Paradoxes of a Long Life Learning: an Exploration of Peter Jarvis’s Contribution to Experiential Learning Theory.

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# Abstract

The paper explores the work of Peter Jarvis related to learning with particular reference to his definitions of learning and his models of the learning process. This exploration will consider different approaches to experiential learning and demonstrate the contribution Jarvis has made, noting how his writing on the subject has changed over time. The relationship between the individual and society is a key sociological question that has informed his scholarship. The social context of learning and action will be considered with specific reference to Jarvis’s ideas in *Adult Learning in the Social Context* (1987) that were developed in *Paradoxes of Learning* (1992) and evolved in his later work. A constructive critique of his work is provided, one that aims to capture the way in which he has continuously adapted his thinking. Parallels are drawn between Jarvis’s work and more recent writing on reflexivity in social theory that open up opportunities for future research in the field.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Peter Jarvis

# Introduction

This contribution to the special issue on the scholarship of Peter Jarvis will focus on his contribution to experiential learning theory. It will demonstrate the connections between his work and other contributions to the field and explore how his thinking has developed as he has continuously engaged over a long life learning. His continuous an eclectic reading, reflection and writing has been the catalyst to change and adaptations in his scholarship. The sociological orientation to his work will be explored along side his evolving conceptualization of learning. I have long seen parallels between Jarvis’s work and Margaret Archer’s (2010) theorizing on reflexivity and the morphogenetic approach; these themes will be considered and used to suggest further research.

In writing about Peter Jarvis’s work, I should declare a personal relationship. For me, Peter has been an inspirational teacher and scholar with enormous impact on my professional practice. I was a teacher who participated in workshops that contributed to the development his models of the learning process. Peter later became my PhD supervisor. Our supervision sessions positively fizzed with energy and ideas and left me with my head spinning and hungry to read more. When I have met Peter in more recent years the same energy and vibe has always been present; he has never failed to send me off discovering new books and ideas. I am very grateful to and fond of the man. Here I will attempt to review and critically appraise his work and ideas on learning processes - which have shaped and informed the work of many scholars and educational practitioners across the world.

# Modelling Learning Processes

A central theme of Jarvis’s work has been to explore sociological perspectives on learning where previous learning theories in adult education tended to draw on psychology. He has acknowledged the importance of psychological aspects of learning but sought to extend these to an appreciation of how human beings learn within a social context and how learners adapt to their surroundings. There is a Kantian theme in this conceptualization, whereby learning is understood as being derived from experience. This experiential theme was developed during the twentieth century in the in the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget. These three writers in turn shaped David Kolb’s (1984) classic text on experiential learning – Kolb’s reference to the Lewinian learning cycle continues to be represented as if Kolb’s own (Jarvis 1987, 2005). Lewin’s learning cycle of concrete experience, observation and reflection, generalization, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Kolb 1984:21) has had enormous impact on reflective practice across a range of professions such as teaching and nursing. It was also a starting point for Peter’s research into learning theory and the development of his own model of the learning process.

There are strong echoes of Dewey in Jarvis’s work. He used Dewey as a departure point for introducing the Adult Learning Process. He referenced *Experience and Education* (Dewey 1938) to demonstrate that learning takes place in a social context, where experience is fed by a spring of previous human experiences, sources external to the individual. This emphasis on social structures is evident throughout Dewey’s work and articulated in his early writing on the ‘Reflexive Arc’ (Dewey 1899). Human activities and social settings shape how a person experiences the world, how they interact with it and adapt what is learnt in one situation to act in new situations that they meet throughout lifelong learning. The process of interaction between learners, their experience and the external conditions outlined in Dewey’s work resonates with theories that articulate the relationship between structure, action and reflexivity in social theory (Archer 2007, 2012) – ideas that Peter Jarvis has grappled with in his own thinking and to which I will return. Peter has always acknowledged the work of Dewey, particularly his emphasis on contextual continuity and learners interact with the world. However, the main departure point for Peter’s exploration of learning processes was Kolb’s study of experiential learning and definition of learning as: ‘the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience’ (Kolb 1984:7).

