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AN EMERGING PATH OF PRESENCING MASTERY: *Introducing a Framework for Exploring the Depth-Dimensions of Presencing in a Coaching Context*

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Abstract: Drawing from the recent developments of Dynamic Presencing Coaching (Gunnlaugson, 2024a, 2024b, forthcoming; Proches, C. et al., 2024), I introduce a framework outlining an *embodied, phenomenological and ontological-based* (EPO) approach to cultivating new forms and expressions of presencing mastery. Through each of the three EPO dimensions of practice, it becomes possible to effectively immerse in, embody and transform one's way of navigating the depth regions of presencing coaching as an emerging frontier of mastery practice.

Keywords: Emerging presencing approaches, dynamic presencing, presencing awareness, ontological, epistemological, presencing coaching

I. Introductory Remarks

More broadly speaking, as many presencing practitioner's will attest, it is not uncommon to occasionally have deep presencing experiences that stand apart from ordinary practice. Whether arising in solitude, in a profound presencing conversation or while on retreat, such breakthroughs can inspire a felt connection, giving rise to a noted shift in one's depth and quality of presence as well as enhanced lucidity with the interior process of presencing itself. Often there is an amplified quality of clarified meaning and purpose, compelling further exploration. These and other alluring experiences have the potential to draw us into a noted deepening of both presence and presencing in ways that evoke wonder, even awe, catalyzing an immersion into the underlying depth-dimensions of presencing that bring forth new expressions of whole-human aliveness and possibility. While such potentially transformative experiences serve as significant

internal reference points for what is possible with presencing, there has been a longstanding need for developing in-depth methods that advance our capacity for accessing this underlying presencing territory directly and in a sustained manner (Gunnlaugson, 2020, 2023, 2024, forthcoming), especially in leadership and coaching contexts where growth, development and mastery related concerns are of paramount value.

To a significant extent, the embodied level-depth of our coaching presence plays a formative role in shaping the overall quality and effectiveness of our coaching. From a mastery perspective, actively attending to and exploring these inner dimensions of presencing is essential to advancing our presencing capacities. To support further research in presencing mastery, this article introduces a framework for engaging and integrating three essential depth-dimensions of presencing. Summarized as EPO: *embodied, phenomenological, ontological*, (figure 1 below) each brings into focus important interior conditions that support the emergence and development of new forms of presencing mastery. Applied within coaching contexts, this framework serves as a template and guide for coaches to work with actively developing different facets of their presencing experience. Whether working in depth within one of the practice domains or combining two or more dimensions, as a guide for advanced practice this framework is useful in identifying the blind spots and limiting conditions of our existing presencing practice. In turn, it can be useful in identifying which underlying capacities are needed to help us discover new forms and expressions of presencing mastery, as well as deepening our overall approach.

II. EPO-Inspired Shifts in Dynamic Presencing Coaching

In this article, I draw from aspects of the recent work and research of Dynamic Presencing Coaching (Gunnlaugson, 2024a, 2024b, forthcoming; Proches, C. et al., 2024), a deeply presence-sustained, presencing-guided, field-based, transformative method of coaching from source. From the applied research to date, a number of EPO-related shifts have been observed and reported through a recent five-year period of research where I investigated the inner and intersubjective processes that optimally support a generative, presence- and presencing-based coaching culture in my local and global MBA classrooms.⁴

⁴ For further information on this research, please consult Gunnlaugson (2024a) in this IJPLC issue.

Within this period, the EPO framework was also developed in response to the coaching need for a lens that brings into focus the key depth-dimensions of presencing that shape the coach's overall capacity for and mastery of presencing as a generative way of being.

