

## PATTERNS OF AWARENESS: CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE GROUP MIND

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### *Introduction*

On the eve of 1983 CBS news featured New Year greetings and wishes from an array of world leaders. One after the other they wished for peace, cooperation, prosperity, creativity, and love—sentiments no doubt echoed in the hearts of the vast majority of listeners. The anchor-man wound up with a reflection on the high and humane aspirations expressed and signed off with the quip, "Now if only they meant it."

His thinly veiled cynicism is understandable, subjected, as he is in his job, to an endless recitation of global terror, betrayal, oppression, and hypocrisy. But he, like most well-educated members of our culture may be caught up in one of our most enduring myths—the myth of the individual. And so he misses the real tragedy. He misses the fact that in their individual, subjective experience these world leaders probably *do* mean it. But each of these people is also part of some group. They participate in summit conferences, their own cabinets of advisors, their party, family, nation-state, language or religious group, groups that are capable of collective action that individual members may not seek, plan, choose, or be able to control. Just like juries, which can return verdicts that differ from the particular sentiments of the members, the actions of groups cannot be understood in any easy cause-and-effect way by an examination of the values, talents, ideologies, aspirations of their individual members.

It is also clear that the problems facing humanity, the "global problematique," as the Club of Rome refers to the situation (Botkin, et al, 1979), are so immense, so complex and so interpenetrated that only a concerted action by groups can make any impact at all. In spite of outstanding achievements, the isolated

consciousness cannot solve these complex group problems. Pollution, for example, is a problem which will not yield to individual initiative, no matter how dedicated or enlightened. It will, and *does*, yield to coordinated, cooperative efforts of informed people who concern themselves with group-wide issues. One might say that our most serious problems—group problems such as nuclear threat, militarism, hunger, oppression, alienation, pollution, crime, disease—will only be solved when we discover how uncoerced individual effort can become attuned to collective need. This can happen humanely, we suggest, when self-conscious individual minds are also attuned to a larger entity, the collective, which thereby achieves consciousness to direct intelligent concerted action—when, as Rene Dubos suggests, individuals “act locally, but think globally.” (Dubos, 1981)

The reality of this phenomenon, the presence of this entity, the conscious group, has been recognized repeatedly with varying degrees of concreteness. Perhaps the most convincing acknowledgement comes in the form of the ubiquitousness of faith in the superiority of group deliberation over individual direction, seen in most areas of democratic processes. We rely on groups, overtly and covertly, to make many of the important decisions which affect us and our future.

It is common to see reference to the idea that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Recent thinking in embryology and developmental biology takes us even further. From these studies it would seem that the parts themselves are re-defined and re-created in the process of their interaction with the whole, acknowledging that the whole has an effect on the parts which create it. Some writers even give organismic properties to groups. Liberman (1980), as one recent example out of many, suggests that the group may have “hands,” “heart,” and other organs in the persons of its members. The British biologist J. B. S. Haldane steps outside a biological model altogether when referring to this phenomenon, preferring instead a “mental” model. He states,

If the cooperation of some thousands of millions of cells in our brain can produce our consciousness, the idea becomes vastly more plausible that the cooperation of humanity, or some sections of it, may determine what Comte calls a “Great Being.” (Haldane, 1954)

The concept of a “psychology of group mind” has been elucidated by LeBon (1908), who showed this mind to be primitive, impulsive, and unintelligent in comparison to the mind of any individual. McDougall (1928) also revealed the constructive aspects of group mind. Religious writers, especially process theology proponents, have discussed such phenomena as metaphysical realities. Social, political, and evolution theorists have all tried to come to grips with this aspect of human consciousness. This study is our contribution to this on-going exploration.

#### *Case Material*

Our study has been focused upon a series of temporary learning communities which we have convened, with colleagues from the Center for Studies of the Person. We have case material from over forty of these events, conducted world-wide over the last ten years.

These communities or "workshops" as we have referred to them have had differing formats: most have been residential, a few were not; some have been highly structured, most have not; they have been held with translation and in several languages; they have had as few as forty participants and as many as two-thousand; most have lasted from ten to seventeen days, although some were as brief as nine hours. They have been entitled "Person-Centered Approach Workshops," "Gestalt Encounters," "Cross-Cultural Encounters," "Community-Building Workshops," "Celebrations," and "Ciclos." Their convenors have at times been relatively unknown and, at other times, famous authorities. Some have been psychologists, some have not. The events have been held in over twenty different cultures including those governed by dictatorships and democracies.

