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ON THE PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

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Coat

WHEN TWO ARE TOGETHER, YOU HAVE A UNITY

John Keith Wood

"...Decoud caught himself entertaining a doubt of his own individuality. It had merged into the world of cloud and water, of natural forces and forms of nature. In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part." Joseph Conrad

ANOTHER FORUM

Last summer, following the Royal Wedding, hundreds of persons gathered for a forum in the Great Hall of City University, London. They came from some thirty nations to attend the First Assembly of the Fourth World, a conference of

"...small nations, groups working for their autonomy and independence at all levels from the neighborhood to the nation...which are struggling against the giantism of the institutions of today's mass societies for a human-scale and non-centralized, multi-cellular, power-dispersed world order." (1)

Papers were invited from participants and 255 were collected; bigshots like Ivan Illich, Helen Caldicott, Ursula Le Guin, Gary Snyder were invited speakers; the assembly broke down into special interest groups like "Arab/Israel," "Decolonizing the Great Empires" "Women and the Fourth World," etc.; there were films, slide shows, celebrations, and Sufi dancing. The event, from descriptions, was not unlike a "person-centered workshop." Certainly it was as serious and ambitious as the First International Forum on the Person-Centered Approach.

When the Fourth World conferees brought their small group findings back to the large group a dispute broke out over whether to vote, or insist on a consensual agreement, on key issues. After an hour of haggling someone asked for "a show of hands (but not a vote, he was careful to add) on whether voting on the proposals was in order". A group favoring consensus withdrew from the proceedings by forming a circle of hands in the center of the assembly and quietly chanting, "Om."

"In short order," free-lance write O'Conner observers, "comic-opera warfare erupted on the floor of the assembly. The Celts were angrier than ever, the Om was louder than ever, and tempers continued to rise... As the minutes passed, more and more people began filtering out of the hall. The worst moment came when the Latvian representative...tried to intervene on the part of the Celts, and was repeatedly interrupted by an Englishman who proposed that everyone stop talking and simply hug one another... Thus the First Assembly of the Fourth World ended. Nothing was decided, nothing was declared, and nothing, in fact, was done. Except for the circle of chanting handholders, every group

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eventually broke down into its smallest possible components - single individuals, who gave up in either disgust or bemusement and walked out of the room."

Allowing for bias and certain blindspots in the perception of the reporter, this description of despair is very familiar in the course of large group events - especially when they involve idealistic people, like those who follow person-centered philosophies. Whenever a large group of people with strong opinions gather to express their feelings there is the risk of chaos and disruption of the proceedings. The chaos can be a phase along the way to an amiable conclusion, or it may be the conclusion of the meeting.

LARGE GROUPS

No matter how cleverly planned the speech, or how thoughtfully organized the demonstration panel, or how masterfully conceived the unfolding of events for a workshop, the large group can, and often does, destroy every systematization. Destruction is definitely an aspect of the nature of large groupings - a nature which touches and fascinates any of us. As Neil Smelser observes, we stand

"amused by the foibles of the craze, aghast at the cruelties of the riot, and inspired by the fervor of revolution." (2)

Most of what social scientists and social observers have written about the behavior of large groups is devoted to the crowd or mob phenomenon. Large groups in such instances are aware of only radical emotion, simplistic beliefs, and are best at expressing aggressive tendencies. William McDougall sums up the crowd as

"excessively emotional, impulsive, violent, fickle, inconsistent, irresolute and extreme in action, displaying only the coarser emotions and the less refined sentiments; extremely suggestible, careless in deliberations, hasty in judgement, incapable of any but the simpler and imperfect forms or reasoning; easily swayed and led, lacking in self-consciousness, devoid of self-respect and of sense of responsibility, and apt to be carried away by the consciousness of its own force. Hence its behavior is like that of an unruly child or an untutored passionate savage...and in worse cases it is that of a wild beast rather than like that of human beings." (3)

At this point many readers may object to portraying the group, as McDougall does, as if it were one body, like a person, instead of an aggregate of individual persons with independent minds. This objection is quite understandable. Politics, business, science, even sociology, in North America is rooted in individualism. We are not groups, we are taught, we are individual persons.