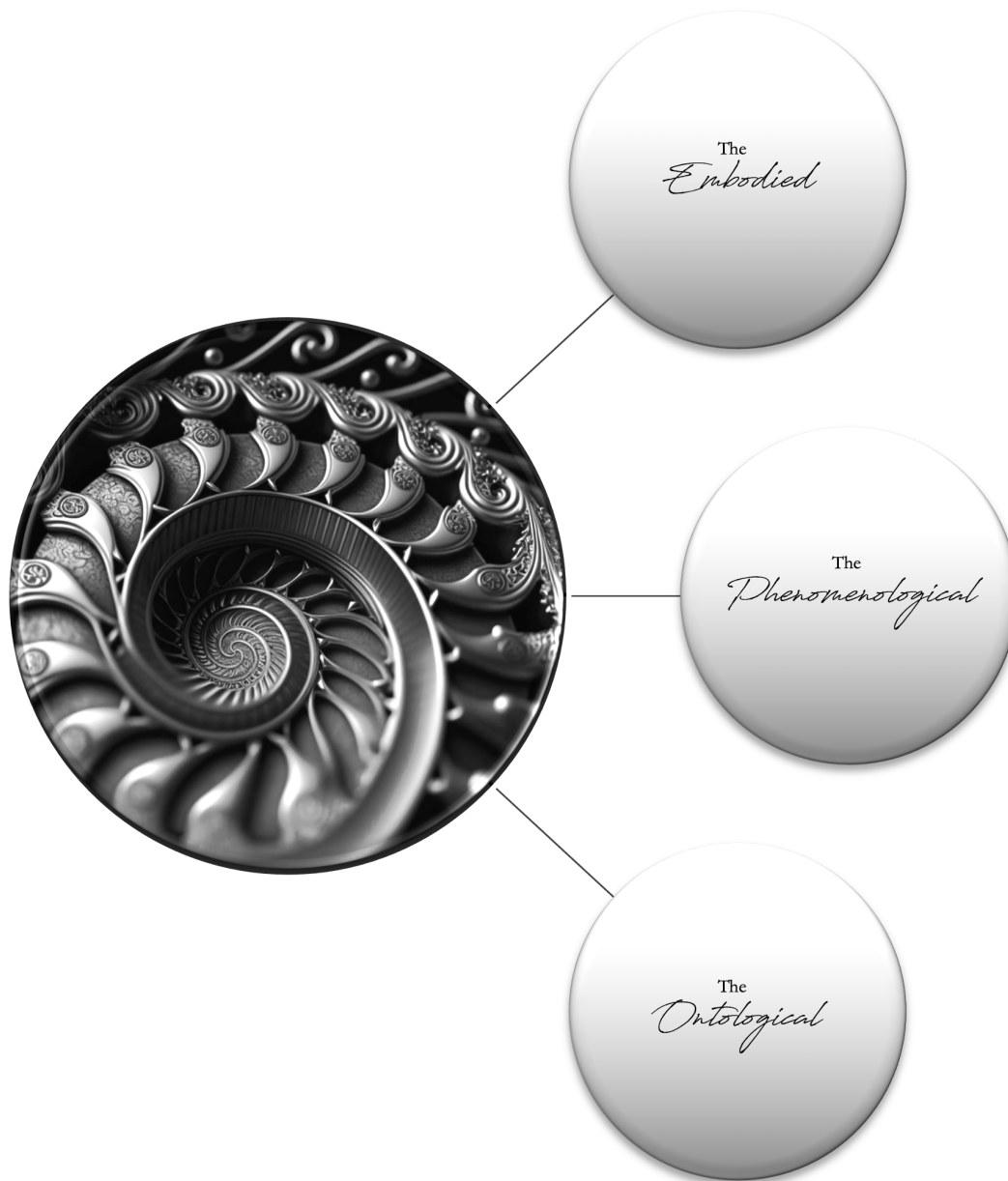


Figure 1. The Three EPO Depth-Dimensions of Presencing in DPC

During the course of this research, among the shifts noted, a more nuanced and in-depth presencing process was observed in coaching contexts as coach's learned to shift their inner ontological location and fill out their embodiment of presence. This particular development led to an increased capacity for a deeper, sustained presence which can be attributed to a more robust and developed *embodied, phenomenological* and *ontological* integration of one's presencing self at new levels. On the whole, this brought

about a noted deepening and clarity of the coach's interior location when engaging in presencing. Accompanying this advance was an increased capacity for embodied presencing self-awareness and wisdom, as well as an ability to access and sustain presence at greater depth for longer durations in coaching contexts. In accessing new level-depths of presence, a parallel deepening of self-awareness and self-knowledge grew out of an increased intrinsic valuing of the presencing process, which is essential to integrating presencing at core experiential levels of our identity. In a related way, a deepening into the territory of post-conventional values maturity was also acknowledged by practitioners who learned how to access inner presence-based forms of wisdom.

