learn to act as they act, that is, to accept the basic certainties of our particular practice (e.g. to use needles, to recognize the symptoms of pulmonary disease, to relate to patients, etc.) and thus to relate ourselves, spontaneously (that is to say non-propositionally – see Schatzki, 2012; Tsoukas, 2011; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011), to our surroundings, while only *later* coming to reflect on them. Experience comes first, knowledge later. 'Language', as Wittgenstein (1980a) famously remarked, 'is a refinement, "in the beginning was the deed"' (p. 13e).

Thus, ontologically privileging the non-propositional bedrock of practice enables one to recognize that particular features of practitioners' 'doings and sayings' (e.g. reasoning, feeling and communicating in particular ways) arise by virtue of individuals participating in certain practices (Schatzki, 2012). One cannot richly understand how individual practitioners exercise their judgment in particular contexts, unless practitioners are seen as being non-propositionally embedded and embodied – the skills they (individually) exercise presuppose the (collective) practices in which they are embedded as well as the bodily abilities to carry them through (Tsoukas, 2009: 942–943).

## Practices, embodied agency and possibilities: Developing new orientations in practice

The 'spontaneous' aspects of the activities practitioners undertake are, thus, primary and constitute what Wittgenstein (1969: no. 94) calls the 'inherited background', against which practitioners make sense of their particular tasks (Shotter and Katz, 1996: 225; Taylor, 1993: 325, 1995: 69). Practitioners are aware of this background but their awareness is largely 'inarticulate' (Taylor, 1991: 308) and implicit in their activity (Ryle, 1949: 40–41). To use Polanyi's terminology,



practitioners necessarily rely on a *subsidiary awareness* of the background for *focally attending* to the criteria relevant to the particular tasks they engage in (Polanyi, 1962: 56; Polanyi and Prosch, 1975: 37–38; Ryle, 1949: 29). It is precisely because of the tacit character of practical knowledge that practitioners, in Polanyi's (1966) memorable phrase, 'know more than they can tell' (p. 4). In the context of carrying out a task, what a practitioner can tell is only what she is focally aware of. The level of articulation is necessarily circumscribed by the horizon of focal awareness. When engaged in action, we cannot identify the subsidiary particulars that make up the background, on the basis of which our action is rendered possible. However, our tacit knowledge of subsidiaries will be *manifested* in our patterns of action (Taylor, 1991: 308, 1995: 68–69; Tsoukas, 2011: 460–464).

The distinctions (or collective self-understandings) making up the inarticulate background cannot be qualitatively neutral. They are rather articulated through contrasts, namely through right and wrong uses of the language in which distinctions are expressed and, therefore, constitute evaluations. To be a member of a practice is to be someone for whom what is going on in the practice *matters*. Surprises, disruptions or disharmonies, therefore, encountered in the flow of work, do not constitute a merely intellectual challenge but an emotional one too. As Spinoza et al. (1997) remark,

we should beware of the Cartesian tendency to imagine the skill of noticing and holding on to disharmonies as primarily intellectual, as noticing a problem in one's life and stepping back to analyze it, to puzzle through it, in one's mind. (p. 23)

Only embodied beings, engaged in practice, for whom things matter, will experience surprises or disharmonies, namely, unsettling events, that inevitably *affect* them (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009). Thus, emotional involvement is a prerequisite for acquiring and developing expertise (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 2005: 784). As several ethnographic and naturalistic decision-making studies show, unless practitioners stay emotionally involved, they are unlikely to develop further (Benner, 1994, 2001; Benner et al., 1999; Klein, 2003).

