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Smorgasbords, Cracked Pots and Potholes: The Role of Chronotopes in Shaping Coaching Conversations

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Abstract

Drawing on interviews and authoethnography, this paper argues that chronotopes offer a novel approach to deconstructing the dialogical exchange between coach and coachee. Chronotopes shape coaching conversations through specific language use. Chronotopes are aesthetic, literary devices referring to *timespace* that configures different contexts. While there are a multitude of chronotopes, the 'Travel', 'Pragmatic' and 'Romantic' chronotopes are focused on in this paper. These are present in the language of coaching, articulated in concepts including maps, tools and feeling. Critically, these chronotopes dynamically interact, creating opportunities for new coaching vocabularies that enable coach and coachee to escape from a monological time-space.

Keywords: Chronotope, genres, pragmatic, romantic, travel, dialogical subject

Some of the most prominent writers in coaching such as Whitmore (2009); Downey (2014) and Starr (2008), have argued for the importance of focusing on the way that coaches interact in coaching conversations. They encourage a technical focus on whether questions are open or closed, whether phrasing indicates judgement and whether the questions asked are sufficiently

incisive (Kline, 2020). However, the aim of this paper is to consider those interventions that transcend their technical aspects, since the words that coaches use during coaching conversations are shaped by historical and socio-cultural elements. For instance, in this paper we will be referring to the philosophical movements of Romanticism and Pragmatism and the ways in which these historical and socio-cultural factors create the specific context (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2020) in which coaching conversations happen. Therefore, possibilities for thinking and acting within coaching conversations are dependent upon the diversity of concepts and meanings which are available or on hand within language (Wittgenstein, 1922). Language is often ripe with contradictions, as this paper will show. For instance, Romanticism has different topographical layers relating to the concept of time that encourage the coachee to be fully immersed in their feelings in the present moment which contradicts the future focus of coaching interactions (Dennison, 2020). As Bakhtin (1981) suggests, such contradictions reflect the rich social and historical context in which coaching is situated. These historical and socio-cultural factors take shape in the flow of time. Hence temporality can be described as playing a key role in coaching conversations, and this is articulated by the concept of the chronotope which we will be discussing throughout this paper.

Methodology

This paper includes a handful of vignettes drawn from recent research which illustrate these distinct chronotopes. This data was gathered from a longitudinal study that adopted a hybrid methodology which intermingled interpretative phenomenology with dialogical methods. Within this frame, the data was collected through immersion by one of us, (Dennison), the instrument of her inquiry, as a coachee in a series of one-to-one coaching conversations with a professional coach. Emerging from these conversations was an autoethnographic account which explored these encounters in depth. Following on from this initial stage of research, as the researcher found she had further questions to ask, a second stage of research emerged. This involved conducting semi-structured interviews with a sample of 6 professional coaches to hear their voice and thus create a dialogue between these distinct texts. The vignettes in this paper have been deliberately chosen to enrich and enhance the reader's understanding of the role that chronotopes play in shaping coaching conversations.

The Chronotope

Chronotopes have been used in a range of academic disciplines for instance narratology (Holmgren Troy, 2016), gender studies (Luphondo & Stroud, 2012) and identity research (Guerrero-Arias, Agudelo-Orozco & Pava-Ripoll, 2020), however, to date they have been overlooked in coaching research. Chronotopes as conceived by Bakhtin are aesthetic, literary devices that refer to *timespace*, conveying "the inseparability of space and time" (1981, p.84). They indicate the ways in which an individual's thoughts, feelings and actions reside within and are shaped by their context within a particular time and space. In this conceptualization, time acquires a physicality akin to flesh and develops a presence within the conversation itself. This implies that meanings which are formed during lived experience are contingent upon this temporal context, and indicates that these may be tentative, fragmentary or uncertain (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2013). In this sense, chronotopes can be thought of as having secondary agency, which is enacted within a specific social context and capable of inducing and repelling action (Gell, 2013; Layton, 2003). This conceptualization is consistent with the Bakhtinian emphasis on the aesthetic form and content dimensions of the chronotope. There can be micro-chronotopes which are present within language itself, and macro-chronotopes which provide the plot or narrative shape by which human experience unfolds. Thus, chronotopes create discrete genres of coaching that craft coaching conversations. Crucially, chronotopes indicate that human activities are both spatially and temporally embedded and give a specific form to reality (Bemong et al., 2010). However, chronotopes can also be understood as a literal connection between two spaces. It becomes a metaphor for a time-space that is in-between and connective of two places: for example, the timespace of an island becomes a metaphor for loneliness. We also assert that chronotopes are dialectical in nature and have similarities with the concept of context. In other words, actors within a coaching relationship both shape the chronotope as well as being shaped by it.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to explore the ways in which chronotopes shape and are shaped by coaching conversations. This has merit, since chronotopes impact on the way that coaching is conducted through providing the context and the genre in which coaching conversations unfold. Chronotopes also affect the relationship between the coach and coachee, as well as the quality of the encounter and the process of learning itself. Crucially, reflexivity is required, and an awareness of the presence of chronotopes in our language use, since this is beneficial for coach and coachee, encouraging flexibility and creativity. As this paper will show, over reliance on a single