Additionally, observed increases in the depth and capacity for a presenced listening and speaking in coaching were noted with the integration of EPO practices and exercises, to the extent that coaches shifted to working inside the framework as an overall transformative process-method. In parallel, an increased fluidity in one's ability to access new sources of generativity personally and with one's client through the medium of presence has been observed as coaches learn how to embody and coach from new level-depths of presence within their presencing self. Following from the EPO cultivation of depth in one's presencing self has been a more accepting attitude towards the complex nature of change through a deepened and strengthened internal locus of control. With these noted developments has come a greater tolerance for being amidst different forms of uncertainty and ambiguity through a deeper personal integration of presencing at the core depths of one's being.

Building from these and related advances, preliminary data gathered to date (Gunnlaugson, 2024a) suggests the EPO framework provides insight into uncovering new means for engaging and sustaining presencing as a transformative way of coaching. As a case example of an emerging presencing approach (Gunnlaugson, 2023), Dynamic Presencing Coaching (Gunnlaugson, 2024a, 2024b, forthcoming; Proches, C. et al., 2024) actively works with each of the three EPO depth-dimensions of our presencing experience to establish a more resourceful and generative connection with one's self, one's client and the overall presencing process while coaching.

III. The *Embodied* Depth-Dimension of Presencing

The first *embodied* depth-dimension of the EPO framework brings into focus the subtle, interior-mediated forms of embodiment that await contact from deeper levels of one's presencing practice. As we become more attuned to the subtle felt nuances of stillness and inner movement, new sensemaking pathways begin to open, drawing us

into depth regions of our presence. In Dynamic Presencing Coaching, the theme of subtle embodiment is worked with in a continuous manner to help coaches experience a more interoceptive, inner-directed, felt-based presencing awareness that is lived into immersively and continuously as a way of being through the interface of one's inner body. The deeper somatic regions of our inner body become the site where these subtle, interior-mediated forms of embodiment are accessed and integrated as integral to the DPC process.