Peter’s approach to learning has changed and become more nuanced over time; he developed Kolb’s definition of learning as the transformation of experience through *reflection* or *action*. The idea of learning as transformative, as changing the learner, has endured in experiential learning theory. Kolb stressed that experience alone was not sufficient for learning to take place; something had to be done with that experience: it needed to be transformed into learning through reflection or action. Within Kolb (1984) it was also asserted these transformation activities were not sufficient for learning, there also needed to be a foundation of experience a set of conditions, situation, social context or knowledge foundation that could be transformed. An acknowledgement of a role for the structural conditions that exist before us, such as bodies of knowledge, is therefore evident in Kolb (1984) as well as Peter’s work, though it has not been emphasized in later scholarship in the field. Kolb, following Dewey, articulated a tension between *what* we learn and *how* we learn. I have suggested that there are parallels between the relationship between knowledge and learning and that between social structure and agency (Dyke 2013). These founding authors, including Peter, always recognized the complex relationship between knowledge, reflection, experience and action.

As part of his appraisal of Kolb in *Adult Learning in the Social Context* (Jarvis (1987) Jarvis provided an early warning about the use of learning styles inventories. He argued that individual learning styles were not fixed but could vary over time. Approaches to learning, he suggested, may be more varied than those suggested by Kolb (1984); the ideas behind learning style required further research. Coffield, Mosely, Hall and Ecclestone (2004) identified a range of learning style theories and instruments across the twentieth century with the majority, including Kolb’s, originating from the 1970s. Learning Styles inventories flourished in post-16 education in the UK throughout the 1990s. Jarvis’s observations (1987) were perceptive and predated the later critique of the field developed by Coffield, Mosely, Hall and Ecclestone (2004).

Despite Kolb’s strengths, Jarvis maintained that his rather neat and tidy presentation of Lewin’s model risked oversimplifying the learning process. Where the Kolb model suggested a specific linear sequence or cyclical pattern to learning, Jarvis argued that different sequences, non-linear routes to learning, are perfectly possible; learners are capable of moving freely between concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. He presented us with a more complex notion of reflection , in which reflection can occur simultaneously with action as ‘reflection in action’ - it need not occur simply after the event as ‘reflection upon action’ (Jarvis 1987:18). He acknowledged that the relationship between knowledge and learning was a strength of Kolb’s. It is interesting to see that knowledge was placed so centrally in these classic texts on experiential learning. More recently the role of knowledge has faded from the field to such an extent that Young (2008) argued there was a need to ‘bring knowledge back in’ to the curriculum, criticizing experiential learning for being emptied of knowledge. Jarvis, however, has always emphasized a role for knowledge, and for learning from others, through his distinction between primary and secondary experience.

Many interpretations of reflective learning stress the importance of primary experience as concrete first-hand experience of practice. Schon (1983) in particular made a virtue of the practitioners’ primary experience. Experiential learning often refers to learning from the *primary* experience of the individual. Such experience could be gained at home, in work or education; it occurs through all aspects of everyday life, it can be gained through group interaction or individually. Primary experience may also be gained through structured educational activities such as practicals, visits, work placements, role-plays and simulations. Yet learning from the secondary experience of others is common in educational settings. Secondary experience is gained through language; through lectures, debates, discussion, and the use of any audio-visual media including books, broadcasting, film, information technology, and so forth. Jarvis’s distinction (1987, 2005) between primary and secondary experience is a useful rejoinder to the emphasis on primary concrete experience, particularly in a digital age when so much information is mediated rather that experienced first-hand. However, if we examine how his definition of learning has developed and grown over time this simple binary distinction between primary and secondary experience becomes more problematic. I will return to this later after further consideration of Jarvis’s critique of Kolb and the development of his own model of the adult learning process.