The practical arrangements are made by a group of people, about eight. They are known as "staff" or "facilitators," in accordance with convention, but once the program gets under way they function in the same manner as any other member. More will be said about this later.

In the most common situation there would be a group of about 150 educated people with different temperaments and diverse interests, assembled without daily time restrictions, without planned topics to discuss, without scheduled activities. In its (typically) two-week existence this collective lives many significant moments.

If looked at through Zinker's "developmental lens" (Zinker, 1980), the collective passes through the complete group-sensation, group-awareness, group-energy mobilization, group-contact, group-resolution, group-withdrawal spiral many times. At first, this may be disjointed, "staticky," chaotic, finishing business—if at all—in a clumsy, graceless, manner. Later it may become superbly artful, intense, harmonious; the people experiencing an organismic, synchronized resolution and satisfaction.

The group, in its short life, confronts many of the perennial concerns of civilized persons. It faces problems of power, discovery and distribution of resources, violence, competition, sexuality, madness, health care, education, freedom, leisure, loneliness, poverty, security, etc., as it develops methods for self-governance, communication, and fulfillment of human needs. Briefly, it becomes close to being what Paul Goodman has called a "natural organization." (Goodman, 1962)

"Natural" does not of course imply only tranquil. It is not always a pleasant place to be. Sometimes there is senseless aggressivity. The group behaves like an unruly mob or crowd. It can make unfair judgements and cause pain to its members. Simple decisions may elude the group for hours or even days and members, out of frustration and exhaustion, will settle for less than satisfactory solutions. But, at times, the collective achieves levels of constructive, humane action far beyond the reach of any individual. With exquisite delicacy it teases, tickles, and tugs out the dimensions and contours of some issue confronting the community. A process is devised whereby the emotions, opinions, feelings and intuitions of every person who wishes to be heard, can be incorporated into a discussion that leads eventually to a creative solution which satisfies the needs of the individuals and the collective. A collective seems to be capable of *learning*, of progress from an infantile, impulsive, incompetence to a graceful, intelligent wisdom.

It is the potential of groupings to achieve a capacity to resolve complex and,

to the individual, seemingly intractable problems, which excites us. We suspect that within the functioning of the "wise group" may exist knowledge of human possibilities which we have yet to deliberately tap. These capacities are exactly the kind of "group competence" necessary to solve the problems we face.

*Evolution of Consciousness in the "Group Mind"*

Before any decision has been made to convene a workshop no group exists. All the potential participants are unconnected to each other and are part of other groups. The workshop as yet has no consciousness. Its "existence" comes about when the convenors begin to plan, to discuss this to-be-in-the-future community. Brochures are written; locale, dates, and such details first take form within the convenor group. Once announcements are received and decisions made to attend, the group has begun to take on a loosely formed existence.

This is not merely a metaphoric existence. In telephone conversations, letters, and other meetings people speak about "the group." What kind of a group will it be? How will it be housed? Is it to be international? Is it an "old group?" Are some of the frequent preoccupations and conversational topics. Communication between parts of the community occurs: people plan ride-sharing and may dream about the group. The group is already having an effect on its widely dispersed parts. Stay-at-home family members notice that their loved one, in preparing to participate, is often "already gone," appearing changed, distracted and distant. Even before arriving at the designated gathering point, attention is already becoming concentrated: reviewing one's life, planning, hoping and anticipating what will occur in the new experience. The participant is no longer in ordinary consciousness, there has already occurred a slight shift in the direction of belonging to the new group. Speaking from the point of view of the collective we might say it is in a state of vague anticipation.

As the workshop officially gets underway the people are jostled by newness which touches the ordinarily protected boundaries of familiarity, habit, physical body, ideas, values, and ego. There is constant, varied, and unpredictable contact. The situation is chaotic, unexpected, and uncontrolled. Excitement continues to intensify and consciousness expands even further. Self-expression is deepened. There is a shift to feelings, to letting-go and to focusing on one person at a time. No one directs this. It cannot be "facilitated" to happen earlier. People report being caught up in this consciousness state.

A state similar to that of psychotherapy is common. People become intensely conscious of their inner symbolic world and may surrender everyday consciousness completely, entering deeply symbolic, dramatic worlds. They may talk to a dead parent, scream at demons, play with childhood friends, give birth to themselves, all regarded as totally ordinary and natural events in this state. The collective mind is now in a kind of "altered state" of personal drama.