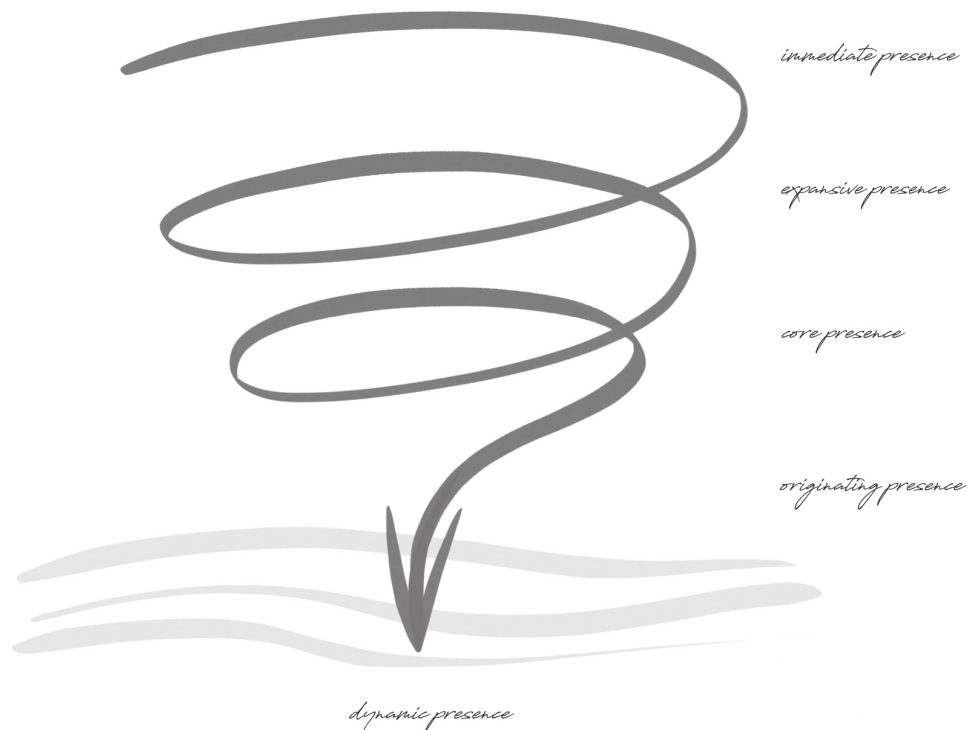


Figure 2. The five embodied levels of presence

In Dynamic Presencing Coaching, the five embodied levels of presence (figure 2) are a site where the first embodiment depth-dimension becomes particularly active. The five level-depths of presence await the coach and client's embodied exploration and mastery in relation to the coaching inquiry. Guided by our still point, each of the initial four forms of *immediate*, *expansive*, *core* and *originating presence* represent the fully embodied presence-based nature of our presencing self. As these four forms of presence become active in our embodiment, they generate an overall subtle fifth form and movement of *dynamic presence* (Gunnlaugson, 2023)⁵.

The DPC Coach focuses on embodying and apprenticing with each level-

⁵ The five embodied levels of presence (figure 2) and the five ontological lifeworlds of DPC (figure 4) are part of the Five Level-Depths Method of Presence (Gunnlaugson, forthcoming).

depth of presence as a central dynamic of the DPC process, which gradually reveals new insights, realizations and breakthroughs for both coach and client. As the experience of *dynamic presence* develops into an embodied interface and seat of presence, it serves as a depth conduit that reveals a new graduated role for presence in the presencing process when explored in these subtly embodied ways. Through the medium of our deeply embodied presence, our presencing nature is re-discovered in the actual territory of our experience itself. The embodiment lens of the EPO framework offers valuable resourcing and assistance for coaches to ground, deepen and mature their presencing perception inside the overall presencing process. By developing a capacity to coach from each subtle embodied form of presence and being, coaches can discover firsthand the dormant transformative potential of reclaiming our presence at depth as a living dimension of who we are.

Given that creative emergence is integral to our presencing nature, the subtle embodied location from where we are listening and speaking from with our clients as we coach them matters a great deal. In exploring the subtle, interior embodied territory of presence directly amidst our arising experience with our coaching clients, a subtle inner path of presencing embodiment is cultivated. Here, the embodied dimension directs us towards a way of engaging our presencing self that is co-extensive and co-arising with the presencing process itself, where new paths to connecting-to, being-with, and finally becoming our presencing self as the locus of the presencing process directly (Gunnlaugson, forthcoming) await.

IV. The *Phenomenological* Depth-Dimension of Presencing

The next *phenomenological* depth-dimension of the EPO framework brings an overall closer discernment and excavation of the phenomenological territory of presencing. In DPC the phenomenological depth-dimension is particularly active between the presencing gestures of *letting go* and *letting come* in Theory U (Scharmer, 2016). Drawing from the initial research of Dynamic Presencing (Gunnlaugson 2020, 2021, 2023; Gunnlaugson and Brendel, 2019, 2020, 2021), in Dynamic Presencing Coaching (Gunnlaugson, 2024a, 2024b, forthcoming; Proches, C. et al., 2024), research with the EPO framework developed a third phenomenological gesture and presencing depth-dimension, *letting be* as depicted in figure 3 below. Between letting go to letting come, there has been an absence of a depth practice for entering into a nuanced phenomenological calibration with one's faculties and presencing experience.

This missing element is needed to actively apprentice with presence, the

presencing process and one's presencing self in the field directly. As an inner posture, letting be slows down the presencing process, giving us the chance to metabolize and digest our experience by stabilizing our presencing awareness at depth. This is essential when learning to develop our capacity for a more sustained and immersive presencing experience. In supporting the emergence of a dynamic way of *being presence* and being presenced in real time, letting be creates conditions for sustaining an essential phenomenological attitude, fostering a high-definition, suspended curiosity and immersive depth-way of relating with our presencing experience. This fundamental shift is needed if presencing is to reach the next mastery frontier as an inner movement and generative way of being.