It was Peter’s appreciation of Kolb that led him to conduct his own research with adult learners through a series of workshops. These workshops tended to be with teachers or those working in professions allied to education. Participants were encouraged to think about their own learning and share their experiences through a process that reflected nominal group technique (Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck 1994): participants worked first independently, then in pairs and finally in larger groups that compared their individual learning experiences with models of learning. The workshops developed their own models of learning that were iteratively evaluated and tested. Jarvis refined the model in the light of the diverse learning experiences of workshop participants. There were approximately 200 participants in these workshops in 1985 and 1986; they were held in the UK and United States. In the course of a post-graduate class taught by Peter in the early 1990s I participated in such a workshop, where a strikingly similar model emerged in a grounded manner from the group of students. I have repeated the exercise many times with my own students and gained similar responses, including a positive endorsement of the Jarvis model in comparison to Kolb’s. Many of the practitioners in Peter’s workshops were, like myself, involved in teacher education. The impact of Peter’s work on practice is evident if one considers the number of adult educators he has taught directly and their exponential impact as teacher educators. His ideas cascaded across a wide range of formal and informal education settings with a variety professionals working in private, public and nongovernmental services.

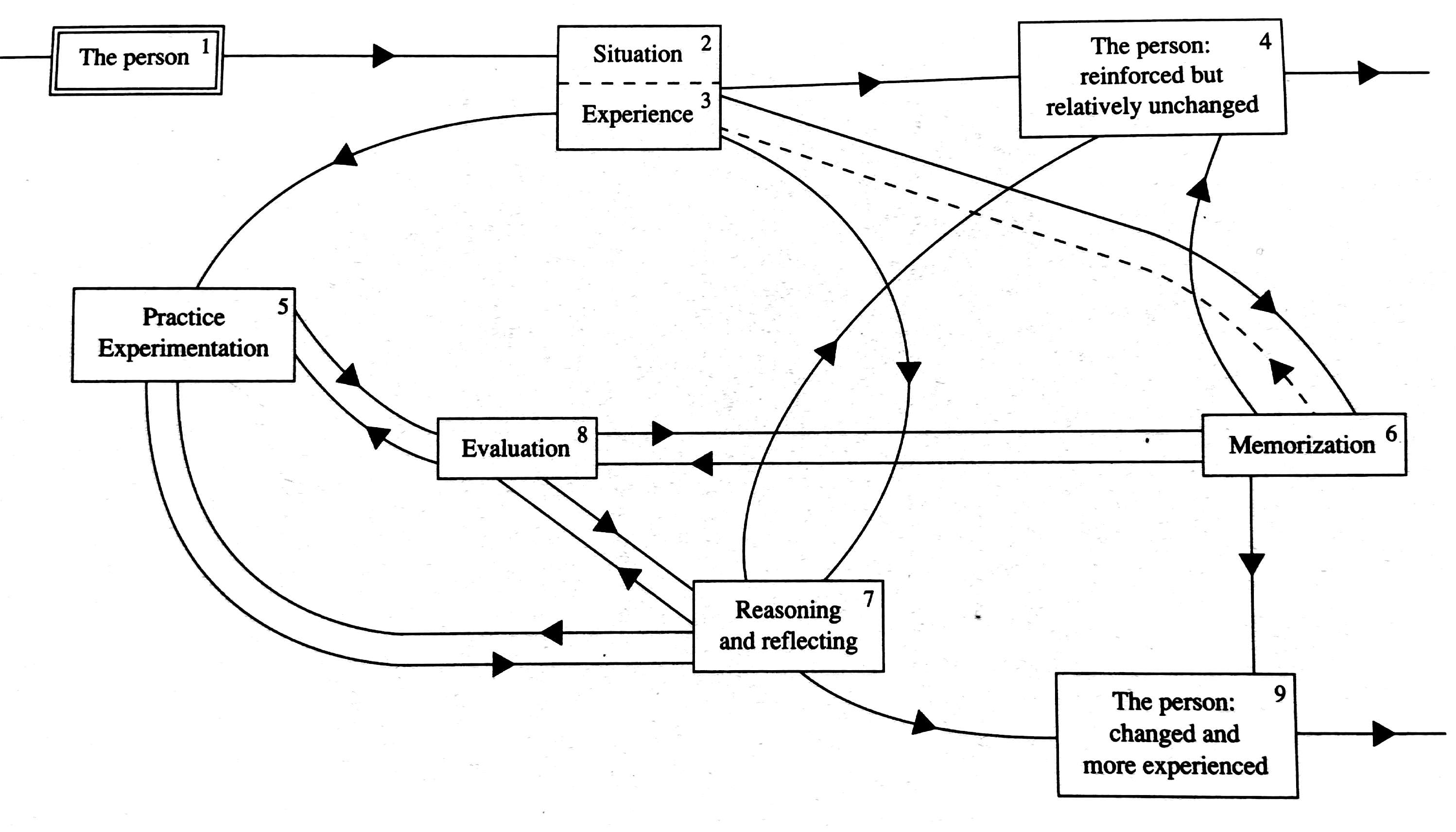


Figure 1: Jarvis 1992 Model of Learning Process

Jarvis’s 1992 model (Figure 1) identified nine routes or pathways that may or may not produce learning but reflect the routes mapped out by workshop participants. These pathways included a hierarchy of non-learning responses, pre-conscious and non-reflective learning as well as the higher-order reflective learning. Non-learning included: ‘presumption’, where people rely on un-reflected past socialization to guide their actions in the present; ‘non-consideration’, where no thinking or engagement occurs; and situations where people simply ‘reject’ the learning opportunity. A second