chronotope can be deemed monological, and therefore making space for other diverse chronotopes enables a more fruitful dialogue to emerge, both between the coach and coachee, as well as the chronotopes and the actors within this social context.

Finally, chronotope as a device places distinct emphasis on the time-space dimension of metaphors, which is hitherto unexplored in the coaching literature. Thus, it is important to draw attention to the different connotations of metaphors present within coaching conversations, and explore the possibilities with coachees of moving from, for example, 'ruts' and between emotional landscapes. Moreover, the chain of metaphors and indexical meanings that are organized by the time-space of specific genres are open to investigation via chronotope. Therefore, this paper is making a valuable contribution both to coaching theory and practice.

The chronotopes that we will be discussing include: 1) Travel, 2) Romantic and 3) Pragmatic. However, it is possible that within coaching conversations there are many more chronotopes which could be articulated, and this opens up exciting avenues for further research. What is significant about these distinct chronotopic genres is the way in which they create worlds, generating a unique sense of space, for instance, the romantic suggests a space in which creativity, imagination and intuition are nurtured whilst the pragmatic genre is one of rationality where problems need to be solved via the use of coaching models and techniques (Dennison, 2020).

The Role of Metaphor in Coaching

The chronotope is ontologically distinct from the concept of metaphor since it provides a temporal and spatial context within which specific events unfold. In this sense, we might argue that chronotopes are real in a metaphysical sense as these contexts pre-exist their apprehension by actors who operate within them. Nevertheless, the concept of chronotope can also be understood as blending "concrete life with aesthetic expression" (Cresswell and Sullivan, 2020, p. 123) and thus it can be described as a specific metaphor in that it refers to how time and space shape narratives, creating distinct genres. This suggests that chronotopes are social constructions of reality which can only be accessed via metaphor and genre hence requiring a subjectivist epistemology. Hence, we can never directly experience a chronotope as an objective reality as it must be experienced through the lens of our respective personal narratives, in the guise of metaphor.   Therefore, we are locating this

paper within the broader coaching and mentoring literature that is situated within a metaphorical frame.

Metaphors pervade the coaching literature. Examples of this include Gallwey's (1974, 1997) work on the inner game which has been integral to the development of non- directive coaching approaches, using the game metaphor to communicate the core constructs of the approach. In mentoring, particularly in relation to the role of the mentor, metaphorical thinking has been important for example in Scanlon (2009). Other aspects of coaching are also strongly located within metaphor; for instance, 'Clean Language' which situates the metaphors articulated in a coachee's language at the heart of the coaching conversation; 'Transactional analysis' with theatrical or dramatic qualities that are expressed through concepts including the coach performing the role of rescuer and the coachee playing the role of victim, and 'Neuro-linguistic programming' with its notions of anchoring or creating a map of the world. Within coaching, metaphors are useful for exploring a coachee's sensemaking of lived experience as well as offering insights into their values, issues and current situation (Emson, 2016; Humphreys and Tomlinson, 2020). They are also useful in a coachee's healing process, enabling them to move forward (Sullivan and Rees, 2008).