It is important to mention here that many of the members of this collective have never seen this kind of activity before. Even so, by-standers—people who do not personally go through this kind of experience—easily understand the meaning of these events; they see what those "working" see. An on-looker may participate quite naturally in the drama of another and frequently learns what the other learns.

However, people who also witness these events but who are not identified with the group and do not participate in the group mind, such as conference staff or visitors, may find such behavior mystifying, frightening, or even ludicrous.\*

Consciousness is stretched, both individual and group, to a state of great expansion. Boundaries yield as themes of personal drama are played out, calling forth empathic resonance in those assembled; the group yields the mysteries of its nature. As each member restores vitality and vibrancy to his or her particularity, his or her own and the collective's identity become known. There is created what Paul Goodman (1962b) called a "face-to-face" community and we would say that the community itself also has a face. The entity of the group takes form and as consciousness expands the form changes.

This expansion (learning) of the group mind may be resisted in the same ways as individual expansion may. For example, external pressure or threat (as in one case when our Jesuit hosts reacted strongly against some of the dancing and sexuality) may provoke regression or rigidification of boundaries. Internal unresolved conflicts, incomplete awareness, avoidance, repression of minority voices, ignorance, even diet, can interrupt group contact.

In one workshop a chronic unfinished situation kept the group mind from reaching a fuller expansion. A decision about a possible boat excursion remained at a frustrated, power-impacted impasse for several days. A *de facto* decision was finally forced when about half the group left to take the trip. The consequences of this were disastrous for the tentatively formed coherence of the group, breaking as it did into excursioners (wild, exuberant, emotional) and stay-at-homes (meditative, silent, spiritual). The resulting explosive clash at the evening re-union of these factions generated more excitement than could be handled by the shrunken system in the short time it had left.

This, like many contrastingly happier moments, reminds us that impasse, tense immobility, resistance may also be a reflection of wisdom. In the previous example the opportunity to discover that wisdom was lost when the group broke faith with the present or actual nature of its own mind i.e. its impotence at resolving the impasse without disintegration. One could say that by the group's disregard for its own complex moment, instead of vitality being generated at a usable rate it burst forth at a level too high to be integratable in the process of expansion of consciousness. It spilled over into fighting, drama, and exaggerated emotionalism. It also happens, though, that impasse is respected, attention drawn to it so that its intrinsic meaning can be seen. This may result in a change of consciousness so great that it is often referred to as a "turning point," a "quantum leap," a "paradigm shift," by the people who participate.

When not resisted, or when the resistance has yielded its secrets, consciousness can expand so that there is an experience of oneness, where individual

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\*We remind the reader that although these observations are commonly found also in therapy groups, the activities to which we refer involve groups of 150 or so persons with no designated leader or organized interventions. Our interest in this article is not with leadership style or intervention but in the nature and range of group consciousness.

and group consciousness become unified, with a correspondence between individual and group mind.\* There is true meeting, an I-Thou encounter between group members. In this state of oneness dreams are shared, people may experience perceptions beyond the reach of ordinary senses, healing often occurs, the future is sometimes glimpsed. In short, many of the phenomena referred to as "psychic" or "transpersonal" often appear.

This integral group mind, now experienced by the individuals, expresses itself through no pre-established or predictable form. The group may be distinctly unpleasant, it may be quite stupid, it may be toxic, it may be nourishing, it may be capable of acts of supreme intellectual achievements or may be religious. What form it takes is dependent upon, but probably not predictable on the basis of, both intrinsic and extrinsic qualities and challenges. A group of Brazilian farmers, for example, becomes a cooperative, enterprising and capable of acting with a grasp of extremely subtle political realities. A group of ordinary citizens devises a psychologically enlightened therapeutic program for a troubled teenaged boy. A group of highly intellectual North Americans discovers intuition as a problem-solving tool and learns to conduct a complex sequence of daily business following feelings and internal rhythms.

