The Complex Roots Of Human Resource Development

*Stream 8: Human Resource Management Phenomena – HRM and Beyond*

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Abstract.
This paper uses notions of complexity in which to frame the case for processes that underlie the ‘human condition’ and that colour our existence and our understanding, theorising, and depiction of that existence. I use a Jungian typology to reinforce the parameters of four paradigms by which management and HRD have been interpreted, and locate this within some findings from evolutionary psychology. This analysis suggests that HRD is located at the dynamic and co-creative interface between individuals and organisations. The language of complexity is used to articulate implications this view holds for our understanding and practice of ‘HRD’.

Key Words
Complexity
Evolutionary psychology
Human Resource Development
Learning
Meta-typology
Underlying processes
The Complex Roots of Human Resource Development.

Social science and complexity.
As the various branches of social science have developed the way in which they build accounts for the world and our existence within it they have moved away from each other and from the natural sciences. Barklow, Cosmides and Tooby (1992) note that the natural sciences have retained a common root in their development, such that any move forward needs to fit with both its ‘home’ discipline, and also be concurrent with all others in order to be accepted. This has not happened in a consistent way within the social sciences. In adopting a post-scientific perspective postmodernism has challenged many of the contradictory yet self-sustaining frameworks that have developed. Yet in creating a world that is devoid of structure other than our own unique and individual structuring of it, postmodernism is actively engaged in preventing constructive (or ‘with structure’) dialogue between the various disciplines of the social science (though see Cilliers, 1998). In contrast to this, the notions of complexity provide the ideal vehicle by which a meta-view of human existence can be established within which apparently contradictory world views can be accommodated.

Central to complexity theory is the idea that a complex system is more than ‘just’ a complicated system. A complicated system or a problem might be very complicated indeed, but with time and effort all its parts, and its whole can be measured and understood. In contrast, a complex system might be quite simple, yet its parameters cannot be measured or quantified (in the normal sense) and the whole is more than the sum of the parts. However much we atomise the different parts we can never get to the essence of the whole. In this there is similarity between postmodernism and complexity theory, however, unlike postmodernism, notions of complexity suggest that whilst aspects of complex systems cannot be measured in the normal sense, we can infer relationships between the constituent parts and sub-systems, and we can deduce global underlying principles. Put another way, however we chose to view the world, there exist processes that underlie all of humanity, and the principles of complexity theory might provide a language by which we can get closer to an appreciation of them. (Tsoukas & Hatch, 2001)

There is no requirement that a complex system be uniform in nature. It may have sub-systems that appear in structure and function to be significantly different to each other and to the whole yet each is in relationship to the others and to the ‘environment’ of the whole, and the whole is in relation to the wider environment. This relationship might be one that is in a state of ‘far from equilibrium’ (cf Stacey, 1993) yet the system maintains dynamic coherence through autopoietic processes, and adheres to its global underlying principles.

The following sections of this paper suggest that there exist processes that underlie ‘the human condition’ and mechanisms by which these are transferred across generations. Further, the diversity apparent between individuals and nations is indicative of self generating and autopoietic sub-systems that might be complex in their own right, but which are still parts of the whole, as each derives its identity or being from its opposite (as perceived from the whole) and ‘development’ in any of these sub-systems is synonymous with interaction with the whole.

Before going forward to the rest of the paper, however, it is worth noting (as I shall expand upon later) that I am using language loosely. By this I mean that each of the discipline areas that I bridge in this paper has their own (often conflicting) terminology and reference points. In taking a bridging approach I stand the risk of offending the mores (and the adherents) of each discipline. My choice of words is therefore
governed by the need to paint a coherent picture, rather than to meet the specific requirements of any one area of thought.

**Underlying Processes.**

In this section I shall explore what these processes might be through illustration. I do this to emphasise their metaphorical or representational nature. The words employed are used to represent concepts which are themselves socially constructed representations – in other words – whilst there might be some commonality of language between the various constructions discussed here it must be remembered that the meanings behind the words are dynamic, situated and ephemeral. One word may mean different things in different contexts and different things to different people (Jankowicz, 1994). I am therefore trying to explore the parameters of the concepts or meanings behind the words, whilst acknowledging that these concepts are also socially constructed and essentially indefinable.