Interestingly, the etymological roots of the word metaphor can be found in ancient Greek soil, and refer to carrying over, or transferring the meaning of one word to another (Harper, 2021). Thus, metaphors create an implied comparison between objects that are not literally alike (Irvine, 1975). When it comes to human thought and understanding, metaphor is king, and as Sweetser (1990) attests, our understanding of many areas of life is metaphorical, indicating that we "think in metaphors" (Pinker, 2008, p.238). Therefore, it is unsurprising that metaphors are commonplace in our everyday language use. For instance, we talk about how "love is a journey" (Pinker, 2008, p.240), we may feel that we are at a crossroads or a fork in the road, we may describe how we are crossing the Rubicon, or think in terms of using moral compasses and of reaching a point of no return. The list of metaphors used in everyday parlance is seemingly endless. However, it is noticeable by the metaphors discussed above that our language use is peppered with those which refer to journeying and travel (Sullivan & Rees, 2008). This metaphor is also situated at the heart of coaching as outlined later in this paper. When it comes to coaching, there are a plethora of metaphorical terms, expressed in the use of tools, models and goals (Dennison, 2020). For instance, during this research several metaphors were stumbled across, including adopting a smorgasbord approach, keeping the channels of communication open, toolboxes, cracked pots, avoiding potholes,

and holding things up to the light. As a type of figurative speech, metaphors are constructed when there is a chasm between our everyday lived experience and language, and as Pinker (2008, p.276) states, language is a "lossy" medium which has limits when seeking to fully articulate the complexities of sensory experience. This is conveyed by the following:

For none of us can ever give the exact measure of his needs or his thoughts or his sorrows, and language is a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, while all the time we long to move the stars to pity (Pinker, 2008, p.278).

Metaphors bridge the gap between language and reality since there is what James (2009) refers to as an ineffable quality inherent in life. Thus, metaphors are critical in providing a means to "eff the ineffable" (Pinker, 2008, p.277). They enable us to communicate and share our thoughts, feelings and experiences with others. Metaphors are intrinsically interwoven with how we make sense of space, time, and substance, and connect lived experience with abstract ideas. However, unlike authors such as Emson (2016) and Humphrey and Tomlinson (2020) who seek to use metaphor to understand the coachee, or those who state that a coach's metaphors need to be expunged from coaching interactions, we are claiming that metaphors are actively shaping both coach *and* coachee's understandings. Metaphors do this since they speak worlds into being. In other words, they provide the framework or craft the space in which their conversations unfurl. This is manifest in the concept of the chronotope.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that metaphors have limitations due to their partial nature, tending to privilege certain aspects of phenomena at the expense of others. As Grant (2016) suggests, what is said and how it is said has significance, so much so that new vocabularies which seek to hear and understand the other may be beneficial. Morgan (2006, p.5), in his text on metaphors for organizations sums this up well:

"Metaphor is inherently paradoxical. It can create powerful insights that also become distortions, as the way of seeing through a metaphor becomes a way of *not* seeing".

Also, as Morgan (2006) points out, it can prove difficult to escape a particularly dominant metaphor, particularly when you are not conscious of it – to use a well-known metaphor to describe metaphors, when you only have a hammer, everything is a nail! He advocates adopting a range of metaphors and applying them to a specific issue to avoid this particular trap. These insights are

highly pertinent to coaching for both coaches and coachees, as we shall discuss below.

Coaching Genres

Philosophy is rich in concepts connected with time, for instance Heidegger's (1962, p.39) assertion that being-in-the-world unfolds with "time as its standpoint", creating the horizon in which understandings emerge, and Bergson (2005) with his notion of duration. Chronotopes can be described as providing the "clock and the map" (Holquist, 2010, p.10) of lived experience, as they create the context in which events occur. As a result, chronotopes produce possibilities for acting as well as constraints through their individual forms of language which shape, craft and transform awareness and understanding. Relating this to coaching, coaching conversations have temporal characteristics where meanings unfurl that may be fragmented, multiplicit, tentative and even uncertain (Dennison, 2020). Just as in literature, where distinct genres such as crime, science fiction or romance are defined by their own unique characteristics, chronotopes represent different genres of coaching, for instance Gestalt coaching or coaching inspired by NLP, thus creating a unique "field of possibilities" (Morson, 1994, p.106). This has significance for coaching theory and practice since chronotopes create the space in which specific world views rich in taken for granted assumptions, values and meanings are expressed in the coaching conversation. Therefore, coaching conversations offer a rich source of material for future coaching research that is interested in identifying the many different chronotopes that could be present. Moreover, within these conversations as Bakhtin (1981, p. 269) claims "form and content[..] are one", indicating that different coaching genres will have a specific tone that is articulated through distinct forms of language or "ways of talking" (Shotter, 2008, p.49). These forms of language focus awareness upon distinct attributes and characteristics which might otherwise be overlooked. Therefore, through specific language use, coaching genres create their own style of communication that is palpable in generating a particular way of seeing or world view (Bakhtin, 1981; Collington, 2001; Dennison, 2020). These are situated (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and socially shared, expressed through the words and utterances spoken between coach and coachee during conversation. Hence, within these distinct coaching genres, the experiences that coach and coachee encounter will be granted a separate and unique form. In addition, each coaching genre encourages ways of talking and relating to one another that generates individual meanings and awareness (Shotter, 2008). Moreover, in the same way that different genres of literature determine possibilities for the characters to act, so too do coaching genres for the coach and coachee.