As a subtle phenomenological practice, building from Jaworski's (2012) account of presencing as *indwelling*, the first phase {*enfoldment*} involves the movement from letting go to letting be (see figure 3 below). To enfold into presence is to envelope and immerse one's whole being in presence. The DPC practice of *enfolding into presence* shifts us inside a particular lifeworld of self-generating presence. As a DPC Coach, we work with developing our phenomenological discernment of presence in this first phase of enfoldment, so as to become embodied in it. In the second phase, {*unfoldment*} the movement reverses as we explore unfolding emergence from the enfolded state of being presence. From letting be, a DPC Coach works with resting and re-orienting themselves as presence. In becoming embodiments of presence as coaches, we then shift into *becoming presencing* in phase two, where the work is to unfold presencing emergence as we move from letting be to letting come. This is the foundational movement of Dynamic Presencing Coaching represented simply in the practice: *Enfolding presence; Unfolding presencing* (Gunnlaugson, forthcoming).

Redirecting our awareness from the Theory U singular focus on letting come, the phenomenological gesture of letting be opens up a generative holding space of presencing with one's clients, shifting the very ground and path of presencing in a fundamental way. In Dynamic Presencing Coaching, letting be offers a new path for orienting one's presencing experience at depth, where the level-depths of presence become the new context out of which one engages one's presencing coaching from. In 1) revealing this previously hidden depth realm, and 2) offering a path and method for accessing and actively working with it, a new presencing narrative and story await exploration.

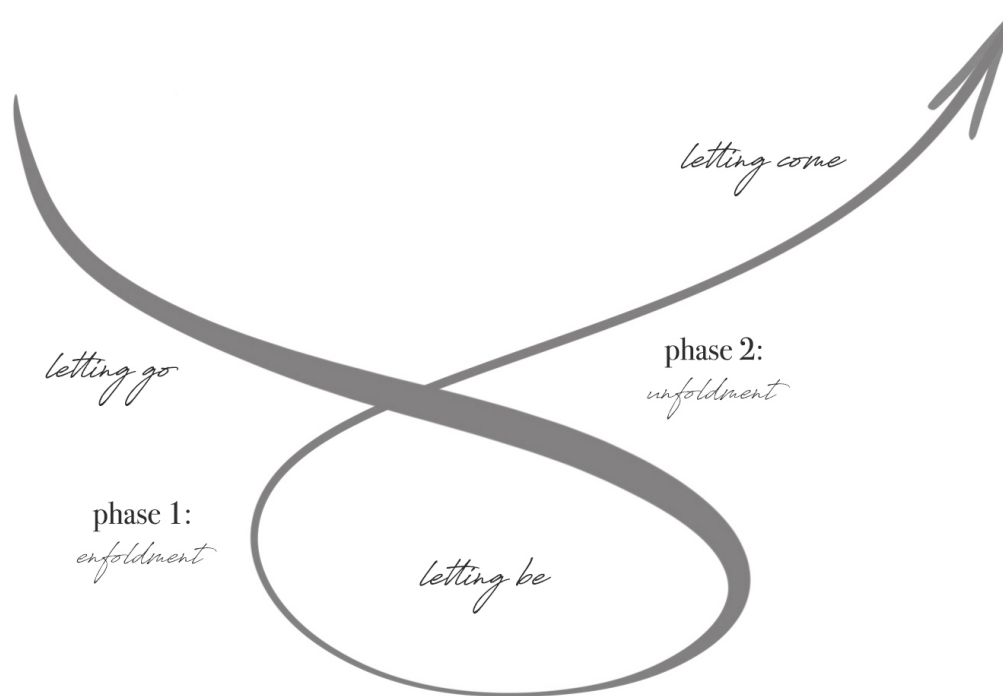


Figure 3. *Letting Be*: The hidden phenomenological gesture

As a wisdom way of working with the sensemaking crisis of our time, introducing the phenomenological gesture and method of letting be introduces coaches to a fundamentally different way of coaching from presencing. Letting be also opens a phenomenological space for new emergent wisdom processes to take the place of the traditional executive role(s) of the intellect. By offering a new direction and immersive experience of presencing that takes guidance from a deeper emergent wisdom way of being, letting be offers a safe harbor for the intellect to relax and re-discover itself in relation to a presenced way of knowing.