In other words, building competence and learning relevant judgments, namely, achieving the 'standards of excellence' necessarily implicated in a practice, requires emotional involvement with it – to *feel* the diversity of emotions ordinarily encountered in the carrying out of work. Being open to the feelings engendered by surprise and disruption, and linking them to action, is a prerequisite for a practitioner to progress in his or her practice. For, emotions are not just general feelings of diffuse arousal as is often thought, but can work to *disclose* to us what in fact matters to us in a practice, what we care about as a practitioner of it (Frankfurt, 1988; Nussbaum, 2001; Solomon, 1988). As Nussbaum (2001) puts it, they 'are forms of evaluative judgment that ascribe to certain things and persons outside a person's own control great importance for the person's own flourishing' (p. 22). We can, thus, on occasions, like Shaleni, feel a 'volitional necessity' (Frankfurt, 1988) to act in a certain way, and in doing so, we make ourselves vulnerable to the losses and gains dependent upon whether what we care about is diminished or enhanced (p. 83). Shaleni cannot be the doctor she is *trying* to be without committing herself to a resolution of this issue.

Thus, being a trained practitioner is not simply a matter of acting like an input–output machine. At any one moment, one can find oneself immersed in a circumstance not of one's own choosing. One's continued existence as the professional one is trying to be is an unavoidably ineradicable *concern* – it needs to be constantly worked at, worked on and worked out. We hold out continually before ourselves – just as Shaleni – an ideal of what such professionals as ourselves should be like. Consequently, immersed in our everyday activities, we cannot avoid taking a stance on the kind of being we feel we ought to be: we should be involved in certain activities rather than others, we should be adopting certain goals rather than others, dealing with certain tasks rather than others and

so on. To be involved in a particular, yet always-developing, life project is to be concerned, always, with *possibilities*, not actualities.

This is why Wittgenstein's (1953) methods of inquiry are so apposite here. While others seek the true facts of the matter (cf. Finch, 1995), Wittgenstein seeks something very different and much more practical, of much more use in the moment of acting: he seeks an inner 'surveyable' sense of the limited possibilities open to us at each moment in our use of language; a clear sense of our 'way about' inside our knowledge of language *use*; an unconfused sense of how to 'go on' wherever we might be placed in our involvements with the others around us. In other words, as he puts it, 'our investigation is not directed toward phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the *'possibilities' of phenomena*' (Wittgenstein, 1953, no. 90; italics in the original).

Thus, as a doctor (especially a junior one), Shaleni needs to work out what being a doctor means on a routine basis. More often than not, this is not an issue for her, since she spontaneously responds to the usual situations she encounters, by drawing on her 'skilled intuition' (Kahneman and Klein, 2009: 520; Weaver et al., 2014). Her trained *ways* of responding tend to prove sufficient. However, there are occasions – as in the cases of encountering particular surprises, disruptions or disharmonies – when her expectations are thwarted and her ways of relating to her practice are challenged. She then needs to 'articulate' (Spinosa et al., 1997: 24–25) her response.

The disruption encountered on this occasion brought Shaleni's medical practice into focus. What was hitherto implicitly manifested in her practice (e.g. a doctor should act in a way that does not put the health of his/her patients in jeopardy) is now explicitly focused upon. However, articulating her response does not mean that she converts her subsidiary awareness into focal awareness, like, for example, one converting water into steam. It rather means that aspects of her 'inarticulate background' are brought into focal awareness when probed by a disruption. The latter creates a new background, which makes it possible for aspects of the old (inarticulate) background to be articulated (Shotter and Katz, 1996: 230; Tsoukas, 2011: 470–471). In articulating what was implicit in her practice, she gives it a particular shape, prompted by the particular circumstances she has found herself in. Being a doctor is not a fixed identity but, rather, defines a certain way to be, whose 'grammar' is re-worked any time it is challenged.

To be a doctor is an important *possibility* for Shaleni. She approaches the world as someone who not only can treat patients, but as someone who has a sense of what being a *good* doctor entails. Thus, her defining characteristics as a doctor are never fully present or actual but ongoing possibilities. To exist as a possibility does not mean that particular features of hers are awaiting actualization, a bit like a weather forecast that it will rain tomorrow, but that her existence is an ongoing, ever-developing way of being. At any moment, she has the ability to give to her 'being a doctor' a particular shape, to push herself in a particular direction in the course of her activities, constrained by her relational engagement in the broader relevant sociomaterial practices of her profession.