level includes pre-conscious learning that automatically occurs as a form of non-reflective learning: evident, for instance, in learning associated with behaviourism. The model is illustrated with reference to examples such as practice in skills learning and memorization. Practice and skills learning are associated with both non-reflection and reflection in learning. The non-reflective elements include repetition and rehearsal of skills, as well as imitation and role modelling. The final triad of reflective learning includes contemplation as higher order thinking, reflective practice linked to Schon (1983) and Knowles (1984), problem solving and finally experimental learning with its Deweyian genealogy. Jarvis (1987:28) aligned his model to Habermas, or whom learning included practical, technical and emancipatory domains: “reflective learning is potentially an agent of change, or what Habermas refers to as ‘an emancipatory cognitive interest’.” (Jarvis 1987:28). This quotation does not suggest that reflective learning in itself is emancipatory, but that it has that potential or capability within it. Archer (2007) argued that reflexivity can be fallible; Peter is cautious about claiming any potential for emancipatory learning and positive social change, suggesting perhaps that learning can be emancipatory but may also be fallible.

Peter’s model of learning was constructed from the experience of practitioners, prompted by his critical reflection that Kolb (1984) had simply provided a synthesis of other theorists, rather than testing his approach in practice. In seeking to provide a more nuanced model, to counter Kolb’s simplicity, Jarvis’s more complex model(s) have evolved over time, recognizing that learning can take a number of pathways. The Jarvis models’ complexity risks their having less traction with practitioners; they are not so readily reproduced and utilized as guides to practice. However, the approach was not developed with the intention of providing a prescription on how to learn - Dewey had similarly lamented formulaic interpretations of his work. However, Peter’s model does provide a useful stimulus to discussion of learning processes. In my own practice, it has proven a valuable tool for reflection of teaching and learning with educational practitioners working in a diverse range of lifelong and work-related learning contexts across the world.