The Travel Chronotope

The Travel chronotope can be described as a root metaphor of coaching since it is common in the extant coaching literature. For instance, this metaphor is expressed in the claim that coaching transports an individual from their current or present situation in space and time to a more desirable or longed for future situation (Abravanel & Gavin, 2017; Bennett & Bush, 2013; Cox et al, 2014; Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2018; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). In addition, this travel metaphor is conveyed by concepts including anchoring and map of the world as articulated through Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). Moreover, the etymological origins of the word 'coach' itself are intertwined with the notion of motion, transport, and travel, since these are from the Hungarian *Kotchi Wagen* - a type of vehicle which was fast moving and lightweight. This means of transport was named after the town of *Kocs* which is thought to have been located near Komàrom, a walled town between Vienna and Budapest (Munby, 2008). Kocs was a busy, thriving town, due to its geographic position. Therefore, it may have been inevitable that a new form of transportation would emerge there. This novel means of transport grew in popularity, due to its speed and sophistication and its reputation increased until even members of the Hungarian royal family rode in a coach. In just 50 years this invention had spread to all the capital cities in Europe (Munby, 2008, O'Connor & Lages, 2009). As Stec (2012) suggests, 21st Century coaching can be understood as post-technological, where the coaching journey has become associated with personal growth, self-development, and independence (Stokes, et al, 2020). Thus, within this metaphorical frame, as O'Connor and Lages (2009) attest, coaching is described as the foremost and stylish way to travel whereby the coachee experiences change and transformation to their landscape of meaning. Within this frame, a coachee is on a journey, and as motion is a concept that involves space and time, perhaps they could also be described as a traveler through time. Moreover, as coaching is interconnected with notions of delivering value as indicated by Hawkins and Turner (2020) then the coach could be imagined as the pilot of a time travelling machine helping to deliver a coachee to their chosen destination.

There is a tension that sits at the heart of coaching, with this desired move to travel towards a future state contrasting with the need to stay with emotions as they arise in the present moment. These are expressed in the following vignette extract where a research participant is recounting a story from their own coaching experience:

Extract 1: Moving ahead

> …we weren't moving ahead and he'd, he'd asked me for an action plan and I said no I would not do an action plan we're staying, we've got to access your emotions…and sit with them I'm afraid and we need to talk about that first… he wanted to come and you know, know what he was doing… and I was saying 'just stay with it!..You have to stay with this horrible situation…just so you know what's going on in it and until you've done that anything you do is running away.

This extract conveys an emerging sense of struggle between the expectations of coach and coachee which expresses this tension or paradox, where the coachee is articulating the desire to move ahead on his journey, whilst the coach is ironically encouraging him to slow down, maybe park up and absorb the scenery so that he can stay with and encounter his emotions as they arise in the present moment. Not only do these words convey this struggle between movement and stasis, but they also indicate the presence of another chronotope - that of the Romantics which is discussed in the following section of this paper. In relation to the above extract, this chronotope is expressed through the assumption that values can take shape through the flow of lived experience and that new and novel meanings may form as the coachee fully immerses themselves in their emotions in the here-and-now. Within this conceptualization, time cannot be reduced to discrete parts but is understood as unfolding in duration: there is no longer a road or space to travel though, there is only the experience of time (Bergson 2005).

The Romantic Chronotope

This chronotope refers to language that conceptualizes human beings as creative individuals engaged in a continuous striving towards the infinite, where emotions and feelings predominate (Berlin 2013, Furst 1980). This has been shaped by Romanticism which was an artistic and intellectual movement that grew out of the revolutionary change engulfing Europe and the United Sates in the late 18th Century (Burwick 2015). Examples of this Romantic chronotope in the coaching literature include Humphrey and Tomlinson (2020), with their discussion of the role of poetry for encouraging sensitivity, creative insights, and eliciting emotion. Their paper explicitly refers to Romanticism through quoting John Keats as well as in their argument against rational design and fixed or stable outcomes whilst supporting the need to experience mystery, uncertainty, and doubt (Snell, 2013).