Shaleni's shock ('I froze') arose because, as a member of a particular sociomaterial practice, she had witnessed something that *mattered* to her as a doctor. Her spontaneously formed expectations of what constitutes proper behaviour at work, which had arisen as a result of her involvement in the medical practice of the hospital, were thwarted. Her spontaneously oriented professional living was challenged. Her non-thematic engagement in the practice had been shaken. She had now to find a way to *re-relate* to her practice and for her spontaneous involvement to be resumed. Her orientational difficulties are shown in her anxiety over finding the right ways in which she could ready herself for perceiving, experiencing and valuing the new situation created – finding, in other words, the new expectations and anticipations she might adopt, which would organize her lookings, and listenings and sense-makings, and which would ultimately determine the lines of action she would resolve to carry out.

Her feeling of shock is no mere feeling, however. It is also suggestive of a line of thinking that started emerging in her – it is ‘a feeling of what thoughts are next to arise, before they have arisen’ (James, 1890: 225–226). Such feelings are not bounded entities with a clear beginning and a clear end, but, as James (1890: 254) remarks, they are ‘feelings of tendency, often so vague that we are unable to name them at all’, but which, nonetheless, function as ‘signs of direction in thought, of which we have an acutely discriminative sense, though no definite sensorial image plays any part in it whatsoever’ (James, 1890: 253). Emotions have a cognitive dimension insofar as they incorporate beliefs (Nussbaum, 1990: 41). It is because Shaleni holds the belief that a doctor should never put a patient’s life in jeopardy that she feels shocked by what she had witnessed. Attempting to clarify and articulate what exactly she feels and why is an important step towards grasping the salient features of the situation confronting her.

What Shaleni experiences, then, could be the *beginning* of a whole new orientation in her practice. But it is worth stressing that her new orientation ‘begins as a feeling, a special kind of feeling, but a feeling nonetheless’ (Damasio, 1999: 312). To begin to articulate her thinking and to consider likely lines of action, she needs to be in touch with her emotions and, for that purpose, her body plays a crucial role in what makes sense to her and how to reason about it. Articulating her thinking begins as a feeling: initial shock is succeeded by puzzlement – *what* is going on here? ‘The nature of the problem was unclear to me’, she recalls,

I was not sure if the registrar was abusing drugs. The information was insufficient. Aside from witnessing the incident and having seen the empty ampoule, I was unclear as to why the senior doctor had been so brazen in using the drugs. The nature of the events could be flawed by my humanly reconstruction of what I saw.

In other words, experiencing particular emotions, underlain by certain beliefs, orients Shaleni towards sensing a problem and wanting to do something about it. She needs to clarify what the issue is and what is at stake.

The feeling of puzzlement arises from the indeterminateness of the situation, which makes it not merely uncertain, but singular and fragmented. A unitary whole needs to be hermeneutically created from a sequence of fragmented experiences. ‘It is’, remarks Dewey (1930 [2008]),

of the very nature of the indeterminate situation which evokes inquiry to be *questionable*; or, in terms of actuality instead of potentiality, to be uncertain, unsettled, disturbed. The peculiar quality of what pervades the given materials, constituting them as a situation, is not just uncertainty at large; it is a unique doubtfulness which makes that situation to be just and only the situation it is. (p. 182)

Inquiring about such a situation involves ‘the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole’ (p. 108).

But to set out to *try* to do something in order to turn an indeterminate situation into determinate one is to articulate its contour with a certain expectation of it as occasioning within one’s circumstances a certain kind of response *before* that response actually happens. As we noted above, this seems to entail Shaleni conducting a good deal of imaginative work within herself as to how she should expect others to respond to her actions, to what she might have to say to them.

