

# Philosophy of Coaching

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## Editor's Introduction

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The editorial team is delighted to share with you this new issue of *Philosophy of Coaching*, which brings together papers that explicitly engage with the philosophical backbone of coaching. As a journal we seek to provide a platform for voices that question, challenge, and deepen the conceptual and theoretical foundations of coaching practice. At a time when coaching continues to expand across contexts, cultures, and formats, such philosophical engagement foregrounds its professional and ethical necessity.

This issue is a collective composition, curated through the collaboration of three Associate Editors – **Pauline Fatien, Charline Russo, and Julian Humphreys** – who together have shaped a menu that invites readers to reflect on coaching not merely as a set of methods or tools, but as a living philosophical practice. Across the issue, authors interrogate the beliefs, assumptions, and epistemologies that underpin coaching, and examine how these are enacted, embodied, and sometimes contested in practice.

### SECTION 1: SPECIAL ISSUE

#### LIVING PHILOSOPHY IN COACHING: FROM BELIEFS TO PRACTICES

The first section of this issue is organized around the theme “**Living Philosophy in Coaching: From Beliefs to Practices.**” The six papers and one case study gathered here share a common concern: how philosophical assumptions about knowledge, ethics, relationality, agency, and development are not abstract positions, but actively shape coaching encounters, professional identities, and the lives of those who engage in coaching.

In “**Rethinking Coaching’s Epistemological Roots: From Historical Myths to Living Practice,**” *Dr Leticia P. Mosteo* offers a critical interrogation of coaching’s epistemological foundations. Challenging the field’s reliance on romanticized historical narratives and borrowed paradigms, the paper dismantles taken-for-granted assumptions surrounding Socratic dialogue, adult learning, and the boundaries between coaching, mentoring, and therapy. Grounding coaching praxis in pragmatism, constructivism, and process ontologies, the article positions coaching as a contested and evolving space rather than a fully settled profession. In doing so, it calls for critical reflexivity and a “living philosophy” capable of engaging with the ethical and systemic complexities of human development.

*Jemma Broadstock*, in “**Bridging Worlds: A Relational Framework for Ethical Integration Across Coaching Epistemologies,**” addresses a growing epistemic divide within contemporary coaching. The paper explores the tensions between psychology-informed, institutionally recognized coaching practices and forms of coaching emerging within digital and social media cultures. Drawing on theories of epistemic injustice, recognition, and relational ethics,

Broadstock demonstrates how epistemic misalignment can generate ethical risks in practice. The proposed *Bridge Model* offers a relational framework through which diverse coaching ecosystems can be ethically integrated, without collapsing their differences or hierarchies of legitimacy.

In **“Relational Pluralism in Coaching Partnership: A Cross-Cultural Philosophical Reframing,”** *Abhijit Bhattacharya* revisits one of coaching’s core ethical concepts: partnership. Moving beyond liberal-humanist ideals of equality and reciprocity, the paper proposes the *Relational Pluralism in Coaching Partnership (RPCP)* model, drawing on dialogical philosophy, care ethics, and decolonial and intercultural scholarship. Partnership is reframed as a plural, culturally situated, and ethically responsive relational field, shaped by power, asymmetry, and difference. Central to this reconceptualization is the coach as a philosophical translator, engaging reflexively across multiple moral worlds.

The paper **“Silence as Ethical Intervention: A Pressure Point in the Universalist Assumptions Underlying the Coaching Field,”** by *Dr Elly Li Tai and Dr Winnie Sin Wai Pui*, turns attention to silence as an often-overlooked ethical phenomenon in coaching practice and education. While silence is frequently framed as reflective and empowering, the authors complicate this optimistic view by examining its potential to be coercive, exclusionary, or psychologically harmful. By situating silence at the intersection of philosophical reflection and psychological care, the paper exposes ethical fragilities within dominant coaching paradigms, particularly those influenced by Positive Psychology, and invites coaches to confront the ethical implications of their own stances toward practice.

In **“When Life Itself Is the Threshold: Rethinking Coaching Through Chronic Liminality,”** *Dr Veronica Madan* challenges transition-based and reflection-centric assumptions prevalent in mainstream coaching discourse. Drawing on sustained engagement with marginalized women and worker communities, the paper introduces two conceptual frameworks: the *Action-Led Meaning Model (ALMM)* and the *Liminal Becoming Model*. Together, these models reconceptualize growth, agency, and identity as enacted through continuity of action rather than resolution or stability. Coaching, in this view, becomes a practice of scaffolding sustained engagement in contexts of ongoing uncertainty, recognizing dignity in endurance and intelligence in responsiveness.

Finally, **“Coaching and Social Structures: A Bourdieusian Framework for Reflexive Practice,”** by *Dr Winnie Sin Wai Pui and Dr Jason Chan*, offers a sociological critique of coaching’s claims to neutrality and empowerment. Drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of practice, the authors demonstrate how coaching encounters are embedded within social fields structured by power, capital, and cultural norms. The proposed *Reflexive Bourdieusian Coaching Framework (R<sup>3</sup>C)* operationalizes sociological reflexivity across four interconnected layers, supporting coaches in examining how values, identities, and practices are constituted and negotiated within specific contexts.

Taken together, the contributions in this section invite us to experience philosophy not as an abstract backdrop to coaching, but as something lived, enacted, and ethically consequential. They remind us that coaching practices always carry assumptions about what counts as knowledge,

whose voices are legitimized, and how human flourishing is imagined. To live philosophy in coaching, then, is to remain critically attentive to the beliefs we inherit, the practices we reproduce, and the worlds we help to shape.

## **SECTION 2: GENERAL SUBMISSIONS**

*Tatiana Bachkirova*, in her paper “**Coaching Should Not Become ‘Individual Training,’ Sliding Into Being Unethical**” revisits the question of what coaching is, in contrast to related modalities i.e. therapy and mentoring. She then distinguishes between coaching and what she terms ‘individual training,’ using examples to highlight some of the ethical risks coaches face when the distinction between the two becomes blurry.

*Peter Rubarth*, meanwhile, in his Case Study titled “**The Tightrope between Coaching and Consulting: Role Clarity in Internal Organizational Practice,**” shares his experience working as an internal coach and OD consultant in the same technology company, and the role conflict that developed in the eyes of those he was working with. He offers concrete lessons on role clarity, and critical questions practitioners can ask themselves to ensure they mitigate some of the risks of taking up dual roles within an organization. In conclusion, he offers reflections on the value of writing case studies, for both the writer and reader.

Lastly, in “**More Than Just Tea and Sympathy: A Classical Mindfulness-Informed Philosophy for Higher Education Coaching Practice**” *Steven Baguley* explores the potential challenges to and opportunities for the practice of a mindfulness-informed coaching philosophy within the current Higher Education landscape. He challenges the assumptions of ethical neutrality and proposes a coaching philosophy grounded in classical Buddhist mindfulness, emphasizing ethics, wisdom and compassion, and aligning with developmentalist coach education to support reflexivity, collective responsibility and systemic change.

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