Four main views of ‘management’ can be identified: the classical, scientific, processual and phenomenological. (Author 1997a). Managers, within the classical view, must be able to create appropriate rules and procedures for others to follow, they must be good judges of people and able to take independent action as and when required. Good managers are assumed to be ‘born’ rather than ‘made’ – and so Management Development is a matter of selecting the ‘right’ people with leadership potential. The **scientific** view assumes that human behaviour is rational, and that people are motivated by economic criteria (Taylor, 1947). Within this view ‘correct’ decisions can be identified and implemented appropriately through scientific analysis, and thus good management techniques can be acquired by anyone with the right training and ‘training departments’ systematically identify and fill the ‘training gap’. Both of these approaches assume a structured and known world based upon rational principles and in which rationality leads to success.

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The other two approaches to management assume a world in which agency (rather than structure) is the predominant force. The **processual** view of management assumes that economic advantage will come to those who are best able to spot opportunities, to learn rapidly, and to create appropriate commitment amongst colleagues. Human resource development is seen to help managers develop leadership and interpersonal skills, creativity, self reliance and the ability to work in different cultures. Although the individual is the main stakeholder in his or her own development, the direction of the organisation (and thus of an individual’s development) remains at the behest of senior management who, through initiatives such as Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), aspire to mould the organisation and the people within it. **Phenomenological** management, differs from processual management by the way in which the activities drive the functions, strategies and even leadership of the organisation. For many, management is about ‘purpose’ and ‘doing’ whilst phenomenology is about the ‘study’ of ‘being’. All individuals are seen to collude with their situation and, through that collusion, are ‘together’ responsible for the running and development of the organisation (despite some being ‘senior management’ and others from the shop floor). ‘Management’ is about being part of a system whose activities change as a function of the system and of its relationship to its environment.
These four approaches link quite closely to the four ways in which the word ‘development’ is used in the literature, as delineated through an entirely different line of research (Author 1997b). Development was used to indicate a form of maturation—the (inevitable or natural) progression through series of stages of life cycle. When used to indicate shaping it similarly implied a known endpoint to which the individual or organisation was steered by the application of various tools, within a known, quantifiable and manageable environment. In contrast, the other two uses of the word ‘development’ that were identified did not have a known endpoint. Development as a voyage was evident in literature about personal development—in which the self was the agent and the object, and development as emergent was evident in social science literature particularly, in which the lines between the individual and the organisation became blurred and the focus was upon co-development and co-regulation.

Figure 2 shows a representation of these four forms of development, presented as a typology (in which the lines of the figure indicate the strength of spheres of influence, and not delineations or divisive categories) and maps on to these the four views of management discussed earlier.

This latter point is important and worth emphasising. I am NOT here discussing ‘real’ differences and saying that there exist four ways of ‘doing’ management or development—or that management or development are ‘things’ that can be done, or can be done to. In contrast, I am saying that there appear to be differences in the way that people talk about, or enact, whatever it is that constitutes ‘development’ or ‘management’ in their eyes, and, that there appears to be some consistency within the realisation of those differences. These points of similarity could, of course, merely be a product of my imagination—my own research being the common factor between the two, however, others have reached the same conclusion.