Sixty years ago, in a now familiar argument, Floyd Allport denounced the "group fallacy" in American sociology. He preferred to define the work of sociology as describing

"collectivities of social behavior and social change resulting from

it in terms of the group, and to explain these phenomena in terms of the individual." (4)

Allport tried to establish the "true origin" of social organization in the psychology of the individual and, he claimed, that substituting the group as a whole, as an explanation, in place of the individuals in the group is a fallacy. His chief complaint with writers who used the group metaphor was that "it leads us away from the discovery of true causation which lies, not in groups, but in persons."

True causation, however, in this vast and mysterious universe, is rarely discovered and known with certainty. The notion of billions of individual atoms which make up a person may predict his or her behavior, but does this activity make the actions of the person any more understandable in a social context? Psychological phenomena of the individual: greed, lust, desire, hunger, love - doubtless move the person to activity with others, yet the uncanny outcomes of the collectivity are interesting, and even vital to understand, as a separate phenomenon.

Most psychological writers have been unwilling to grant sovereignty to the individualistic viewpoint. Even Sigmund Freud, known for his individualism, respected the influence of the whole.

"As regards intellectual work", he wrote, "it remains a fact, indeed, that great decisions in the realm of thought and momentous discoveries and solutions of problems are only possible to an individual working in solitude. But even the group mind is capable of creative genius in the field of intelligence, as is shown above all by language itself, as well as by folk-song, folklore and the like. It remains an open question moreover, how much the individual thinker or writer owes to the stimulation of the group in which he lives and whether he does more than perfect a mental work in which the others have had a simultaneous share." (5)

It has not gone unnoticed that there is an amount of stupidity, impulsivity, and cruelty, equal to that found in the group, to be found in the lone individual. Emory Bogardes, responding to Allport's essay, has pointed out that there is also an "individual fallacy." He writes,

"The 'individual' is a social myth, except as he is a member of a 'group.' As a result of intersocial stimulation he moves up the biological level. The interstimulation that occurs between him and members of the group, not as mere individuals but as persons, explains him more than any other method or approach can do... He is more group-made than individual-made." (6)

The war between "individual" and "group" rages on. But I find both merit and limitations in each viewpoint, in certain situations, at certain times. I find it convenient (and will try to convince you of this later in the paper) to regard "individual" and "group" as two aspects of the same phenomenon. For now, I would like to put forth more vigorously the aspect of "group" and to use the metaphor of "group mind" in the sense of a consciousness of the whole - shared by the individual minds - and which is capable of being organized

into a coherent awareness of the activity of the group. The whole is not something overshadowing the parts composing it, it is the parts in union with one another, consisting of coherent functions performed by that intimacy, and is capable of self-awareness. This consciousness is not separate from the individual minds which make up the whole. "Individual minds," writes McDougall,

"which enter into the structure of the group mind at any moment of its life do not construct it; rather, as they come to reflective self-consciousness, they find themselves already members of the system, moulded by it, sharing in its activities, influenced by it at every moment in every thought and feeling and action in ways which they can neither fully understand nor escape from, struggle as they may to free themselves from its infinitely subtle and multitudinous forces."

The group mind, through these multitudinous forces, appears, at times, to have control over the individual member. "Isolated," warns Gustave LeBon,

"he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd he is a barbarian - that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by the words and images - which would be entirely without action on each of the isolated individuals composing the crowd - and to be induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests and his best-known habits. An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will."