In exercising ‘practical wisdom’, notes Aristotle (1955: 92), ‘we must give our activities a *certain quality*, because it is their characteristics that determine the resulting dispositions’ (p. 92, our emphasis). In Shaleni’s case, that certain quality is displayed in her actions by her *trying* to satisfy the ethical demands of her professional ideals, what she clearly takes to be the ethical values shared

by all her colleagues in her profession. As MacIntyre (1985: 216) aptly remarks, ‘I can only answer the question “What am I to do?” if I can answer the prior question “Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?”’ In becoming a member of a practice, one joins a ‘tradition’ (MacIntyre, 1985: 221), whose ‘standards of excellence’ one tries to achieve, and in whose narratives one shares in. ‘What I am’, notes MacIntyre (1985),

is in key part what I inherit, a specific past that is present to some degree in my present. I find myself part of a history and that is generally to say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition. (p. 221)

In Shaleni’s case, she agonized about what she should be doing to the extent her professional identity had been dominantly shaped by the narrative of the ‘good doctor’. Such a narrative has provided Shaleni with the ‘action guiding anticipations’ (Shotter, 2008) in both motivating and shaping her continual trying, in the circumstances confronting her, ‘to do the right thing’.

It should be noted that ‘the good doctor narrative’ need not have been the dominant narrative shaping Shaleni’s professional identity. One can imagine a similar situation, in another context, in which the agent at hand would have been shaped by a different narrative. As business ethics researchers note, the ‘ethical infrastructure’ (Tenbrunsel et al., 2003) in an organization may be such that different narratives, reflecting different concerns and priorities, gain dominance. A ‘self-interested’ narrative (Trevino et al., 2014: 640), for example, would have prioritized the self-interest of the person at hand, not the ‘internal goods’ achieved by the medical practice. What narratives compete for practitioners’ attention and how they are drawn upon by practitioners, with what results, is an empirical matter. Although socio-material practices are constituted, in principle, by the ‘standards of excellence’ guiding practitioners’ action and the ‘internal goods’ those practices aim at achieving, how socio-material practices operate in practice remains an open-ended issue.

### **From ‘thinking (seeing) within frameworks’ to ‘perceiving (sensing) within situations’**

What we have emphasized above is the major difference between thinking *about* a puzzling situation within the terms of abstract theoretical system, and doing what seems to practitioners necessary to get clear – articulate – the precise nature of the particular situation before them, and what opportunities for action it uniquely affords them. This cannot be done by taking an *intellectual* attitude towards it. Taking an intellectual attitude to a bewildering situation is to seek to subsume its particulars under a universal, to view particular instances as manifestations of general concepts (Nussbaum, 1999: 155–166). When we attempt to understand things intellectually, we place them up against a system of separate generalizing concepts, such that relations between instances of the concepts can be judged as corresponding to actual relations between the elements of the situation in reality (James, 1996). Pushed to its logical extreme, the concrete situation faced becomes a mirror image of an abstract world of concepts; particular experiences are understood in terms of already known generalities, thus failing to *notice* their unique features, arising from their being embedded in a particular flow of events. Situational uniqueness is lost when events and experiences are seen as merely reflections of broader, already existing conceptual categories (Mesle, 2008: 43).

By contrast, in becoming *oriented*, namely, when we take a *practical* attitude to the world, we seek to go out towards a concrete situation in all its richness and particularities. What is required here is not analysis but appreciation – to ‘apprehend reality’s thickness’ (James, 1996: 250–251), explore it from *within* (not look down on it from on high), feel the landscape of possibilities with

the knowledge of the inhabitant not that of a traveller. What is accomplished in this case cannot be accomplished simply by ‘applying’ something already made; it involves a process of ‘making’ – a process that begins with a person’s feelings of disquiet, of things not yet being quite right. And it is the unique quality of a person’s initial disquiets, of their bewilderments and disorientations that is of crucial importance. For, as Dewey (1930 [1988]) points out, although psychologists have paid much attention to processes of perception, they have only done so by describing the perceived object in terms of the results of an analysis of the process, leaving out of account the situation within which the process occurs, the situation that was present even before the process began. For Dewey (1930 [1988]), however, the term ‘situation’ designates ‘a complex existence that is held together in spite of its internal complexity by the fact that it is dominated and characterized throughout by a single quality’ (p. 246).