Parallels to these notions can be seen in the work of Carl Jung (1964, 1971). Jung suggested that whilst everyone seeks to make sense of the world around them, they do not focus on the same things. He suggested that there exist two processes (perception and judgement) which are independent of each other, and both are bipolar. Perception is the process by which individuals make sense (consciously or sub-consciously) of their surroundings, and is thus mediated by previous understandings, expectation and anticipations, memory and unconscious influences (from the ‘promissary notes’ of metaphor, myth and rhetoric (Soyland, 1994) to primal drives). When gathering information people prefer to focus either on the ‘here-and-now’ information from their senses, or on the ‘what-if’ information they ‘intuit’ from the possibilities and patterns they see developing. Judgement is the process of deciding which of the many alternative perceptual interpretations available at any one instant to adopt as ‘reality’. Judgement is influenced by previous understandings and is more likely to be based upon post-hoc rationalisation than the traditionally accepted view of ‘scientifically’ weighing up the alternatives and rationally choosing the best option in advance of the final decision. When deciding about the information they have gathered, people prefer to make decisions based on objective thinking, by analysing and weighing the alternatives from a wide perspective, or to make decisions based on their feelings for each particular situation in an individualised manner.
There is strong evidence of individual variation in preferred perceptual and judgemental styles (see, for example, Mitroff and Kilmann, 1978, and Reason, 1981). Such variation forms the basic premise of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a management assessment and development tool for individuals and organisations that is being increasingly used world-wide. It is beyond the remit of this chapter to go into the MBTI based literature in any depth, though see Briggs Myers and McCaulley (1985), Krebs Hirsh and Kummerow (1987) for more detail. I raise the issue here to record general acceptance of the MBTI tool, and thus (by implication) the assumptions on which the tool is based. Other researchers have used Jungian dimensions as a basis upon which to build an analysis of their area, for example, Tufts-Richardson (1996) links Jungian typology to individual spirituality by mapping four types of spiritual path, whilst McWhinney (1992) maps four paths of change, or choice, for organisations and society. Similarly, as can be seen in Figure 3, the work of other researchers who make no claim to root their work in Jungian typology, such as that of Hofstede (1991), can also be mapped onto these dimensions.

I have included different approaches to learning in this figure as I shall refer to them in the next section, however, before moving on I wish to emphasise that we cannot label the dimensions in a fixed and unique manner, but we do need to understand their qualia better if they are fundamental to our way of describing and enacting self and society. In the following section I shall explore the underlying dimensions of these quaternities further by positing their evolutionary basis, and the way in which they might be promulgated.

**An evolutionary basis?**

Research into evolutionary psychology and psychiatry (Barklow, Cosmides and Tooby, 1992; Bradshaw, 1997) suggests that human (and primate) affecational development progresses through the maturation of specific affecational systems, and that ‘All major psychiatric syndromes may thus be conceives as inappropriate expressions of evolved propensities concerned with adaptive behaviour in the domains of group membership (..), group exclusion (..), and mating (..).’ (Stevens and Price, 1996:29). They argue that there exist two ‘great archetypal systems’. The first formative experience faced by our proto-human ancestors would be that associated with parenting and family. As our ancestors developed the pattern of bearing live young that needed parental care for survival they also developed the pattern of behaviours and emotions that bonded parent and child in a dependant relationship. Thus their first great archetypal system has to do with attachment, affiliation, care giving, care receiving, and altruism. As the child grew, was replaced by other children, and eventually became a parent themselves, so ‘self’ – and as a necessary and integral part of that process, ‘not-self’, or the ‘other’, emerged. Therefore, that the first fundamental dynamic played out in each person’s life is that of self and other. This pervades the whole of our existence and is the core of self-development literature.

The second formative experience was that of collectivity. For 99 percent of its existence, humanity has lived in ‘extended organic kinship groups’ of about forty to fifty individuals, comprising six to ten adult males, twelve to twenty child bearing
females, and about twenty juveniles and infants. (Fox, 1989). As predators, they were sufficiently effective not to need to develop large aggregations, flocking behaviour and high sensitivity to others in the group in order to survive, but they were sufficiently weak that they could only exceptionally survive as solitary individuals. We are therefore left with an awareness of society and its necessary structures and hierarchy, and also of individual agency. This equates to Steven and Price’s second great archetypal system, that which is concerned with rank, status, discipline, law and order, territory and possessions.

Stevens and Price posit that the search for achievement of archetypal goals occurs throughout the whole of the life-cycle, though the presenting face of the goals we seek changes as our circumstances change with age. These dual aspects of our collective psyche (self and other, and the structured law and the anarchic body (Hopfl, 1995)) can be seen mirrored in the tensions between sociology and psychology, or between structure and agency, as elucidated by Giddeons (1976). .