#### *Isomorphism and Heteromorphism of Individual and Group Consciousness*

In the earlier stages of the workshop self-assertion may be the commonest mode. The individuals speak a great deal about "I," dispute issues of power, autonomy and meeting of personal needs. Competition, voracity, rigidity of ego boundaries and individualism are figural. The group itself may also be in a self-assertive mode, its boundary well delineated. A stranger or a tape-recorder may be seen as a threat; so may "society" or another group housed at the same facility. Individuals make great efforts to be clear on differences between "I" and "You," and relations with outside groups are dealt with on the basis of "Us" and "Them." We can describe this state as being *isomorphic*, where individual and group are in the same mode.

There can also be a *heteromorphic*, self-transcendent/self-assertive state where individual consciousness surrenders or merges into the group, and the group itself is self-assertive. At these times it is common to hear declarations of surrender to "the flow," to another person (love affairs are common), to an idea, to a charismatic leader or ideology. The group itself may become supremely self-assertive at the same time. This is a state where the group may be seen as extremely closed, confluent, even cultish. Visiting family members may be perplexed about the contradiction between the "openness" and "unconditional love" expressed by individuals who seem to be in a genuinely loving and accepting state, and the fact that at the same time they themselves feel unwelcome, alien and out of place as they try to make contact with the group. It is as if the tendency to self-transcendence of the individuals is used to fortify the identity of the collective. The self-assertiveness of

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\*We find Arthur Koestler's treatment of the relationship between the individual and the group, especially relevant to these ideas. (Koestler, 1978)

such groups as armies, religious groups, political movements and so on may similarly exploit the natural tendency of individual members to enter self-transcendent consciousness within sharply defined group boundaries.

Another heteromorphic configuration is where individuals are self-assertive and the group is integrative. In such groups there may be outstanding individual achievements, a strong sense of freedom of choice, a high degree of self-awareness, autonomy and personal power, yet the group is easily entered, is loosely defined. There is little loyalty, the group is easily disrupted and can suffer general malaise. It is vulnerable to becoming moribund on the one hand, or to explosive fragmentation on the other. It is an "I do my thing, you do yours," situation.

The most constructive isomorphic state is where the individuals are experiencing an integrative, expanding consciousness, and so is the group. In this state it seems that the individual achieves an integration with all of his or her own inner world. Individuals achieve integration with the other group members and with the collective mind. The collective mind is also integrated within itself and with the larger world of which it is a part. In these moments of isomorphic integration the individual and the group gains access to a vastness of possibilities which is of cosmic proportions.

The individuals do not lose their identity to the group, they integrate the "I" with the "We." They become *spontaneous* rather than autonomous, functioning in what has been described as "middle mode" of consciousness:

The middle mode of spontaneity does not have the luxury of this freedom, nor the feeling of security of knowing what and where one is and being able to engage or not: one *is* engaged and carried along, not in spite of oneself but beyond oneself.  
(Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, 1951)

Neither does the group lose its identity, but integrates it with the larger whole. The group mind actualizes its intrinsic learning potential. It becomes *wise*.

#### *Factors Associated with Group Learning*

At this point we are not able to formulate in specific behavioral terms what brings about a change from one state to another in these large experimental groups. We are also mindful of the inappropriateness of reductionistic science being applied to human affairs.\* Our present theory-making attempts are therefore aimed at understanding rather than defining, explaining or managing these events. We suspect that much of what happens reflects some intrinsic aspect of the nature of persons and their groupings and that all attempts to formalize and intervene may be as

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\*To demonstrate the enormity of the problem of offering a formal account of the interrelations in these complex systems, we need only remember the analogous situation in physics. A gravitational field is, like a community, a force created by the objects under its influence. A complete description of what happens when only three bodies interact eludes us. Group consciousness is similarly a force or phenomenon created by beings under its influence. So far, holistic or other non-reductionistic epistemologies have yet to come to grips with even *dyadic* human encounters.

fruitless as trying to design a zipper for a chrysalis.

What seems to be important are simple, non-formalizable but nevertheless important attitudes like good-will, respect, humility, curiosity. A willingness to consider another view point which is different from one's own perception can create a win-win solution from the pooling of divergent ideas and feelings. What follows then are not "laws" of group processes, nor are they formulae for interventions to be applied by those wishing to "facilitate" groups. They are, rather, intended as what they are, speculations, scents of learning, of some of the factors contributing to the development of intelligent group consciousness.