In shifting from the inner disposition of letting go to letting be in the first phase of enfoldment, the intellect as a traditionally dominant faculty of knowing steps back from taking a more active role in our experience, transitioning into a receptive mode of allowing, interpreting and stewarding the presencing process. Informing this step back, letting be opens space for other presenced forms of knowing and being to enter the coaching conversation with our clients. This involves a deeper trust and confidence in letting the unknown play a more active role in guiding the presencing process, as it diffuses surface tensions and pressures one might otherwise experience, offering an active suspension of these psychological factors. This develops an adeptness with what Keats (1899) described as *negative capability* or the ability to be amidst uncertainty with ourselves and our clients without recourse to reason to give one a false sense of security or buffering against that uncertainty by keeping certain control and

judgment-related functions of the intellect subdued and at bay.

In this way, the phenomenological gesture of letting be also re-purposes the intellect as a steward of the presencing process by developing a sustained phenomenological connection with the underlying territory of being itself. Signaling a shift to a bottom-up processing and sensemaking from the subtle inner senses and ground of presence, letting be develops and sustains a subtle and patient way of relating to the complexities of presencing practice. In learning to let our coaching develop in a more receptive way that is in synch with the rhythms of emergence, letting be returns us to contacting the essence of our direct experience at the root source, which is needed to uncover and reveal viable and sustainable pathways for our clients. By constituting and re-constituting ourselves from this place of deep allowing and receptivity, letting be opens a new generative path for Dynamic Presencing Coaching to regenerate and resource us and our clients at depth.

V. The *Ontological* Depth-Dimension of Presencing

The ontological depth-dimension of the EPO framework is reflected in research into the ontological categories of scientists and inventors who have made ground breaking scientific discoveries. What this research indicates is that key insights were possible when scientists were able to undertake a deeper ontological shift, enabling a re-representation of the problem at deeper levels, in turn developing a new relationship to the phenomenon they were investigating (Chi, Feltovich and Glaser, 1981). In the case of scientific discoveries predicated on deeper ontological shifts, new creative insight becomes possible via a noted shift in one's way of being, which in turn gives rise to a qualitative shift in one's way of knowing. From this point, the quality of one's knowing follows from the way one is orienting one's being in terms of their respective ontological location.

Because the quality of our presencing knowing follows from the depth and quality of our presencing being, there has been a longstanding need for an overall presencing-based coaching approach that facilitates an ontological development and mastery of presence in one's coaching practice as primary. That is, a process that enables coaches to embody and coach from different ontological depth-based forms of presence and in doing this, develop one's coaching capacity for becoming a dynamic instrument of presencing. To date, applications of presencing in coaching have yet to address how to establish a sustained ontological depth or duration of presencing with one's own interiority, the interiority of one's client, and the coaching process as a whole. Dynamic Presencing Coaching finally addresses this ontological blind spot within the EPO

framework.

In DPC, presence is not only uncovered and contacted, but apprenticed with and embodied as an interior attuned way of unfolding presencing as a way of being. As presence grows to become foundational in structuring one's being in the coaching process, a presenced way of knowing, seeing, communicating and relating through the coaching conversation are revealed. Here the coach works directly from their deeper presencing nature that reveals and guides one's way of coaching in the moment. In Dynamic Presencing Coaching, research with the third EPO ontological dimension of presencing has shed insight into understanding how the nature and process of presencing changes at different level depths through each ontological shift—there are five in total (see figure 4 below). As each level-depth of presence is reclaimed by deepening into and establishing ontological rooting within these underlying grounds, this in turn amplifies our presencing awareness and perception in essential ways.

Within the Dynamic Presencing Coaching approach, research into the archetypal expressions of presence led to clarifying five ontological lifeworlds containing phenomenological grounds of being that coaches can develop the embodied capacity to access and resource their presence from. Each lifeworld (i.e., *being real*, *being witness*, *being essence*, *being source* and *being presence*) includes a specific depth location and that can be attuned to, and a modality of presence that can be entrained with (i.e., *immediate*, *expansive*, *core*, *originating* and *dynamic*). Initially, each of the five lifeworlds serve as an activation site where DPC Coaches uncover and establish fresh ontological rooting in our presencing nature, which as it becomes more a part of our experience, gradually reveals the deeper dynamism of our presencing nature as a way of being. Within the method as a whole, each lifeworld represents an essential archetypal ontological dimension and gateway into filling out our overall presencing nature.