Within this Romantic context, diverse phenomena are experienced, and multiple possibilities continue to emerge which suggest that self-knowledge is never finalized and that there is always more to be encountered and understood. In contrast to moving between time-spaces in travel, in Romanticism a particular time-space is held and explored. This relates to the notion of depth, where lived experience expresses an elusive sensation of un-embraceability (Berlin 2013). Within this genre individuals are encouraged to experience phenomena whilst staying with or acknowledging the intensity of feeling that dwells within. Thus, spending time exploring the inner world has value, as articulated by Humphrey and Tomlinson (2020) with their assertion that poetry can enable a voyage inward towards aspects of self which are unfamiliar or difficult terrain. The Romantic chronotope has been influenced by the Romantic philosophy of the 18th Century, for example, the writings of Fichte, Schlegel, Herder and Goethe, (Fichte, 1916; Millàn-Zaibert, 2007) along with the creative works and poetry of Blake, Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth (Berlin, 2013; Furst, 1980). These works were a reaction against the dominant Enlightenment value of reason in their time, emphasizing instead the importance of intuition, insight, and the irrational. The Romantic emphasis placed on insight and intuition is expressed by the following vignette extract from a research participant's interview transcript:

Extract 2: Intuition

> ...working out where there's you know...is it this? Is it that? Erm...and I know I've become an intuitive person and so I use that and will give them feedback on things that I have picked up..I think that's it.

In the following extract drawn from the autoethnography, the language that is being expressed is also that of the Romantic chronotope in that the coach and coachee are discussing bodily feelings and perceptions whilst seeking to develop an intuitive sensitivity or sensibility to these sensations as they arise in the present moment. This emphasis on encountering feelings as they are happening in the here-and-now also reflects the Romantic commitment to holding a specific time-space as articulated above. This language is articulated in the questions that the coach is asking which provide the context in which the coachee responds. This reflects the dialectical nature of the chronotope as discussed in the introduction to this paper. Extract Three also points to a sense of mystery, doubt and uncertainty unfolding for the coachee as they seek to become more attuned to their bodily sensations. For example, in her comments about the activity taking place in her heart or stomach. This uncertainty is

conveyed by Extract Four where the coachee states that for her encountering her bodily sensations for the first time was not only unfamiliar but puzzling, and that a sense of mystery still remained when re-reading these words in her autoethnography.

Extract Three: Body Sensation

Isobel asks: 'Is your heart beating fast or slow?', and so I have to stop and think about this, which is not easy. I think it is beating at a normal pace…and so I say so.

'Are you comfortable?' I respond with a one-word answer: 'Yes'. The chair feels comfortable, I can't feel any obvious physical discomfort. Ok, I am feeling a little conscious of myself here but other than that….
Isobel asks me 'Are there any areas of tension in your body?', to which I say: 'Not that I am aware of'.

This process continues with Isobel asking me 'How does your stomach feel right now?' and I have to say I am not too sure as I don't regularly stop to consider how my stomach is feeling. This is definitely alien territory to me! I say 'It feels fine' as I can sense nothing out of the ordinary……

'How have your perceptions changed since you closed your eyes?'
I reply with 'Well..yes..sound seems to be louder or more acute, I am aware of the ticking of the clock, which I may not have been aware of before, and I can feel the cool metal of the chair arms against the flesh of my fingers and hands…I can feel the heaviness of the floor beneath my feet'.

Extract Four: Attunation

Becoming attuned to how different areas of my body may be feeling, for instance contemplating how my stomach may be feeling was puzzling at first to me. I encountered a sense of not knowing. In retrospect I find this surprising as it is clear to me now that I would know if my stomach was aching or in discomfort. Why I found this process so difficult at the time is curious to me as I write these words today. Re-reading this field text I sense that I found it easier to articulate how the world around me felt, more than my body. I could feel the coolness of the chair arms or how the floor felt below me, but I was unsure how my stomach felt. I wonder why this was, but perhaps it was simply the newness of the situation.

It could be argued that this chronotope is prevalent in Western culture particularly, conveyed through the plethora of self-help books that are present in bookshops to tv gurus (Dennison, 2020). Ironically, it may even be articulated in this paper which owes much to Bakhtin and his conceptualization

of the ways in which we emotionally shape one another through our interactions, and where we can only know ourselves through relationship with others.