That ‘single quality’ is something ‘sensed or felt’ (Dewey, 1938 [2008]: 73) – *noticed* as a ‘feeling of tendency’ – before it is articulated in language *as* an X or *as* a Y. Such a noticing spontaneously arouses in us an intelligible next step in our activities in response to it, which typically takes the form of some description. Descriptions (linguistic or otherwise) come after a period of noticing a ‘something’ while, at the same time, having the quality of ‘pointing’ to a something more, which needs to be further explored and checked out. Thus, facing an indeterminate situation in which we do not know our way out, rather than the solution to a problem, we are seeking to *resolve* what we at first encounter as an indeterminate, ambiguous or bewildering situation by our active inquiries within it – conducted in the course of our living, engaged, attentive movements within it. As Todes (2001) put it, much of our activity begins ‘with the sense of an indeterminate lack of something-or-other’ (p. 177), so that our exploratory activities initially need to be directed, ‘not to get what we want but to discover what we want to get’ (p. 177).

This process, then, of *resolving* on a line of action, is not at all like carrying out a calculation, or of making a decision or choice among a set of already clear alternatives. It is quite different. It involves moving around within a landscape of possibilities, and in so doing, being spontaneously responsive to the consequences of each move, and assessing which one (or combination of moves) seems best in resolving the initial tension aroused in one’s initial confusion. Judgment is involved because we are operating here only in the realm of possibilities, not that of actualities that can be named and formalized.

As practitioners of one kind or another, we have no other choice but to find the guidance we need in taking a *prudent* step forward – a step that is *in-formed* by a moment-by-moment felt sense of ‘in-touchness’ with both our own inner resources and with crucial features of our surroundings – within the unfolding dynamics emerging in the interplay of our outgoing *tryings* and their incoming results. Sheets-Johnstone (2012) discusses what is involved in our coming to an understanding of how we, as ordinary human beings, actually go about finding a *way* of doing something *from within* our doing of it. We seem to have an imaginative ability, she argues, to project a line of action into the future, to perform a joined up sequence of contributory activities, beginning from a felt tension of a qualitatively distinct kind and to act in such a way that it results in a satisfaction of that tension.

But we do not do it by following a map or an already existing path. We do it, as Garfinkel (1967) so nicely put it, for yet ‘another first time’ (p. 9). We seem able to imaginatively constitute the *line of action*, the effort required to bring off an achievement, in the course of our bringing it off. We are both aware of our agency and of the demands our situational surroundings may exert on us and seek appropriately to respond to it. It is not so much a question of comparing alternatives in deciding what to do – indeed, no such set of clear alternatives is in fact available to us to choose among (see Weick, 1996) – as being spontaneously responsive to the consequences of each move we are

considering. The actions we are resolving to follow emerge from within the landscape of possibilities in the course of our explorations within it.

This is clearly shown in Shaleni's case. She had to explore the matter and resolve on a line of action from within her work setting – its contextual nuances, its possibilities and affordances (Badaracco, 2002). She needed to remind herself of how respected the senior doctor was, how politically weak she was as a junior doctor, how much she respected seniority in her profession and how committed she was to patients' well-being. All that had been known to her, albeit tacitly, thanks to her immersion in the 'inarticulate background' of her sociomaterial practice. After being shocked and perplexed she was now conflicted. What had been a smooth, non-deliberative and transparent practice now, at this moment, demanded her explicit attention. She was facing an *aporia* (impasse), groping for a way forward, a way out. She recalls,

As a junior member of the theatre team I had not established any political influence. I was left perplexed by contradictory emotions and values. As a junior registrar I felt a sense of respect for seniority and an inner pressure not to spoil the image of the department. At the same time, I felt a sense of wanting to protect patients from the potential negligence that could result from abusing drugs. I felt disturbed by the inner turmoil I was experiencing. I could not understand how a doctor whose ability to heal and help patients was known had opted to jeopardise his work and people's lives to sustain what I thought was a drug problem. I began questioning the persona he had displayed as a competent senior registrar and great anaesthetist renowned in the department. [...]