As DPC Coaches journey through the five ontological lifeworlds, each plays a formative role in awakening coaches to their presencing nature. Learning to intimately contact and embody the ground of presence within each lifeworld opens a distinct inner presencing landscape or *inscape* that is colored by the distinct ontological qualities and state of consciousness that accompany each lifeworld. Learning how to discern the inner landscape of each lifeworld is described is needed to move towards ontological levels of presencing mastery.

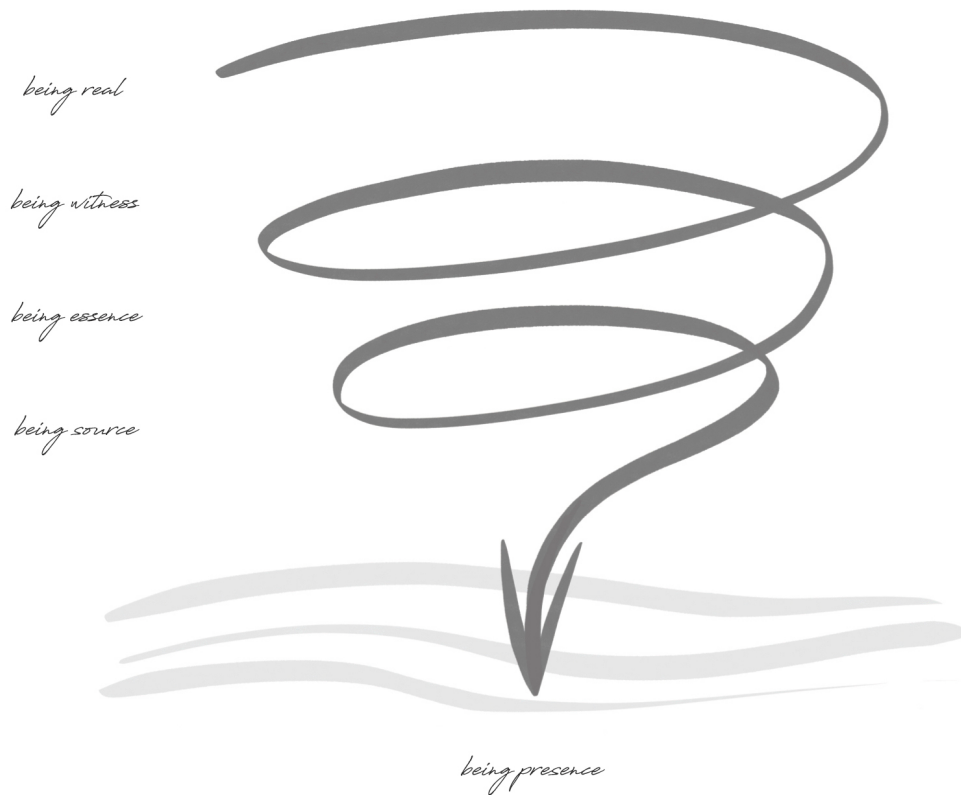


Figure 4. The five ontological lifeworlds of DPC

From the DPC Coaches perspective, the lifeworld of *being real* connects us with our existential ground at the level of our *immediate presence*. As DPC Coaches, we initially work with contacting this elemental experience of being human with our clients and their experience on its terms. From here, the lifeworld *being witness* introduces an effortless spacious quality of being from *expansive presence*. Where being real activated the inner gravity of an existential experience of ourselves and our clients, being witness releases us into a more transcendent witnessing of our own as well as our client's experience from a relaxed and de-centered expansive presence. The next lifeworld *being essence* brings us down a level-depth into *core presence*. Inside being essence, we bring our faculties into a coherent state of felt contact with our essential nature. In doing this, our embodiment of essence flows forth as we learn to uncover where we experience ourselves most essentially and centrally. Continuing our descent, in the next lifeworld *being source*, we connect with the emerging not-yet-manifest dimension of who we are via *originating presence*. Surrendering further into being source uncovers a tangible and actionable way of relating with and actively presencing from source. Finally, in contacting the fifth lifeworld *being presence*, we shift into a meta-view and mesa-embodiment of all four of the prior lifeworlds, which creates key conditions for embodying our presencing nature through each of the four prior forms of presence

while coaching. Inside the lifeworld of being presence, DPC Coaches apprentice with embodying and leading our coaching from a movement within, and between each of the four prior lifeworlds, which as each grows to become second nature, eventually transforms into a *homeworld* for coaches to source and resource their presence from while coaching their clients. Making the shift to understanding presence in this ontologically nuanced way sheds insight into understanding what is possible from each distinct archetypal form of presence at its respective depth address. Learning how to self-generate each form of presence offers a powerful set of presencing interfaces for DPC Coaches to engage their clients with. By engaging the five ontological lifeworlds as a path into presence, this activates essential conditions for coaching from presencing as a way of being.