The Romantic chronotope adds further complexity to coaching conversations as they are unfurling since it can be understood as comprised of distinct topographical layers (Dennison, 2020). These layers relate to the concept of time, for instance, as conveyed in vignette 1 above, where the coachee is actively encouraged to be fully immersed or sit with their feelings as they arise in the here and now. This is also a process that contradicts the future focused characteristics as constructed by the travel chronotope. Hence this may be an area of tension within coaching conversations. However, this contradiction is reflected by Humphrey and Tomlinson's (2020) claim that a coachee needs to hold on to their emotion and felt sense as it emerges in the present moment so that they can be fully explored. And this may be beneficial since it is argued that this process has the capacity to generate new insights that can be drawn upon creatively. This may be a "fertile void" (p.12) that is often overlooked or squeezed out of the coachee's hectic, demanding everyday life.

Perhaps this Romantic chronotope is most clearly expressed in the coaching narrative through the enaction of so-called 'chemistry meetings' where a prospective coach and coachee get a sense or feeling of the other and whether they feel that they are a good match. This forms part of the contracting conversation and is a key part of building alliances with others in the coaching space (Lai & Smith, 2021). This is in keeping with the Romantic chronotope, in that the emphasis is on intuition, instinct and felt experience of personal warmth and compatibility. Authenticity also is at the heart of 'Romanticism' which rebels against the surfaces of things. This is conveyed in the subsequent vignette, taken from the autoethnographic account where the coachee articulates that in her experience coaching conversations seem to require a sense of authenticity before commencing as this provides a structure and context for conversations to unfurl.

Extract Five: The Authentic

> Significantly, I have found through meeting one or two coaches that they seem to want a 'genuine' topic to discuss in order for coaching to be as 'authentic' as possible.

Furthermore, breaking into the depths of the inner, private world, through deep conversation, is a significant task of the romantic genre. The assumption

is that being authentic and enabling the expression of a real or authentic self will lead to a happier more fulfilled life. This is conveyed by Humphrey and Tomlinson (2020, p.6) who state: "We are engaged by clients looking for fuller, richer, more informed lives". This language is also voiced in the next vignette from the autoethnographic account where the coachee appears to be developing a sense of fulfilment as well as contentment:

Extract Six: Exploration and Peace

> *Slowly through this process of exploring and examining what is important to me I have found a sense of peace, through which what I may have previously considered to be negative attributes, for instance, drive and ambition are now re-imagined and re-interpreted as positive. Through these experiences I have begun to enrich my understandings of self.*

The Pragmatic Chronotope

The Pragmatic chronotope has been shaped by the writings of Pragmatist philosophers including James, Peirce and Dewey (James, 1907, Bertman & Addis, 2007; Leary, 2009). Unlike the Romantic chronotope this values rational thought and purpose, so that the value of a concept, idea or suggestion resides in its impact on conduct and action in the world (Bachkirova and Borrington, 2019). Knowledge needs to be tested in lived experience, thus within this genre of coaching, emphasis is placed on enabling the coachee to become "ready to act" (Bachkirova & Borrington, 2019, p.17). Therefore, the language used in this specific genre articulates aims, outcomes, and results. This chronotope draws upon the need to establish concrete goals and refers to coaching models and techniques. This language is articulated in the vignette below where one participant stated that she tended to work on outcomes, however there is added complexity in this vignette as there is also a hint of the Romantic chronotope here in her comments about feeling, and this dialogue will be explored in more depth as this paper develops:

Extract Seven: Goal Setting

> *…Erm..goal setting so…[pause] erm..I would say that I am not hung up on goals!..erm..and having goals to me sounds very transactional ...and..erm..that's..but for me I work on outcomes...outcomes are not just about thinking they are also about feeling and being.*

This genre is articulated in Abella and Arvizu (2019) who use the language of models, referring to Kanban, a model with pragmatic origins in

increasing productivity and efficiency in the Japanese car industry, developing solutions which solve problems and resolve business challenges through the creation of objectives and the generation of outputs and goals.