*Flexible Central Control*

The workshop is first conceived and convened by a subgroup (in a self-assertive mode) which is referred to, and refers to itself, as the "staff." The participants expect this group, because of previous life experiences, to function as a "faculty" or as leaders. The staff group is seen and is referred to as an entity. For a period of time there is some expectation that it will offer direction, take control as an institutionalized authority. The staff's unwillingness to assume this function of centralized control comes not from an ideological position nor is it intended as a manipulative device. Indeed, during the initial stages of design, planning and convening, the staff group readily functions as a central control group. Such preparatory procedures, where the ends are specific and well defined, are accomplished more efficiently when centrally controlled. Once underway, however, the problems facing the group change. Problems and goals are no longer so clear-cut. There is no one person or one group that can decide what the ends are. Issues are complex beyond anyone's capacity to codify or even articulate without the help of the whole. The community or the large group resembles the "real world," with its interlocking, interpenetrating fields of rights, interests, and influences.

Attempts to control, manage, govern, teach, or facilitate, at this point, seem to cause more problems (in resistance, dependency, counter-dependency: all the familiar leader-originated elements) than they solve. The anarchic hypothesis of Paul Goodman that

forceful, graceful, and intelligent behavior occurs only when there is uncoerced and direct response to the environment, that in most human affairs more harm than good results from compulsion, top-down direction, bureaucratic planning, pre-ordained curricula, jails, conscription. (Goodman, 1966)

is supported in these multidimensional groups.

By decentralizing as soon as the convening task is accomplished, the staff group dissolves and its members begin to function as individuals. The particularity of each member becomes visible and eventually the group "staff" ceases to exist both in function and in the perception of the members of the larger group. It is in the interests of the whole to decentralize control and for the convenors to act as individuals only. Their power to influence now comes from whatever natural authority they have and ceases to be supported by institutional or transferred power. (Lisboa da Fonseca, 1982) They undergo a transformation which Brazilian educator Paulo



Freire has referred to as "class suicide" to be reborn as persons, "free amongst the free." (Freire, 1981)

This process is not by any means without difficulties. Both on the part of the convenors and of the participants, human beings all, there are moments when the dissolution is challenged and resisted. It is in the painstaking and frequently uncomfortable process of encountering and recognizing such difficulties that the group begins to discover itself.

The group now embarks upon a process of independent initiatives which is constantly regulated by similar (often synergistic) initiatives between members. It is what Goodman (1962c) calls "natural coercion," Polanyi (1951) calls "polycentricity," Habermas (1971) calls an "ideal speech situation" and, perhaps, it is what Kitzler (1980) means by "contribution without prejudice."

### *Loosening Boundaries*

By leaving behind familiar patterns which structure ordinary consciousness and entering a field with minimum institutional structure, familiar ego boundaries can be expanded. Each person is challenged and supported to behave more spontaneously than usual, individual expression is liberated. While not every person is accepted by every other, the principle of pluralism and the right to be different is generally respected. By following more and more their direct experiential references in the context of community life, and by not withdrawing from the collective experience, members of the group learn how to learn in new and unexpected ways.

### *Challenging the Obvious*

The fundamental values of the workshop are constantly questioned. New values are discovered, put into practice and then also challenged again. Little passes without question. Sometimes familiar conventions are turned on their heads. Sociability may be taken as "superficiality," being thoughtful and polite may be regarded as "insulting," speaking up in support of another may be seen as a cultural "betrayal."

By challenging previously unquestioned assumptions, ordinarily "tacit dimensions" (Polanyi, 1966), a new culture is established, heightening awareness of previously hidden patterns or unknown principles. The group moves from knowledge of what it *was* to an awareness of what it *is* right here. This understanding itself yields in time, as new values are encountered with each changing situation. By examining its own impediments to free non-coercive meeting, new constructs are devised, *in situ*, to deal with events as they emerge.

### *Psychological Equilibrium and Growth*

If individuals in the group go through highly charged experiences they will be supported to fully express themselves. They will be encouraged to do whatever they need to do to release their tension into appropriate action. The effect of this on the group consciousness may vary. There are occasions when an individual cathartic ex-

plosion, while immensely satisfying for the person involved, results in a narrowed consciousness and a state of tension in the group. At these moments the group may be in a state of as yet undefined emergency. There is a need to somehow integrate what has just happened to one individual within the group, into the collective, thereby expanding the group consciousness. The community has many alternatives by which to achieve this once its need becomes recognized.