# Concepts and Definitions

As he has reflected on his experiences over a lifetime of learning and refined his thinking, Peter’s model has developed. His reflective practice can be illustrated in how his definition of learning has been refined over time. Building on Kolb’s definition of learning as a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb 1984:41), Jarvis (1987:7) argued that this focus on knowledge outcomes was too narrow; it did not account for skills learning or the development of attitudes. Peter used a similar construct to Kolb’s and defined learning as “the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” (Jarvis 187:16). *Paradoxes of Learning* (Jarvis 1992) presents a more philosophical and theological approach to learning. The book explores a number of interesting paradoxes and dualisms, informed by an eclectic range of philosophical arguments. The distinction between primary and secondary experience is maintained and the definition of learning retains a focus on the social, with more emphasis on the temporal nature of learning. The definition of learning is expanded beyond knowledge, skills, to include beliefs and values (Jarvis 1992:11). In *Paradoxes of Learning* (1992) we start to see a greater emphasis on the relationship between primary and secondary experience - perhaps an awareness that they are more entwined than separate entities. Although the distinction between primary and secondary experience is maintained in later work (Jarvis 2005), a critique of such dualism also emerged. Peter developed his ideas on the role of biography (Jarvis 1987) and prior learning in shaping how someone experiences a new event. The idea of experience becomes more problematic. It is not a simple given, whereby everybody experiences the same event the same way, but fused with the past, changing over time. The way in which people bring their biography, their past experiences, to new situations and the impact this has on how someone experiences a new situation or episode is discussed. Dewey (1899) explored this issue in his critique of behaviourism, arguing that the response to an event is not simply conditioned but dependent on context, learning and past experience. For example, a loud bang, perhaps one similar to an explosion, could be experienced as a mere curiosity, as terror, as post-traumatic stress, as routine or even as theatre and entertainment; the response is context-specific and linked to the learner’s prior experience. A person’s social context, prior learning and biography can change how they experience something. In later writing, Peter has placed less emphasis on dualisms and is more cognizant of how mind, body and experience are entwined together. A paradox of Peter’s theorizing is that learning comes to be seen as more complicated, less dualistic - perhaps his paradoxes become less paradoxical?

Drawing attention to how disjuncture between past and present experience can provide a catalyst to learning Jarvis (1992) discussed more relational aspects of learning processes: learning with others, which he refers to as ‘communicative interaction’ (Jarvis 1992:84). Following Dewey, Jarvis suggested that a disjuncture between a person’s store of knowledge and new information or experience that presents itself, linguistically or practically, creates conditions for learning. Disjuncture is therefore fundamental to his approach to learning and social change: “if information being transmitted is already known, then there need be no disjuncture and no possibility for learning” (Jarvis 1992:84). This presents a key paradox of learning: interpersonal harmony, highly valued in education, may not provide the most fertile ground for learning. A more enabling environment for learning is one where there is disjuncture and disturbance between existing knowledge and new experience. A skilled adult educator needs to navigate this turbulence, providing intellectual and practical challenges to learners while maintaining a climate conducive to learning. Exposure to perspectives different from your own is vital to reflective learning and can be extended to issues of ethics and justice. Critical thinking can be fostered through challenge to the prevailing consensus. Adam Smith raised this issue in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, suggesting that in order to make a judgment about our own views of the world “[w]e can do this in no other way than by endeavouring to view them with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to see them” (Smith 1774:133). Smith promoted a role for ‘impartial spectators’ who offered alternative perspectives and challenged taken-for-granted knowledge and culture. Sen (2010) has also suggested that engagement with different points of view is essential to developing an idea of justice. People need to engage with difference in order to learn and understand their beliefs and values. These social processes and interactions are evident in Peter’s work and represent areas with scope for development.

While the paradoxes of learning provide many useful insights into education and learning, Jarvis accepted that the process of thinking, reflecting and researching learning over a lifetime in itself creates disjuncture and produces new learning and more complex understandings of the field. His definition of learning continued to develop. He has become more critical of his use of Cartesian dualism and argued for an existential approach to learning, one that more centrally acknowledges the passing of time. In *Human Learning: an holistic approach* (2005), and developed in Jarvis (2013) we are given a much broader definition of learning – one that acknowledges the whole person, both mind and body, in a social situation. Learning is now defined as:

The combination of processes whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs, and senses) – is in a social situation and constructs an experience which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person ‘s own biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person ” (Jarvis 2013:4).

This definition extends well beyond Kolb (1984), the departure point for Peter’s thinking. It has expanded as Peter acknowledged different facets of learning (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values emotions and beliefs) and as he has incorporated wide reading across many different fields - in recent years taking in genetics and neuroscience. One can see in this definition how the boundaries between primary and secondary experience have become blurred. When so much of our experience in a digital age is secondary, mediated,, we need to understand how this affects the way we experience new events or engage with the Other. It is to such social processes, and to relations as distinct from social context, that I now want to turn. The focus for Peter has been the person, the individual learner within a social context: it is to the strong sociological thread in his work that I now explore.