This focus on goals can loom large within coaching conversations as Abravanel and Gavin (2017) point out. Indeed, as Clutterbuck and Spence (2017) claims these are often deemed to be essential. As indicated above, the Pragmatic chronotope is influenced by management discourses whose primary aim is to meet targets and achieve objectives. Often this is seen as an end in itself, with very little concern as to whether there is any benefit to the individual concerned. However, within this genre there is the genuine belief that goals provide a sense of purpose, offering clarity and vision (Haddock-Millar, 2017). This is articulated by another research participant in the following vignette, whose words indicate how goals can help in steering a conversation in a particular direction:

Extract Eight: Steering to a goal

Another metaphor that I use quite a lot in coaching is about avoiding potholes. So I..when I am going to get up and ride my bike again, I am not wobbling about out there..er..a friend of mine said that the important thing when riding a bike is not to look at the potholes but to look at the route around the potholes..yes.. and to think about when you are cycling on a flat road with a little one then they look at you and then they start heading towards you…so..[pause]..um..that's part of the way that I think about goals and talk about it with people, that having a focus on where you want to get to can help you to achieve going on and that's now a part of what I do.

Whilst this metaphor has aspects of the Travel chronotope, using the metaphor of cycling, the coach uses this, within the Pragmatic chronotope to describe charting a practical course through a coaching conversation by using goals. Moreover, these are framed within the pragmatic language of instrumentality and tools for instance:

Extract Nine: Simply a tool

…I think it is important to keep it in perspective, as a focus on goals is simply a tool...a powerful tool.

The coaching world also contains a plethora of such models, as Franklin (2020) suggests, since models are believed to create a sense of clarity, raise

awareness, and offer solutions. This is articulated by Franklin (2020) who describes a model of his own: the B.E.S.T model aimed at enhancing performance, a key aim with the pragmatic genre. Other well-known examples include GROW and SMART, the latter tending to be ubiquitous within many organizations with its emphasis upon specific, measurable, and attainable goals (David, Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2016). These goals promote a teleological context of the coaching conversation. In contrast to the romantic genre which valorizes the past as part of a deep dive into the private sphere to understand the present (e.g., in psychoanalytic approaches, beloved by the artistic, creative community), in pragmatism the present is inauthentic in a different way – it is not the future, actualized potential but conferred as a staging post in need of tools to lever out the potential.

Encouraging a dialogue between chronotopes

So far in this paper we have been describing distinct chronotopic genres. However, within coaching conversations, these can interweave in complex and subtle ways, creating a dialogue in which experience and understandings are given shape. In the Bakhtinian conceptualization our world is a place where ideas are not simply abstract notions but are actively lived through dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986). Unlike the Romantic chronotope with its emphasis on individual subjectivity, within a dialogical understanding, the self becomes known to itself through its relationship with others, for instance during conversations between coach and coachee. This indicates that lived experience and self-awareness are shaped through these interactions (Dennison, 2019). The genres discussed in this paper have their own unique characteristics, which when expressed in isolation are monological and centralizing, in that they seek to create a normative or "unitary language" (Bakhtin 1981, p.270). These centripetal forces squeeze out the plurality of other voices and world views, but within coaching conversations there is space for a dialogue to open between these genres. This is a key point since coaching conversations are enriched by an acknowledgement of the ways in which these distinct chronotopes dynamically interact with one another. Moreover, this articulates their dialectical nature and could suggest that as these chronotopes interact new coaching genres may form. Furthermore, chronotopes can be described as dialogical rather than monological, and, as such are not directed at a telos or a deterministic end but, exist in a relationship with others that creates junctures, as well as conflicts, contradictions and tensions that communicate with and shape one another (Bemong *et al.*, 2010). These arise from the rich social history and context in which chronotopes are situated and from the heteroglot nature of language (Bakhtin, 1981). These conflicts and contradictions also

express a sense of irony, for example, in the intermingling of the Travel and Romantic chronotopes since this implies the Bergsonian notion of duration in which there is no space, therefore there can be no movement through it, all that there is time (Bergson 2005). This is expressed by vignette 1, where the coachee is stating a keen desire to move forward whilst being actively encouraged to stop and stay where he currently is, to fully experience his emotions as they arise in the present moment. This reflects the temporal nature of chronotopes, for instance, in the Romantic chronotope time is experienced holistically, rather than mechanistically, and is not reducible to discrete parts (Bergson 2005). Within this context, the coachee's values are shaped in the flux and flow of the coaching conversation. New meanings arise as the individual becomes fully immersed and attuned to what is happening in the present moment. During the conversation there can be an interpenetration between present and former events within consciousness which can rise to further understandings. Similar temporal qualities are conveyed by vignettes 3 and 4 where instead of considering how a coachee is going to get to their future destination, and, working to accomplish this incrementally as coaching models including GROW imply (Clutterbuck and Spence, 2017; David, *et al*., 2016), the coachee is being invited to stop and encounter their feelings in the here and now. Vignettes 3 and 4 are also a good example of the Romantic assertion that self-knowledge is ongoing rather than finalized, since in vignette 4 the coachee is still seeking to make sense of and understand her feelings and sensations in vignette 3. These vignettes may also imply that this intermingling or dialogue between the Romantic and Travel chronotopes is not uncommon within coaching conversations.

