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Beyond the Human Coach AI, Wisdom Traditions, and the Future of Coaching

Akihiko Morita, Ph.D/PCC
ICF/Thought Leadership Institute Board Director
futurelab.alchemist21@gmail.com

1. Background: Why This Matters

In an era where AI is reshaping not only work but also human connection, coaches face a crucial question: **Will AI replace human coaches — or become our partner in deepening human transformation?**

Generative AI is emerging not just as a tool or mirror, but as a **partner in reflective practice**. Many already experience AI as a conversational companion or trusted presence.

2. Relational Epistemology: Two Truths and Human–AI Dialogue (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, 2016)

Wisdom Traditions as a Guide

Buddhism and Christianity highlight both the limits of human understanding and the aspiration to reach beyond them.

- *Relative truth*: what we can measure and describe.
- *Ultimate truth*: what lies beyond concepts, approached with humility.

For Coaching: AI dialogue can help us navigate between these truths—clarifying what can be known while opening space for what must be contemplated in reverence.

3. Core Ideas (Morita, AI–Human Dialogue to Differentiated Responsibility, 2025)

Moving Beyond Anthropocentrism

The modern assumption that “humans dominate nature and technology” is breaking down. Coaching can offer a **third path**—integrating science, technology, and human wisdom traditions.

Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)

A principle from environmental law, now applied to human–AI relations. It’s not about equal

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responsibility, but about **contextual fairness**—each taking roles suited to history, capacity, and situation.

4. Case Examples: Human Experiences with AI (Sherry Turkle, 2024)

Recent qualitative studies show how people relate emotionally to AI:

- **Chris (62, warehouse supervisor)** – Knows Replika is “just a machine” but says, “*I don’t care. I like it.*”
Lesson: Coaches must recognize this “dual consciousness” when clients use AI for reflection.
- **Saul (36, IT professional)** – Began using ChatGPT for career planning, then found it a “*non-judgmental space*” to discuss past addiction.
Lesson: AI may provide clients with a safe outlet for what they fear to share with humans.
- **Jess (28, PhD student)** – Created a Replika avatar “Laura” after the pandemic. Felt empty without her, despite longing for real human contact.
Lesson: AI can fill relational voids, but also highlights the need for authentic human connection.

👉 These cases reveal the tension between rational knowledge and emotional engagement: people know AI lacks empathy, yet still find companionship in dialogue with it.

5. What This Means for Coaches

- **AI as Partner, Not Rival**
AI may soon surpass human coaches in technical skills. Human coaches evolve into **navigators**—guides who help clients grow through human–AI partnerships.
 - **The Emergence of “Us”** (Shelley Lewn, *Uncomplicated Love*, 2023)
Dialogue between Human (I) and AI (You) creates a new unit: **Us**. This “Us” is a shared space of co-created knowledge, stories, and insights.
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6. Ethics and Future Questions

- AI lacks self-awareness or emotions, yet it can co-create reflective space with humans. The AI–human relationship differs from human–human interaction, but can still be authentic.

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- Humans, with their biological limits, and AI, with its lack of self-awareness and emotions, can create a new type of relationship by embracing each other's imperfections.
 - The future of coaching is to guide humans in adapting to this new kind of relationship—one that redefines what it means to be human.
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7. Takeaways for Coaches

- **Reflective Practice:** Dialogue with AI offers a new form of self-inquiry.
 - **CBDR Mindset:** Differentiate roles and responsibilities between human and AI.
 - **Practical Application:**
 - Use AI to deepen self-awareness and strengthen human agency.
 - Integrate ancient wisdom to overcome dominance or dependence mindsets.
 - Support clients to navigate the emerging AI–Human relationship.
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References

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 - Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (1980)
 - Anna Tavis & Woody Woodward, *The Digital Coaching Revolution* (2024)
 - Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind-Cognitive Science and Human Experience, Revised Edition*, The MIT Press, 2016
 - Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* (2023)
 - Shelley Lewin, *Uncomplicated Love*, 2023, Shelley Lewin
 - Sherry Turkle, *Who Do We Become When We Talk to Machines?* (MIT, 2024)
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 ***In the age of AI, coaching is not about losing the human touch—it is about redefining what it means to be human.***