"It is for this reason," concludes Le Bon, "that juries are seen to deliver verdicts of which each individual juror would disapprove, that parliamentary assemblies adopt laws and measures of which each of their members would disapprove in his own person." (7)

Everett Martin, noting the hypnotic qualities of the crowd, its generality, abstractness, superficiality, and lack of humor-especially about itself and its sacred mission - goes as far as to say that

"A crowd is a device for indulging ourselves in a kind of temporary insanity by all going crazy together." (8)

SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

Large groups not only impress the lone individual but also are seen to have a strange (and often negative) power over him or her. The group, according to Herbert Blumer,

"conveys a sense of 'transcending power' which serves to support, reinforce, influence, inhibit, or suppress the individual participant in his activity." (9)

Arthur Koestler has argued that the ignorant, selfish, and often cruel, activities of the large group are created by the altruism - or self-

transcendent aspect - which is a part of the nature of its individual members. A self-transcending urge within participants find its expression in the group's obsessional pursuits of part-truth, taken as if it were the whole truth.

"The continuous disasters in man's history," he writes, "are due to his excessive capacity and urge to become identified with a tribe, nation, church, or cause, and to espouse its credo uncritically and enthusiastically, even if its tenets are contrary to reason.. Throughout human history, the ravages caused by excesses of individual self-assertion are quantitatively negligible compared to the numbers slain ad majorem gloriam out of a self-transcending devotion to flag, a leader, a religious faith or political conviction. Man has always been prepared to not only kill, but also die for good, bad, or completely hare-brained causes." (10)

Perhaps I am going too far in bringing in the voices of other writers and that you are not receiving enough of "me" in this essay. I am risking your loss of interest for two reasons. First, many of the arguments, for and against groups, have already been stated many times by strong and articulate writers. Their words offer, I think, an historical foundation for the issues I wish to raise here and points toward the perennial nature of these issues. Second, I wish to establish that an argument over which one is superior - the individual or group? - is senseless in arriving at new knowledge. It is an acknowledged fact that large groups often act in ignorant, destructive, and cruel ways which are quite at odds with the sensible individuals making up the group. Also, there is a self-transcending aspect to the nature of the individual person which can express itself reprehensibly in his or her participation in a large group. And I wish to say one more thing: this self-transcendence is not limited to individuals who make up destructive groups and constructive social activities as well. Even Gustave Le Bon, one of the crowd's leading critics admits,

"If, then, crowds often abandon themselves to low instincts, they also set the example at times of acts of lofty morality. If disinterestedness, resignation, and absolute devotion to a real or chimerical ideal are moral virtues, it may be said that crowds often possess these virtues to a degree rarely attained by the wisest philosophers... We should not complain too much that crowds are more especially guided by unconscious considerations and are not given to reasoning. Had they, in certain cases, reasoned and consulted their immediate interests, it is possible that no civilization would have grown up on our planet, and humanity would have had no history."

So here we have it: The large gathering of self-transcendent individuals may act coherently with great strength (either destructively or constructively) but largely without conscious awareness of its actions. Is it possible that large groups can also act consciously and in ways which are congruent with the desires of individual participants?

EASY SOLUTIONS

"He savored them to such an extent that I doubt that he would even accept liberty if he could not have his slogans along with it."
Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis

Should this article ever go to press, it is very likely that I will scratch out this section. What I have to say here I pass through quickly and freely, not certain that it is part of the main thesis of the paper.

The fact that benefit can be realized by the coherent action of a large group - even acting "unconsciously" - encourages those who would worship collectivism. The solution they find for social life is to allow only self-transcendence, discouraging any individual expression, and controlling the avenues of group activity to assure "constructiveness."

This is the approach of the socialist countries: cultivating individual thought which places the collective over the individual. Chinese thought reform, for example, is said to aim at motivating group members to devote themselves to broad organizational goals without concern for individual advancement or comfort. The approach is hardly free of problems. These countries reportedly suffer from, not only material deprivations but also, a lack of individual freedom and initiative.

On the other hand,

"Against the vision of group relationships as a force which liberates creativity and individual power", writes William Schwartz, "there grows the fear of 'group think' and the 'organization man'; and against the conviction that the group is an instrument for learning and change, there appears the fear that the changes are for the worst, toward the least common denominator, trampling on talent and individual creativity in the exalted name of group product." (11)

These, of course, are reasonable fears. As we have seen, the self-transcendent nature of collected persons can become a fanatically oppressive force. So, western societies have turned to individualistic as the solutions to threats to human dignity and the aggression of the collective mind.