In other words, we can identify two fundamental processes derived from our evolutionary history that continue to effect our humanity and our enactment of our existence. I want to make a clear distinction between the discussion here about the existence of fundamental or underlying processes and our day-to-day appreciation of them. Our daily lives and ways of seeing them are framed by our sense making of our past and by our anticipation of the future – we each live in our own self-constructed worlds. The surface diversity of our own worlds does not, however, detract from the existence of underlying processes. Our existence is interpreted differently across the spread of our civilisations, but that is a matter of the ways in which we choose to make sense of our existence.

**Autopoietic Mechanism for promulgation of the sub-sets.**

Socialisation can be seen as a mechanism by which the tensions and their resolution between self and other, and between structure and agency, are promulgated and emphasised through succeeding generations. I base my argument on the view that social development is a process of creative interaction in which ‘individuals dynamically alter their actions with respect to the ongoing and anticipated actions of their partners.’ (Fogel, 1993:34; Smith, 1992; McWinney, 1992; Author, 1994). Relationships exist within mutually constructed conventions or frames of reference (Kelly 1955; Duncan 1991:345; Moreland & Levine, 1989), and a dynamic view of culture is facilitated (Hatch, 1993).

'Society' exists in so far as people agree to its existence - and could be a family unit or a nation. In some way (whether by being born into and thus socialised within it - as in a family or nation; through meeting 'like minded people and thus forming friendship groups; or formally through induction into an organisation) individuals come to identify (and be identified by others) as part of a community. In doing so they help create and collude with underlying values and norms. This process starts at birth and is a basal acculturation mechanism in which the underlying processes are the same whether the focus is upon family and friendship groupings, temporary 'micro-cultures', small or large organisations, or national culture (Burns, 1977). There is empirical evidence of correlation between form of parenting and the child’s life stance (Baumrind, 1973; Bee, 1985), and between career and family history (Cromie, Callaghan & Jansen, 1992). Similarly, there is evidence that choice of curricula, methodological approach and course design are partially governed by the value base of the providers, and thus perpetuate that value base (Ashton, 1988; Boyacigiller and Adler, 1991). Thus the approach to learning adopted by each society has a fundamental effect upon the continuation of the parameters of that particular society (Author 1996).
In Figure 2 different forms of learning were mapped against the archetypal parameters of self and other, and of structure and agency. In practical terms, the ‘cognitive’ environment carries with it group norms about received wisdom and the value of qualifications. Power is vested in those who have achieved qualifications and those who can give them. Cogent argument carries more importance than does applicability or individual difference. The ‘problem’ student (or heretic, Harshbarger, 1973) would be someone who lacked sufficient intelligence to master the required concepts. The ‘behavioural’ environment focuses upon activity, functionalism, and the importance of the end result. Norms are about identifying competence, and filling the ‘training gap’ to achieve appropriate levels of competence. The heretic is someone unable to demonstrate the required competence. The ‘humanistic’ environment focuses upon difference and equality. Received wisdom (in so far as it epitomises a particular view of reality) is inappropriate, as are identifiable and assessable ‘competencies’ (in so far as they epitomise a ‘right’ way of doing things). The problem participant is unwilling to explore and share their affective and attitudinal aspects. In the ‘experiential’ environment the focus is on actionable outcomes - the end justifies the means. The heretic is someone who questions the route, or prefers inactivity. (*The confidence to act is a prerequisite for learning*, Blackler, 1993)

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It is rare, in ‘real life’, that ‘learning’ only occurs within one approach. Instead, it is much more likely that in any situation one learns more ‘holistically’ (Author 1996). Honey and Mumford (1989) suggest that ‘experience’ plays a part in any learning, regardless of whether or not it is acknowledged or focused upon within the educational process. One of the best known models of experiential learning is that of Kolb (1974, 1984) who suggests that the process of learning is cyclical, revolving through experience, reflection, theorising and planning. In Figure 4 this is represented by the large (arrowed) circle. From this perspective, we only really learn by engaging in all aspects of the activity.