I spent many days after the incident contemplating what to do, surrounded by mixed emotions. The uncertainty consumed me. The ambiguity surrounding the experience was great as I had no idea if the registrar was experimenting or serially abusing drugs. The more internal conflict I felt, the more I felt I was less able to deal with the situation. I felt burdened and suffered with insomnia [...].

On the one hand I felt a moral obligation to protect the patients from potential negligence that could result from substance abuse and I felt an inherent need to want to help the senior registrar at the same time. I knew I could accomplish this only by exposing the experience I encountered. On the other hand if I exposed the problem, I would risk having the senior registrar suspended or, even worse, fired. It would also mean that I would be betraying the department and depriving them of a star anaesthetist. I would rob him of the opportunity to heal many more patients, but, at the same time, I could prevent potential negligence, which, up until now, he had displayed [...].

I began to think that I had two options. If I chose to expose the situation, I realised that as a junior employee my credibility was at stake, which would ultimately influence my prospects of career advancement. And I also risked being victimised, which meant that my emotional well-being was also at stake. If I chose not to expose the situation, patients' lives were at stake, as drug abuse affects one's judgment and therefore compromises quality of care. However, the registrar's life was also at stake if he continued his habit. Omitting to act also meant that I compromised my emotional well-being.

Finally, I realized that it came down to doing one of two things. I could choose to expose the situation and act as a whistle blower, or I could continue to play the game and ignore what I had seen. I realised that I had no evidence and this meant it would be my word against his. My conscience, however, would not allow me to rest.

Coming to a judgment, then, is not a matter simply of decision making – as if the possibilities from which we must choose can be clearly laid out before us – nor is it about providing 'an interpretation' of an otherwise bewildering situation (for an uncountable number of interpretations is possible), but a matter of coming to, or resolving on, a clear perception of a circumstance and its

performative meaning for us – what it calls upon us to do within it. And central to such a process, as we have noted above, is a matter of our *will*, how spontaneously we find ourselves *wanting* to respond to features in our surroundings by bringing specific expectations and anticipations to bear in determining how next to ‘go on’ with our activities within them, even when our ‘going on’ is an imaginative going on. Shaleni clearly does a lot of ‘moving around’ within the mental landscapes in relation to which she is trying to resolve on a pathway that does justice to every detail of the dilemma she faces.

But what is perhaps most crucial here – in line with Aristotle’s (1955) noting that ‘like actions produce like dispositions’ (p. 92) – is what we can refer to as the formation of Shaleni’s *will*, what she cares about and how that can be ‘shaped’ and ‘developed’ in the course of her professional (and other) life’s experiences.<sup>2</sup> As she reflects,

After more thinking and agonizing, about three weeks later, I approached a senior consultant in the anesthesia department, the same consultant who had recruited me, and asked to have a discussion with him. My decision to continue with the situation was driven by my sense of responsibility and I didn’t want to deal with the situation alone [...]

And here, of course, she was relying on her colleagues sharing with her ethical worries – for, after all, if she cannot trust without reservation the ethical judgments of her senior colleagues, she will feel completely disoriented, suddenly within a wholly unreal and anomic situation. Although she experiences an individual sense of responsibility, that sense is nonetheless shaped by her participation in a particular practice, by virtue of which she sees herself as ‘bearer of a particular social identity’ (MacIntyre, 1985: 220). Her role as a doctor connects her to her peers – her concerns are their concerns. MacIntyre (1985) describes the irreducibly social nature of one’s individual sense of morality as follows:

[...] I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I belong to this clan, that tribe, this nation. Hence what is good for me has to be good for one who inhabits these roles. As such, I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity. (p. 220)

Shaleni’s agonizing may, thus, be individually experienced, but is grounded on, and is intelligible through (and, therefore, sharable with others) her professional identity.