Throughout his work there is discussion of the social context and situation that exists before the person and from which the person constructs an experience. Social context is treated as structural reality that pre-exists as culture, socio-economic structures or even bodies of knowledge. This is a key strength in Peter’s work, underplayed in Kolb (1984) who tends toward individualized models of learning with limited reference to the structural conditions in which learning takes place. However, there is a risk that the understanding of the social is limited to these structural conditions, that we have an over-deterministic view of the person, as shaped by socio-economic conditions and demonstrating little human agency. This can produce social theorizing characteristic of what Archer (2000:66) refers to as “homo economicus or homo sociologicus”. For Jarvis such people would not be learning: they would not change but simply reproduce existing social relations.

In Jarvis’s definition, there is also an emphasis on the individual: his focus is on the person and their biography. This raises questions as to the roles of social relations in these individual constructions. One needs to be careful here to avoid a form of reification that suggests it is society that learns and reflects, rather than individuals. Archer’s (2007) powerful critique of the reflexive modernization thesis was that the leading thinkers reified reflexivity as a quality of society, not of individuals. One can argue similarly about learning; it is individuals who learn, not inanimate institutions or social structures. However, individual learning does not simply take place within a pre-existing social context; it takes place amid a range of social processes, mechanisms and social relations. Somewhere between social context and human actions there is a whole set of social relations and interactions that enables learning. To put it simply our experience is often transformed into learning through our immediate social relations - in the company of others. One can argue it is individuals who transform experience into learning, but still seek to understand a little more about the social processes or mechanisms by which this occurs. This social situations and role of interaction are elements I would like to have seen explored a little further in Peter’s work.

To provide an example from teaching: what is taught will reflect the social context of education, the curriculum, the cultural expectations of teachers and students, and the traditions of particular pedagogic subject disciplines. Teachers will take such material and design their lessons, taking into account the needs of students, and make a number of decisions about how the students learn, the methods to be used to foster learning, the media they will use to support learning, the tasks that will be set, and how learning will be assessed. In terms of Peter’s 2005 iteration of his model, we have the person (a teacher) in a social situation (a school) who designs and delivers lessons in a particular educational context. The teacher as a reflective practitioner will then think and reflect on the experience at a number of levels including ‘reflection in action’ and ‘ reflection upon action’. Taking in a range of issues, such as their values, beliefs, skills, knowledge and emotional responses to the situation, they will then draw upon their past experience and own biographies in response to their practice. In the light of these reflections, the teacher will adapt his or her teaching, and hopefully improve. We have a process of social context, planning, action, outcomes and reflection leading to new iterations of planning, action, outcomes and reflection. This process of learning will be familiar to all educationalists. It makes sense and has a long tradition that embraces modes of scientific enquiry, quality assurance, evidence of best practice, and action research as well has having strong philosophical traditions – all explored by Peter over many years. In Schon (1983) and Kolb (1984) this process of reflective practice is more individualistic. Peter, however, has always acknowledged the importance of the social context of learning, and of social interaction. The location of these social processes of learning within experiential learning offers a rich seam for future research.

In drawing attention to human interaction I suggest there are connections to be developed between experiential learning and critical realism. Peter has recognized that a person can emerge from a learning situation changed and more experienced - or unchanged. Margaret Archer explored the process of social change and argued that we start in time with structural conditions that exist before us, and influence what we can do, both constraining and enabling. Over time, we interact with these structural conditions through our actions and social relations in the world; and through these interactions, the structural conditions are over time either reproduced or changed. Archer describes reproduction of the social systems as ‘morphostasis’. Alternatively, through interaction with those structural conditions, people can change them, producing new structural conditions that future generations interact with: this process of social change is what Archer calls ‘morphogenesis’. Jarvis makes an explicit link between human learning and Archer’s morgphogenesis (Jarvis 2007:32). These links between Peter’s work and critical realism could be developed further.