Transformative experiences, therefore, appear to be those that force us to (re)examine our world-view... (Emery & Trist, 1965, Pascale 1990). Any ‘experience’ is an opportunity for learning, however, as Dewey (1938) pointed out, ‘It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even of activity in experience. Everything depends upon the quality of experience which is had ... every experience lives in further experiences.’ Vasilyuk (1984) takes it further, building the case that all learning that has a transformative effect upon us is derived from a clash between our understanding of the world and our experience, such that learning and change are painful processes of redefinition and Romanelli & Tushman (1994) offer empirical support for rapid, discontinuous change in organisations being driven by major environmental changes. Similarly, Stevens and Price argue that our changing lives necessitate re-negotiating our position with respect to the great archetypal systems, and that ‘Psychopathology results when the environment fails, either partially or totally, to meet one (or more) archetypal need(s) in the developing individual.’ (1966:34). In the terms of complexity theory, transformative experiences occur at bifurcation points, when the system and the environment impact in such a way that the system can either continue in its current, well travelled pattern, or shift to some way of being that is new and unpredictable (though not necessarily unpredictable).
Indeed, the current analysis would suggest that the system is likely to shift to incorporate qualia of a different world view.

I have argued that there exist two main bi-polar underlying processes by which the human condition is structured, and that these give rise to four main archetypes. The processes of socialisation, or learning, emphasise particular aspects of our world view, such that the various systems or sub-systems, be they individuals, organisations or nations, have a tendency to enact the qualia of a single archetype. However, although I have talked of the qualia of the archetypes, I have deliberately failed to define them other than by example. Archetypes, by their nature, are undefinable in the scientific sense, and also, as discussed above, the qualia are unmeasurable other than dialectically (Pascale 1990) by reference to their ‘opposite’. Furthermore, that ‘opposite’ might be different under different occasions or interpretations. For example, in one situation it was found that the word ‘conflict’ was interpreted by some people to be ‘contested negotiation’ whilst others saw it as ‘a fight to the death’, and acted accordingly with misunderstanding on both sides (Author 1998). We could extrapolate that for these people the opposite to their views of conflict would be the similar but subtly different qualities of ‘easy negotiation’ and ‘peaceful life’. We live within our own world view yet in order to understand or even describe it we need to compare it with that of others in a dialectic manner. In other words - to know what we are, we also have to know what we are not. We can’t categorise the human condition in a positivistic mutually exclusive sense, but we can use the arguments above to develop a dialectically based typology.

A Wheel of typologies.
Figure 5 shows a typology of typologies of the human condition, constructed by plotting the axes of the great archetypal systems against typologies of individual, organisational and governmental approach and those of individual influence, education and metaphor (as a form of organisational glue, after Morgan, 1986). This is not intended as a categorisation. Each spoke of the wheel supports the others with no clear distinction between neighbouring typologies, and each is validated dialectically by the qualia of the spoke opposite it.. Thus an archetypal individual and organisational approach is represented as if it were located in a radial segment of the wheel (the width of which would depend upon the diversity of the element in question), and the probability of identifying an approach typified by other segments or individual parts of the wheel would be negatively correlated with distance from the primal segment. If this meta-typology is imagined in three dimensions, with the centre forming the tip of a cone, the third dimension represents a continuum moving from micro variables at the apex towards macro variables at the base. In other words, the tip of the cone might represent degrees of aggregation, and the base, large aggregates of elements, yet each has influence upon the other.

For example, recent work exploring gene-culture co-evolution indicates the potential for rapid genetically-linked cultural change linked to choice of mate (Laland, 1993; Richerson & Boyd, 1989). This example also indicates the complexity of the distinction. Individuals might be actively choosing a mate (though sub-conscious factors of background and parenting are likely to mediate in such choice (Duck, 1986)), but they are unlikely to be doing so in order to actively influence societal form. The distinction does, however, emphasise both the unpredictable influence of individual factors (cf. Gleick, 1987, and chaos theory) and the speed with which such ‘inactive’ change might occur.
Examination of the meta-typology could be limited to positive correlation with existing typologies along a single axis. For example, Handy’s (1981) typology of organisation culture (Power, Role, Task, Person) shows some similarity to the vertical axis. Debates about field dependence/ independence in cognitive style (Hayes & Allison, 1994) appear to fit more closely to the horizontal axis, whilst those about the way in which individuals and societies are interconnected and mutually influencing are represented by the third-dimensional axis. Similarly, Rasheed & Prescott’s (1992) dimensions of complexity and dynamism in the classification of organisational task environments show some similarity to the two diagonal axes. Thus the meta-typology can be linked to one-dimensional measures, such as equity sensitivity (King & Miles, 1994), interpersonal orientation (Swap & Rubin, 1983), or machiavellianism (Robinson & Shaver, 1973), and is potentially testable in its prediction of relationships between such measures.