## Concluding thoughts

What we have seen in Shaleni’s account, then, is that the imaginative work she conducts involves her, not in ‘aboutness thinking’ – that is, not in thinking in terms of general conceptual representations of the situation bewildering her – but in ‘witness thinking’ (Shotter, 2006) – that is, thinking in a performative fashion as she ‘moves around’ within the unique inner landscape of possibilities she is currently inhabiting, given her professional values and the dilemma confronting her (see also Shotter, 2011). Or, to restate the issue in Polanyi’s (1962) terms, instead of thinking with a *focal awareness* of the objective nature of her situation, she is thinking *with* the indirect guidance of the *subsidiary awarenesses* aroused in her as she conducts her explorations over the wide field of her concerns, as she moves about within their inner landscapes. Thus, the value of the kind of thinking involved here – in our coming eventually to resolve on a particular line of practical action – is not at all to be measured in terms of the end point of that line of action (the achievement of a focal

awareness), but in terms of what we learn along the way in our *trying* to arrive at it, in our *trying* to achieve a clear focus on what an initially bewildering situation actually requires of us.

What is crucial to subsidiary awareness is its open, dynamic nature. Only in the course of Shaleni's exploratory movements around does subsidiary awareness come fully into existence and become available to her. Its features become available, not as finished, objective patterns out in the world, but as unfinished, *sensed* similarities (and differences) in relation to past experiences that both motivate and guide her in her further explorations (Luntley, 2005). Her moving around is crucial.

Remarks Wittgenstein (1965),

To get clear about philosophical problems, it is useful to become conscious of the apparently unimportant details of the particular situation in which we are inclined to make a certain metaphysical assertion. Thus we may be tempted to say 'Only this is really seen' when we stare at unchanging surroundings, whereas we may not at all be tempted to say this when we look about us while walking. (p. 66)

What we can learn along the way in our explorations are different particular *orientations* towards our surroundings, 'ways of going on' that constitute for us what we need to notice as being important for us within them. As Sheets-Johnstone (2012) points out,

The failure to put real-life movement on the map [...] results in a failure to consult *actual bodily experience* and to opt instead for [talk of such 'things' as] motor systems, motor programs, and motor control, all of which put us at a third-person remove from the first-person bodies we are. (p. 124)

To appreciate the 'corporeal turn' involved here – a turn from *thinking about* to *sensing from within* our involvements in our surroundings – involves us in effecting a major re-orientation both in ourselves, and in those of you now reading this article. For, instead of our central concern being with theoretical frameworks within which to think about what we might describe as the issues, topics or themes of our concern as they appear, objectively, out in the world, our concern, instead, is with our unfolding relations to events, utterances, expressions, living movements, and so on, occurring around us, which elicit living, meaningful *responses* from us as participants in a practice. Those responses consist in uniquely distinctive movements of feeling, the noticing of which is the starting point in our inquiries.

Shaleni, like a child still having to learn aspects of her or his *first* language, does not face the task of making sense of what is already well known to her in a new, *second* language, a theoretical framework couched in specialist technical terms. Instead, like a child who cannot be told, linguistically, of the 'things' she is meant to pick out and attend to, she needs first to become acquainted with them, so to speak, to experience a range of embodied expectations as to how they make their varied appearance to her in her surroundings. And she can do this, for as Wittgenstein (1969) remarks, people

have always learnt from experience; and we can see from their actions that they believe certain things definitely, whether they express this belief or not. By this I naturally do not want to say that men *should* behave like this, but only that they do behave like this. (no. 284)

Thus, in the view adopted here, practical wisdom involves us, not in withdrawing from our surroundings on our first intimation of them as presenting us with a difficulty. Our task is not to devise a framework or model within which to think about it, but to enter into their bewildering nature more extensively, to dwell within them bodily, with attention to felt nuances and to felt details that are only too easy to ignore.