In contrast to the singular eye of the needle or presencing gate at the bottom of the U (Scharmer, 2016), in the work of DPC, ontological shifts of this nature require passing through a series of five inner gates or thresholds that exist between each lifeworld as an inner milieu of presence. As each inner threshold is crossed, new presenced way of being await our exploration. With practice, these five ontological shifts offer an in depth ground for our presencing self to take root in and grow out from as a living, immersive reality. When this deeper ontological process is left unaddressed in presencing as has been the case in the work of Theory U to date, a significant ontological gap tends to develop between our presencing self and everyday sense of self. We need to bridge and eventually close this gap to reach a more advanced stage of presencing mastery. More specifically, this method helps develop a level where presence can be restored as a viable generative ground that, in being lived into, integrated and deeply embodied, grows to become co-extensive of who we are.

Again, in Dynamic Presencing Coaching, all communicating, knowing, seeing and relating with our clients follow forth from a foundational presenced way of being. In this sense, the third ontological dimension of the EPO framework plays an indispensable role in connecting us directly with the living ontological source of being that exists at these deeper levels of presence within us, as us. Through our latent ontological depths, a new path for presencing-based coaching reveals a heretofore dormant world where our inner depth-dimensions of presence and being can play a primary role in the coaching process. Having a significant impact on the quality and effectiveness of our coaching on a moment-to-moment basis, the ontological depth-dimension of presencing is an foundational realm out of which new unforetold possibilities for presencing await.

VII. Closing Remarks

The EPO framework introduced in this article reveals new underlying territory for presencing that hasn't been well addressed in the literature to date. With the first *embodied* depth-dimension, in Dynamic Presencing Coaching presencing awareness is explored in a distinct way that is subtly embodied at the level of our inner body and interiority through felt, inner-directed, stillness-mediated forms of subtle movement. With the second *phenomenological* depth-dimension, presencing awareness becomes accessible phenomenologically as the deeper experiential context that holds our immediate presencing experience through the gesture of letting be. In DPC Coaching, letting be plays a central role in helping us discern and apprehend the arising new by learning to indwell with presencing as a generative way of being. With the third *ontological* depth-dimension, we connect to the five, nested, ontological lifeworlds. Through the DPC apprenticeship, our presencing nature takes root in each of these lifeworlds, activating an overall presenced perception from *being presence*. With practice, these foundational lifeworlds serve as the interior environments where we embody each form of presence that develops through an in-depth integration of three EPO depth-dimensions of our presencing coaching practice.

Overall, this article addresses the critical need for developing a mastery path of presencing that is immersive and immediately accessible to coaches. Introducing the three embodied, phenomenological and ontological-based depth dimensions, this article makes a case for integrating an EPO approach to presencing in one's coaching practice. Each of the three depth-dimensions introduced provide a brief introduction to the mastery path of presencing as reflected in the work of Dynamic Presencing Coaching. In outlining how these three depth-dimensions engage the Dynamic Presencing Coaching method, the EPO lens is designed to catalyze new thinking and awareness that can be applied within the greater journey of presencing mastery in one's current presencing coaching practice.

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Globally, his current research focuses on supporting those leaders, managers and coaches who aspire to develop personal mastery in leading their lives and work from an inner place of deeply resourced presence, presencing and embodied practical wisdom. Connected with this work, over the past decade he has served as lead editor of the academic-practitioner book, "Perspectives on Theory U: Insights from the Field" as well as the three volume book series, "Advances in Presencing." Recently he stepped into the thought leadership role as editor in chief of the new *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching* to continue building this exciting new field of applied practice.

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