The glorification of the individual is, and always has been, widely practiced in human nature. Individual accomplishments in every arena of human endeavor - especially in the west - are recorded and compared, held up as the standard which other individuals from future generations must exceed. In business, politics, science, medicine, education, athletics, art, music, games of chance, millions fail to achieve the goal of bettering these records; a few succeed and these few persons reach fame and justify the notion of "individual."

The USA, perhaps more than any other group, has built a strong nation on the basis of individualism. Individual strength, cunning, courage, is admired in every field. Though a team may actually accomplish the significant task - which no individual could possibly do alone - individuals are singled out as the stars. In America, though "organized" crime is abhorred, the clever individual con "artist" is often admired, especially if the thief steals from large, faceless groups.

But, of course, this individualistic approach works no better than the collectivistic one: injustice, suffering, and the oppression of creativity abound when the individual is worshiped, just as when the collective is worshiped.

Perhaps, as some have suggested, evolution advances from a fermentation of excessive ideas and thoughts and the distillation of principles. One easily, observers, however, the destructiveness of the process in its intermediate stages, when principles are taken out of the context of their successes and applied blindly to every social problem. Unquestioned authority - ascribed to the group - leads to the oppression of the individual and a loss of creativity from the collective; irresponsible individual power stifles the collective's altruism and oppresses individual creativity. The alignment of nations behind these part-truths results in a grotesque and inefficient world order.

It should be clear that my sympathies are not with communism, socialism, or any collectivism, nor are they with capitalism, individualism, or any of its forms. I am not working toward the justification of any system here. My aim is towards understanding and sensibleness in individual and group actions which benefit life on the planet.

We could say that in the human being there is a particularness that is striving for wholeness and there is a wholeness that wishes to express its particularity. If I feel myself an individual, I simultaneously relate this individualness to a greater whole. If I feel myself as part of something, I wish to express my individuality, my unique contribution. So, no system which advocates only an aspect of human nature can bring human fulfillment or the development of human capacities to their fullest. There will always be striving for self-assertiveness and self-transcendence.

And we see hints of shifting cultural emphases in the great nations. In China, built on collectiveness, we see signs of the liberation of individual initiative and expression. In America, founded on individualism, we see signs of a yearning for community. Daniel Yankelovich describes the American tendency as an evolution

"toward a new ethic of commitment. The word 'commitment' shifts the axis away from the self (either self-denial or self-fulfillment) toward connectedness with the world...a longing for connectedness, commitment and creative expression - a poignant yearning to elevate the sacred and the expressive side of life and diminish the impersonal, instrumental side." (12)

Perhaps the planet can no longer tolerate the luxury of either individual-oriented perspectives or group-oriented view-points. Perhaps we are ready for individuals with finely tuned group-consciousness and groups which respect and cherish their individual members.

GROUPS HOLD OUR DESTINY

By suppressing individuality or by ignoring the effects of collective action and retreating into individualism, either way, does not nullify the effect of groups on our lives. A trend toward some new perspective on group life may

not be simply an interesting social observation - its cultivation may be a necessity. Our ability to deal with the group-made problems in east and west may decide the planet's fate.

Groups hold our destiny in their hands. Pollution is perhaps the most illustrative example, at the present time, of this controlling and at the same time destructive capacity. Air pollution is produced chiefly by individual automobiles (and factories). The hazard caused by one automobile or one individual's production is not significant. But, when taken together, in the millions, all over the planet, a very serious problem results - both for the immediate health problems of the inhabitants and for the future environment of the globe.

The problem is a group phenomenon. Though individuals are producing pollution, no independent individual action can bring a stop to it. If one person refuses, for example, to drive an automobile, this would have practically no effect. A significant number must stop at once. The group must act coherently. Yet, any group is hampered by the uncooperation, even sabotage of individuals who are caught in a web of emotional and economical factors preventing their voluntary control of the danger.