Moving attention to another individual provoked by the situation may accomplish this integration. More often than not though it only throws the collective even further into tension. Dance, ritual, play, rest, food, may all have an integrative function but may instead intensify tension even further. What seems to favor achievement of group integration and growth are the moments when the group can define the contours of its emergent need and invent action which results in expansion of collective consciousness and growth in collective possibilities.

The ever present danger in such situations is that the group will respond to its tension attempting to restore some kind of equilibrium before becoming sufficiently aware of the nature of its predicament. The group may move impulsively into some explosive blow-off of energy, or it may try to side-step the discomfort of confusion by abruptly taking a decision, voting, breaking into smaller groupings, electing a leader, *etc.* The outcome may be a reduction in tension and may bring temporary relief but does not result in the realization of the fullness of possibility inherent in the situation. Psychological growth of the collective requires of its participants the ability to stay with the complexities and contradictions long enough that the full dimensions of the predicament of the whole can be comprehended and fulfilled.

#### *Respect for Autonomy and Participation*

Each person must be assertive in the battle for sensible and constructive group action, insisting on being a part of a community and not a herd. Each person's feelings must be respected and used in the construction of a solution to a problem facing the whole. In this way, decisions give respect to each individual, even the one who is "out of step," at the same time respecting the integration of the whole. Even though it is an aspect of human nature to wish to move towards transcendence of self, it is, on the subjective level, often in the midst of fiercely exaggerated individuality, when people are expressing their uniqueness, that a unity—not sameness—is perceived.

If everyone's voice is fully contributed, fully heard and honored, knowledge extracted from it, and action allowed to emerge from this field, then each person's signature will appear in the collaborative product. The group now has the freedom to constantly adjust and shift itself to a changing universe to become what this group, or any other has never been before. The group expands outwards into spontaneity.

#### *Intellect and Intuition*

Just as superior individuals can balance intuitive and analytical ways of knowing, so must the group use the contributions of its "intuitives" or poets and its

"analysts" or scientists in striving for superior decisions and understandings. Images, dreams, metaphors, are brought by different members into interaction and interplay with the thoughts, ideas, and opinions offered by others. A "living art" of intuitive expression is invoked along with a "living science" of critical judgement and intelligence to form a holistic perception and insight.

For the group to function with wisdom it is probably not important whether or not its "society" is composed of the separate roles of "poet" and "scientist" as long as the poet can recognize the rightness of a scientist's contribution and similarly the scientist, the poet's. Such an interactional process at the group level will stretch individual "poets" into science and open up "scientists" to the richness of their intuition.

### *Surrender of Crystallized Patterns*

We have spoken of exaggerated autonomy and self-expression resulting in contacting the altruistic, self-transcendent aspect of our dual nature. When a black North American man in one workshop in Europe, for example, spontaneously and totally expresses his rage and anguish about apartheid to the white man from South Africa across the room from him, everyone participates in the act. We partake of the feeling; we are impotent; but we are one. When the other responds, just as authentically, expressing the depth of his own frustration and loneliness as a lawyer who is seen with suspicion by both whites and non-whites in his homeland because he represents people who challenge pass-laws, there occurs a sudden shift. Separateness melts as mutual comprehension takes the place of antagonism. Both have found an ally and have deepened their grasp of the tragedy they are both a party to. So has the group.

Within the workshop the person is lifted out of his or her usual provincialism in ways of viewing problems. Stereotypic responses can be recognized and revitalized or set aside in favor of spontaneous responses to the wider dimensions of the actual setting. This is a process of surrender.

By, often painfully, delineating, challenging and surrendering rigid positions, new possibilities can be created. Embedded in previous stereotypic patterns of identities, nationalities, affiliations, classes, professions, etc. are hidden the creativity, sensitivity, vigor, and energy that went into their formation.

This surrender is to some larger system, some larger configuration. It is not, when it occurs in a group which supports and cherishes autonomy and self-expression, mindless resignation of self and an abdication of autonomy. Rather, it requires that the person bring his or her fullness, however it is at that moment, to the service of some larger entity. This capacity to surrender fixed individual and partisan patterns in favor of a more fluid and spontaneous interplay of autonomous yet "globally aware" persons seems to be a crucial factor associated with the achievement of more subtle levels of consciousness. The different workshops, varying a great deal in the extent to which this has occurred, reflect the difficulty of this process.