Although it is doubtful whether engaged judgment can be taught in classrooms in the traditional textbook-based way, its development may nonetheless be facilitated by adopting types of knowledge (Chia and Holt, 2008) that privilege first-person accounts, interpretive perspectives, temporality and reflexivity. Such types of knowledge preserve some of the complexity of human behaviour, especially the importance of seemingly unimportant contextual details, the conflict of goods that often permeates human life, the moral qualities of agents, the ambiguity of motives that characterizes much of human action and the observer-dependence of descriptions of human systems (March, 2007; Podolny, 2011; Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001; Weick, 2004). By situating engaged judgment in rich contexts, it is possible to show the processes through which practitioners engage in it.

Moreover, the process of coming to a wise judgment can, in principle, be learnt through practitioners being exposed to a diversity of experiences. ‘Can someone else be a man’s teacher in this?’ asks Wittgenstein (1953: 227e). ‘Certainly’, he replies. ‘From time to time he gives him the right *tip*.<sup>3</sup> – This is what ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ are like here. – What one acquires here is not a technique; one learns correct judgments’ (Wittgenstein, 1953: 227e). In other words, what we need to learn is to make *judgments* as the others around us do (‘knowledge-by-exemplification’ as Chia and Holt (2008: 480) call it), to learn to relate ourselves to initially indeterminate ‘some-things’ in our surroundings linguistically, in a certain manner. Indeed, to go further, the task of learning how to conduct the essentially *developmental* process involved can be *occasioned*; that is, we can set up the surroundings, the conducive circumstances, in which there is a good chance of people developing gradually the skills involved. Mentoring programs (Lester et al., 2011), peer coaching (Parker et al., 2008), apprenticeship schemes (Lave and Wenger, 1991), field training (Benner et al., 1999), simulation-based training (Salas et al., 2009) and reflexive practices (Cunliffe, 2001, 2002) aim, in varying degrees, to attain this.

But, as we hope we have made clear, the process involved as to how to act in an otherwise bewildering circumstance is not a simple matter of decision-making or problem-solving, but of resolving on, or focusing on, a best line of action as the result of an inner process of imaginative exploration of the possibilities available within whatever particular situation the actor, at any one time, happens to be in. Such possibilities come to light only *in* that exploration, they are not available prior to it. As people do this, as they notice or come to anticipate what is happening to them, as they move around within the landscape of possibilities they inhabit as members of an organization and/or profession, they experience occurrences that can occasion in them the development of the kind of embodied responsive understandings they acquired in their first language learning (Shotter, 2011).

We learn about life by exploring it. Shaleni’s response to the bewildering situation she experiences is to try to pick out and articulate the ‘whatness’ of her shocking experience in a way that makes sense to, and is seen as legitimate, by all those around her. As a result of her engaged explorations, although she will end up with the dilemma she started with (‘what am I going to do here and now?’), this does not mean that she will have learnt nothing along the way: Her responsiveness to relations between aspects of it previously unnoticed will have changed completely. She will arrive where she started and will know the situation for the first time.

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## Notes

1. This is her proper name. Shaleni provided this account as part of her work in a graduate class conducted by the second author and has given us permission to use it here.
2. As Frankfurt (1988: 91) remarks: "The formation of a person's will is most fundamentally a matter of his coming to care about certain things, and of his coming to care about some of them more than about others". And he continues: "Thus a person often begins to care about something when he recognises its capacity to affect him in important ways, ceases to care about it when he discovers that it does not have that capacity, and criticises himself for caring too much or too little about things whose importance to himself he has misjudged. [...] It is primarily because it serves to connect us actively to our lives in ways which are creative of ourselves and which expose us to distinctive possibilities for necessity and for freedom" (Frankfurt, 1988:93).
3. That is, the teacher *enacts* or *illustrates* how these judgments are made in different particular circumstances in such a way, that is, by contrasts and comparisons, that the pupil can experience what the doing of it actually looks like, sounds like and feels like.

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