Archer argues we need to understand the diachronic development of structures over time as well as the synchronic presence of these elements and social relations at any given moment. She suggests that a process of *analytical dualism* enables us to examine these different aspects of structure and agency independently. She is highly critical of perspectives that conflate structure and agency and do not recognise how we can, or need to, analyse them as separate entities. Structure and agency also work over different times: structure pre-dates any agency that might later transform it. Any transformation of structures, creating new structural conditions, post-dates the actions that transformed them.

A key contribution Archer makes is the acknowledgement of the time scales through which structure and agency ‘emerge, intertwine and redefine’ one another (2010:62). In Archer’s work this is often represented as in Figure 2 (where T1 to T4 represent different points across time).

Structural Conditioning

T1 Social Interaction

T2 T3

Structural Elaboration

T4

Figure 2: The basic morphogenetic sequence (Archer 2010:62)

Archer extends her argument from social structures to cultural systems and the realm of ideas, defining culture as ‘all intelligibilia, that is … any item which has the dispositional ability to be understood by someone – whether or not anyone does so at a given time’ (Archer 2010:70). A book or television programme would therefore count as part of a culture whether or not it is read or watched. This is an important distinction. Archer disagrees with definitions of culture as shared sets of practices. Shared practice might be an aim of a particular group but it is not an adequate definition of culture in itself: culture includes contested spaces with both contradictory and complementary ideas. For example, a library will contain a diverse range of texts. Whether or not shared cultural practices emerge from these cultural conditions depends on how people respond to the cultural conditions; they have the ability to interact with them to agree or disagree, reproduce or challenge. A cultural system, such as the internet, is full of different ideas, existing before people interact with them. If we use the above diagram, the interaction and learning becomes part of the T1 to T2 stage in morphogenesis. Shared cultural practices are therefore only one possible elaboration on existing cultural conditions. They may or may not emerge; Archer argued that first Social Cultural Interaction (T2 to T3) produces cultural elaboration (T3 to T4). This cultural elaboration may reproduce the cultural conditions (morphostasis) or change them (morphogenesis). As a cultural artefact, Archer argues that ‘a book has the dispositional capacity to be understood and this means the same as it contains and idea’ (2010:72). However, understanding comes from reading that book: interaction and a process of mediation is required. Whether or not the idea understood is the one that the author intended is a different matter. People can come to different readings of text in different places at different times; the readings can reproduce or challenge the original ideas in the book. The diagram in Figure 2 can be used to illustrate cultural change deriving from the Cultural Conditions (T1 to T2). These cultural conditions are transformed or reproduced through socio-cultural interaction (T2 to T3). From Social-cultural interaction a new epoch of social change, or social reproduction, is produced through cultural elaboration (T3 to T4).

I have explored elsewhere the connections between reflexive deliberation and reflection in learning (Dyke 2009. 2013). Learning as the transformation of experience is evident in Kolb (1984) and has been developed significantly by Jarvis It is what he refers to as the social processes of learning (Jarvis 200:7) and Archer as the stage of Social Interaction (T2–T3) that points towards a possible future development of Jarvis’s model. The social processes and social interaction that flow from the social context and engage with individual reflection and action remain relatively unexplored areas in learning. I would now like to explore how we learn in the moment through interaction with others.

Let us return to our teacher who has designed a lesson within all the structural constraints of the school, curriculum and his or her own understanding of student needs. We should understand their learning from this practice not simply in terms of the social context in which teachers find themselves but also the social processes, relations and interactions they experience and *socially* construct in the company of others. This dimension (the social processes of learning), I argue, needs development within experiential learning theory. Teachers will be influenced by their students’ responses, by conversations in the staff room, support from mentors, managers and professional development tutors – not to mention all forms of digital media, and the hegemonic discourses of the time. They will actively and socially construct, perhaps fallibly, their learning from these social situations and from their dialogue or interaction with others. These social learning spaces, and learning from the Other - the social relationships of learning - offers a further strand for developing Jarvis’s approach to fuse understandings of social processes – such as those raised in situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991) –with how individuals respond to their social context – evident in experiential learning and in Jarvis’s model. These learning theories align well with Archer’s morphogentic approach as a theory of social change. Understanding the mechanisms of these social processes - the social interaction Archer places between structural conditioning and structural elaboration (T2 to T3) – is an important and perhaps neglected aspect of experiential learning theory.