When visualised as a cone, however, the meta-typology represents three dimensions each of which possess a pole that focuses upon ‘individuality’, though the import of this is different in each case. This generates multiple layers of meaning that are sacrificed if a one-dimensional form of analysis is adopted. Each segment and type is interpretable in the light of its archetypal opposites within these multiple layers, thus analysis of the meta-typology is richer if a dialectic perspective is adopted. Organisations comprise multifaceted membership and are likely to contain dissidents who might be expected to voice an approach at the polar opposite to that held by the organisation (heresy) or to work outside the accepted bounds of the segment (deviance). Inconsistency of approach might also be found across the levels and/or functions of the organisation (Demirag & Tylecote, 1992), and within the individual (leading to analysis within psycho-dynamic frameworks) (Parsons, 1951). It can be speculated that level of conflict will be positively correlated with degree of inconsistency both between individual approaches and within aspects of an approach.

There is little probability of any organisation or individual demonstrating all the qualia of a particular typology. As a complex system the individual might demonstrate forms of behaviour akin to one segment of the wheel (espousing an approach similar to that of the free-market), whilst the observer notes aspects of behaviour that are located within another segment (working within traditional educational methodology and reinforcing respect for position and rules - theory in practice), whilst voicing a preference for a third segment (one that respects ‘human values’) (cf., Argyris, 1990; Bate, 1990; Papula, 1993). The exploration of inconsistency might lead to greater understanding of organisations in practice (Schein, 1985) and point to areas of knowledge that are, at present, under explored. For example: the form of the model suggests an expansion of Morgan’s (1986) typology of organisational metaphor; it supports Buchanan’s (1991) call for alternative accounts of change, and; it might provide insight into the problems encountered when applying Western-style bureaucracy to African culture (Hyden, 1983), or help contextualise inconsistencies in research findings (cf. Judge & Watanabe, 1994).

Different parts of the system might well adopt different configurations, and configurations might change as ‘needed’. The activities of the system are emergent and feed back into it (Weick, 1977), they can influence all other aspects of the system, and the system itself can be ‘far-from-equilibrium’ (Stacey, 1993). This approach, therefore, denies the ability to ‘plan’ or ‘control’ organisational development - it argues for a resource-based view of the organisation in which the role of ‘managing’ is fragmentary (i.e. Mintzberg, 1979) and offers a valuable critique of the
established 'discipline' of strategy. In addition, because this view eschews ideas of (real) control by a hierarchy, as well as questioning the ability of the organisation to (really) predict or plan, it is more in tune with work that questions the serial and causal nature of our existence (Author & Flatau, 1996).

The three-dimensional interpretation of the wheel presents a holistic and interactive overview of the meta-typology that is, in essence, static. Given the notion that individuals and organisations, despite their ‘presenting approach’ will possess hidden qualia of their opposites and that it is the conflict between these, which are, themselves, part of the environment, or with other aspects of the environment, that generates creative tension and transformation, then it is necessary to introduce a fourth dimension to the meta-typology - that of transformation over time, or dynamism.