*Faith*

Beyond the behavioral and structural factors we have discussed which affect the potential for creation of conscious groups, there is also an attitudinal posture which may be fundamental. It is a trusting that allows people to endure difficult periods as they search together for a collective wisdom and direction. This trust may be spoken of in different ways ranging from frankly religious belief in God or gods to modern scientific affirmations of the existence of natural laws which can be counted upon. But, whatever the language, this attitude relies on all living things, like the group, having a tendency to evolve from chaos towards a more complex ordered whole.

On the individual level this may be experienced as a trust in the worthwhileness and meaning in shared commitment. As Goodman (1962d) puts it:

Faith is animal faith as Santayana said, but it is also grounds for poetry, according to philosophy, in the stream of history. It is humane. A man has faith that if he is well intentioned, rational, not fanatical, he is not alone, there is a human community that is thinking the same thoughts as himself and his friends, and ready to act in concert.

One of our colleagues in this work, Carl Rogers, has based his approach to psychotherapy on faith in a push towards healing, wholeness, and self-transcendence present in persons. The whole heuristic program of phenomenological/existential psychotherapy is similarly founded on a faith that harmony, meaning and growth are inherent possibilities of mind. It is founded on the kind of attitude Eric Fromm (1968) describes as

a conviction about the not yet proven, the knowledge of the real possibility, the awareness of pregnancy. Faith is rational when it refers to the real but yet unborn. Faith like hope, is not a prediction of the *future*, it is the vision of the present in a state of pregnancy.

This pregnancy, this inherent though perhaps hidden direction, in the processes of either the individual or group can be sensed by those alerted to its presence. They may not always believe in it, they may even lose hope, but it is worth the trouble for them to look for what is being born out of their struggle.

*Final Notes*

We know that these formulations and speculations are vague and also that the factors we describe are not unknown. Since we began our study we have encountered almost a century of attention to these phenomena in the behavioral sciences (and a good deal longer than that in literature and religion). What we have discovered has been discovered before in different contexts and perhaps even understood more completely. In writing about the roots of Russian society Nikolas Vakar (1962) describes such a group:

in the communal organization of the village there was an expression of natural equality, togetherness, unselfishness,

cooperativeness. In the village council each man counted for one, no matter who he was. No chairman directed the proceedings. The common interest was commonly administered in behalf of all. . . In the village as in the household all decisions had to be unanimous.

As to the significance of cultivating groups which function in this way Rene Dubos (1981) warns,

the welfare of humankind may well depend upon our ability to create the equivalent of the tribal unity that existed at the beginning of the human adventure while continuing to nurture the individual diversity necessary for the further development of civilization.

Most approaches to human improvement either focus on purely individual dimensions of growth while paying little more than lip-service to the greater whole or, ignore the individual person in favor of the collective, the mass or the community.

Understanding the individual has not been a good guide to understanding the group, neither has analysis of group processes been of much help in understanding the nature of persons. To see the particular person as a purposive agent and at the same time a part of a larger social entity is not contradictory but is realistic. And it is urgent. Robert Ornstein (1976) urges:

We cannot wait for biological evolution or political programs, or even for new ideas. What is needed is a shift in mode of consciousness by many people away from ego-centric individual forms toward one geared more to overall relationships between entities. Such an "emergent" consciousness could convey a more comprehensive perspective of life and action of an individual and of a group, as well as relationship among seemingly disparate activities and systems.

We have come to see these workshops not principally as occasions for personal-growth, psychotherapy, education, healing, although they may achieve all of these for individual members. More significantly they can be opportunities for people to experience and develop the capacities that may be crucial for our evolution and survival. The Aikido master can, with an almost effortless nudge, persuade a much larger opponent to change course. It does not take brute strength, it takes the learnable capacity to concentrate and to align oneself to a larger system which includes the opponent. The skillful psychotherapist appears to be able to bring about what to the uninitiated are miracles, with one intervention. This doesn't take magic powers either. It takes discipline and a similarly learnable skill of sensing and trusting the hidden patterns and directions, and bringing one's own fullness to the service of the emergent purposes of that whole. What seems like super-human powers may be no more than well developed sensitivity and response to larger patterns of existence.

In events such as the ones we have described, every member is offered the opportunity to discover the capacities needed to participate in, to facilitate, the creation of wise groups. Within groups members can be supported to live authentically and the group itself can be conscious and wise in its contribution to its members and to

the larger group of the planetary community. We suggest that deepening our understanding of the conditions which favor such development and those which impede it may offer some grounds for optimism in an increasingly pessimistic society.

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