Extracts Seven and Eight also articulate the ways in which junctures between chronotopes can blur the boundaries, allowing chronotopes to intermingle and offering potential for creativity. For instance, in the former vignette there is a dialogue unfolding between the Pragmatic and Romantic chronotopes which is given voice through the participant's description of her preference for outcomes instead of goals as these encompass feeling as well as thinking. In the latter vignette the Travel and Pragmatic chronotopes engage in a dynamic interplay or dialogue between focusing on goals and avoiding hazard and risk on the journey ahead. Such an interplay reflects the dialectical nature of chronotopes and, creates space for new chronotopes to emerge. It is unsurprising then that these interactions are beneficial since the presence of a single chronotope within coaching conversations can be monological, which is limiting for both parties. For instance, there may be too narrow a focus on goals, tools and techniques or an over-emphasis on insight, intuition, and

creativity. Instead of these delineations, subtle and complex dialogues between chronotopes can provide a much freer route with greater potential for new and diverse meanings to arise during coaching conversations that lead to an "ever-deepening awareness of self" (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2017, p.181). This interplay between chronotopes hints at the complexity inherent within coaching conversations, as well as pointing to their dynamism and creativity. Furthermore, from an ontological perspective, both the coach and coachee's understandings are being shaped and crafted through these dialogical interactions. The implications of this for coaching theory and practice are that reflexivity and an awareness of the critical role that these dialogues play within coaching conversations is paramount. Crucially this dialogue between chronotopes allows for diverse perspectives to be heard and new vocabularies and ways of speaking to emerge. These are vital, since as Grant (2016) suggests, what is said within coaching conversations as well as the ways in which words are spoken has significance. Moreover, novel vocabularies may enable new coaching genres to form, therefore, novel ways of speaking are pivotal in creating further opportunities for coaching practice that fully articulate the complexity of lived experience (Dennison, 2020). Thus, enriching the coaching vocabulary is advantageous in that it extends the limits of coaching language, leading to new and novel avenues worthy of exploration. In addition, this process creates additional opportunities for self-awareness and development. Crucially, as this dialogue unfolds between different chronotopes, the coach and coachee begin to change and are given a new form. They are no longer simply Pragmatic or Romantic subjects but can be understood as complex, dialogical subjects (Dennison, 2020).

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the significant role that chronotopes play in providing the context in which coaching conversations unfurl. Locating chronotopes within a metaphorical frame, this paper has introduced the chronotopes of Travel, Romance and Pragmatism as outlined above. These are expressed in this paper through the language of cracked pots, toolboxes, smorgasbords and communication channels. Critically, each chronotope can be understood as providing coaching conversations with a unique form, through which certain language is expressed. However, it is likely that there are many other chronotopes that give shape and form to coaching conversations, creating distinct coaching genres which could provide fruitful avenues for future coaching research.

A key implication for coaching theory and practice is that it is important to avoid dominating coaching conversations with a single chronotope, for instance the Pragmatic chronotope, as this creates a monological interaction that excludes other perspectives, and over emphasizes certain concepts at the expense of others. Therefore, encouraging a dialogue between chronotopes is advantageous in that it articulates the dialectical nature of chronotopes, producing a creative space in which novel and diverse meanings can emerge that lead to a deeper understanding of self for both coach and coachee. Significantly, this dialogue also encourages new vocabularies and ways of speaking that are capable of expanding coaching language beyond its current limits. This offers further possibilities for coaching practice, for instance, the creation of exciting new genres of coaching, which can only be beneficial. The creation of new genres also provides an avenue for further research that is worthy of exploration. Finally, not only do chronotopes have the potential to enrich and enhance coaching conversations, but through their dialogical interactions the coach and coachee are no longer conceptualized as Pragmatic or Romantic subjects but as dialogical subjects.

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