From Heraclites onwards (circa 500 BC) it has been suggested that humanity is in a state of always ‘becoming’ despite the appearance of structured categorisation and ‘being’ fostered by Western scientism (Author 2001; Stacey, Griffin and Shaw, 2000). In other words, our lives are dynamic, and in a state of constant change. Fixed goals, known end points and clear delineations are tools that we use to provide a sense of stability, but that sense merely a mechanism and is false with respect to the wider reality of existence. The meta-typology, presented here with lines and detail, is merely an attempt to indicate underlying structures, those structures exist, however, not as things in themselves but are presented as a possible pattern of relationships: a representation of the relationships between other representations. As noted above, even the terminology used is just a representation. For example, Campbell and Muncer (1994) show that both occupational role and gender are indicative of whether a person views ‘aggression’ as a functional act aimed at imposing control over other people, or in expressive terms as a breakdown of self control over anger. Thus understanding of the word ‘aggression’, co-varies with the axes and will be interpreted by different readers in different ways.

HRD as the relationship between representations.
As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 above, one’s view of the nature and role of HRD is dependant upon one’s world view. This paper, however, suggests that, regardless of one’s ‘understanding’, or the terminology used, that which might be called the development of human resources is actually located at the dynamic and co-creative interface between the elements of the system, and between sub-systems, such that interacting, they become more than the sum of the parts. Thus the business of HRD, in so far as it exists as a concept and a practice, is concerned with the relationship between the representations. Research into HRD is, in effect, research into the processes that underlie the human condition, and the practice of HRD is about influencing the relationships that comprise the glue of the human condition.

As we research into HRD it means that we need to be aware that we are researching the intangible and un-measurable. We can catch glimpses of what we are looking for and we can try to represent or model it – but we need to avoid the temptation to overly objectify or embody that which we research. The ‘individual’ and the ‘organisation’ are not unitary bounded concepts – they are part of a whole and are identifiable by their relationship to the whole. It is the interactions that are of importance, rather than descriptions of ‘purpose’. Similarly, a change in approach requires a change in the language and meaning that is used. For example, would be inappropriate to talk of ‘organisations’ as if they had a body and could be anthropomorphised, or of ‘people’ as if they were machine cogs within ‘the organisation’ whose function was to ‘operate’ if we were to adopt a loosely bounded or relativistic view of these elements of the system.
As practitioners of HRD we intervene in the human condition with some aim in mind, yet both the ‘outcomes’ and the ‘value’ of them are subject to interpretation. There is no longer necessarily a clear and obvious route between cause and effect - and one person’s preferred ‘outcome’ might be someone else’s feared possibility / cause. In both theorising about HRD and in the practice of HRD we can no longer assume that a particular intervention at a particular time will produce a known effect. We lose the gloss of certainty that many HRD professionals feel is necessary for their work as academics, consultants, trainers etc. HRD and learning are becoming more central to the needs of the nation (as in Watson, 1994) and this shift in provision further increases the complexity and uncertainty of inquiry into the nature (and practice) of HRD.

**In Conclusion.**

I have suggested that there exist ‘great archetypal structure’ that underlie the human condition, and that these can be identified by their effect upon it, such that human society and thought clusters into four main archetypal world views, termed here, for the sake of convenience and baring in mind the fragility of language, hierarchical, normative, entrepreneurial and facilitative. The axes by which these are located are bi-polar and termed, again, for convenience, self and other, and structure and agency. I suggest that these great systems and their products are most fruitfully discussed using the language (and thus concepts) of complexity. This recognises that whilst the whole system cannot be pulled apart and understood, it can be accessed by examining the relationships between the multiplicity of representations that are located within it. Thus the study of the system is the study of the relationships within it, and that study is that which we might commonly call HRD. It follows from this that the practice of HRD is about **agency** in a pluralistic, relativistic and interpretative world. This involves the search for the patterning of the whole, for dynamic structures, an understanding of the possibilities and their links - a **holistic** approach. Holistic agency (Author 1996) is therefore about individual action (or non-action) within a relativistic yet structured world, and thus is about the ‘doing’ and ‘becoming’ of HRD.
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Figure 1. Four approaches to management (after Author 1997a).
Figure 2. Four types of ‘Development’, after Author 1977b
Figure 3. Mapping of typologies.
Figure 4. Movement through typologies. (after Author 1996)
Figure 5. A typology of typologies. (note: the words are indicative, not definitional)