

'We cannot step into the same river twice.'

Heraclitus (probably Simplicius, actually) said that 2500 years ago. He was, of course, saying that from femto second to femto second, nothing stays the same (well, he wouldn't have known about that teensy weensy part of a second, but he would have thought it was pretty cool if he had; and that is what he meant). By the time we have stepped out of the river, it has, partly because we stepped into it, changed entirely. Every molecule has been knocked around by every other molecule, eroding the rocks differently, and warming and expanding or cooling and contracting, and generally wrecking havoc with the concept of constancy. You then place your foot back into that river that looks for all the world like the river you just stepped out of. But you have entered a new place. You changed it. What is is not what was.

I like this observation. First, because it seems true. Second, because it explains something. It explains why the questions in the Thinking Partnership Session appear to be the same questions, session after session; but they aren't. More particularly, it explains why the question, 'What more do you think, or feel, or want to say?' appears to be the same question each time it is asked. And ditto, the Incisive Question. We ask it again and again and again, until the Thinker says they are finished, and they do not continue. The questions are on the diagram. They look the same there. We learn them. We use them. They work.

In fact, we never hear the Thinker say, 'Oh, for Pete's sake, can't you think of a different question? (Who's Pete anyway?)

Nor does the coaching client say, 'I am not going to hire you to be my coach if all you are going to do is just sit there and listen, and then ask me the very same questions this month that you asked me last month.'

You'd think they would say that. But they don't. You'd think that being asked the same questions would be just the biggest boring bore. And nobody would sign up for the experience.

But they do. Because being asked these questions is just the most sensationally scintillating thing. Why?

Because the question asked again is, in effect, not the same question. It looks the same. But it is not the same.

It is not the same because the Thinker, stepping into it -- absorbing it and generating new ideas and feelings and perspectives and understanding from answering it -- in effect changes it. It is as if the question, worded precisely the same, is worded entirely differently.

The Thinking Partner asks it again. And the Thinker experiences it afresh, as if it were not the same at all.

The river changes because we step into it. The question changes because we think about it.