In his more recent work, Peter (Jarvis 2012) has directly incorporated Archer’s (2000) temporal approach into his model of learning from everyday life. He identified how a person enters a learning episode or learning cycle from his or her life world, the social context of their learning where they may have experience disjuncture between past experience and their current situation. The person will transform that new experience through reflection, emotion and action. The outcome of that transformation occurs over time: it can be a resolution of their disjuncture or a failure to resolve the problem presented. Jarvis’s (2012) representation of this process is outlined in Figure 3. I would like to explore social interaction as transformative activity alongside emotion, action and reflection: that is, to add social interaction between boxes 2 and 6 in Figure 3. We can learn and transform our understanding of the world in the company of others as a social process of interaction.

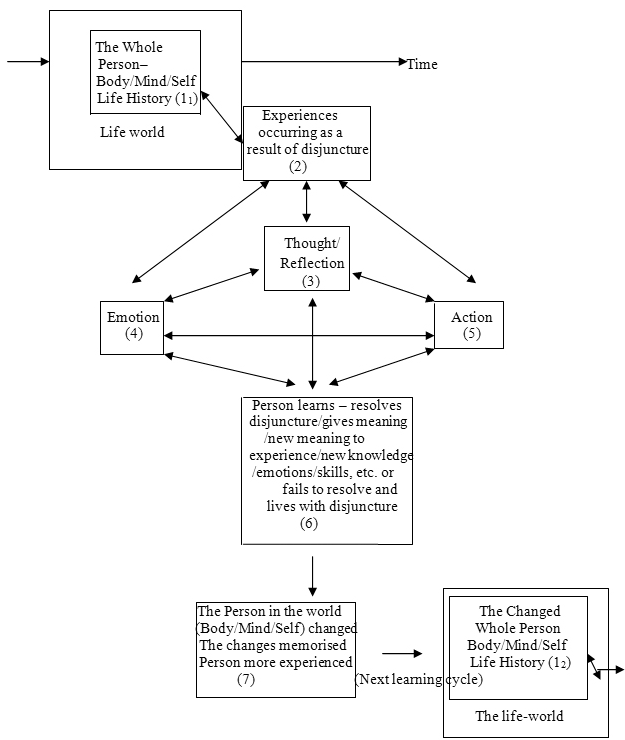


Figure 3: Transformation of the Person Through Learning (Jarvis 2012)

# Conclusion

Jarvis has written so widely and drawn on such vast fields of literature that he has of course noted the importance of interaction and learning from others. Indeed, his account of human learning has social interaction as a thread running through it. My argument is about emphasis within his account of human learning: I think more research is called for to explore these social relations in learning as mechanisms of learning. Social processes of learning could be incorporated more explicitly into a model of learning processes; people can transform experience in the company of others into new learning and thereby become more experienced. Jarvis’s more recent definition of learning includes ‘social situations’ (Jarvis 2007:1), pointing a path to future study that incorporates not only the social context but the social processes whereby people interact with that context to reproduce, challenge or adapt it.

#### Engaging with Peter Jarvis’s work over a number of years one finds one reads something, reflects, and makes some observations and points of evaluation. One then reads another article of Peter’s and discovers he has reached the same conclusions and raised the very same issues himself in a later paper. Western approaches to learning, for example, can seem quite individualistic, and less attuned to the collective and social processes of learning, than I have tried to raise here. In “Learning to be a person – East and West” (Jarvis, 2013) Peter Jarvis addresses this issue directly. He argues “and so all learning is interactive” (Jarvis 2013:6), concluding: “Now, however, the sense of self is always ‘self in the world’ both in its individual and social form – and this is where a great deal of research is necessary” (Jarvis 2013:13). Here again Peter Jarvis moves his thinking and the field forward, inviting us to pick up the baton and conduct more research on experiential learning as a social process.

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