How can each person's rights be respected while at the same time finding a new perspective from which to take corrective action? In this kind of crisis it would help to have a group which could "think" - a heterogeneous collection of individuals perhaps, but with a unified goal, a collection which could recognize its coherent behavior, and be able to effect that behavior in a conscious manner.

A collective mind could be said to exist for the planet, but it is formed with characteristics very different from the individuals composing it. It is ruling the quality of the atmosphere, the natural resources, and the quality of life on the planet very differently from the way the individuals say they wish. The thoughts, sentiments, opinions of this vast, restless, collective have formed into a "movement", a relentless direction, and the personalities of the individual persons has ceased to have an influence.

No one is responsible, no one group is responsible, for the planet and its well-being at the present time. In fact, it is as if everyone thought the other were taking care of it, so they could do as they please. In the many "autonomous" nations, struggling for power, status, wealth, and advantage over one another, we have the equivalent of roaming crowds.

Though individuals certainly behave both brilliantly and imbecilically, creatively and destructively, selfishly and altruistically, it is not individual actions (which are only "good" or "bad" depending on the observer) which are such a problem: it is the collected effect of these actions. We must come to grips with the action of groups as well as individuals. Individual human beings do not wage wars, groups do. It is groups who are accelerating arms races; it is groups who are unable to check starvation. There is an abundance of wise and sensible individuals on the planet. Yet, individually, they seem to have very little ability to stem the proliferation of dangerous

weapons, pollution, and starvation.

PROBLEMATIQUE

The planet's natural resources: minerals, oil, forests, continue to be depleted at an alarming rate. Overpopulation and human inefficiencies tax the ability of the earth to produce adequate nutrients for the human species. Each day pollutants generated from our machines spoil the air and water supplies; multinational trade networks and international political relations criss-cross the globe in such complexity that already they are probably impossible to unravel; there is the constant threat of annihilation from super-weapons or from the waste spilling from our factories. In short, we may be approaching the limits of human negligence.

In a recent Club of Rome report, Botkin, Elmandjra, and Malitza, the report's authors, call attention to the "extreme alternatives" facing humanity.

"At the same time," they write, "an era of scientific and technological advancement has brought us unparalleled knowledge and power, we are witnessing the sudden emergence of a 'world problematique' - an enormous tangle of problems in sectors such as energy, population, and food which confront us with unexpected complexity. Unprecedented human fulfillment and ultimate catastrophe are both possible." (13)

But, it could be argued, every human era has shared a common belief that its members were living in a unparalleled time of history and facing special unmanageable difficulties. Humanity has often wrestled with what was believed to lead to ultimate catastrophe and yet survived. Almost every day another doomsday prediction goes by the boards.

And after all, crises often bring out the best in people. Individuals who otherwise share little in common cooperate willingly and enthusiastically to achieve a collective welfare - even enemies work together in some crises. In disasters the human spirit rises to the occasion; extraordinary feats of human courage, innovation, and creativity are brought to bear against both natural and humanmade destructiveness. In fact, often very important advancements in science, medicine, engineering, and even human relations, the arts, literature, have resulted from the "shock learning" brought about by radical necessity. Could we not, in the problems which face us presently, simply continue in our traditional ways and let any crisis which is boiling come out? Would we not be jolted into new solutions like in World War II?

Perhaps Nature, in its slow and inevitable way, will solve our problems. But, in this A-Bomb age the "shock" of a nuclear holocaust leaves little hope for advancement. Rather, it promises the total destruction of human life - perhaps all life on the planet. When the devices of total destruction are easy to produce and are potentially, if not already, in the hands of terrorist groups as well as older fanatical groups, like the major nations, we must find alternatives to deciding the complexities we face without a nuclear free-for-all.

What is new in our present time is not only that the consequences are more

grave than in the past, but that they are the result of human choices - and, many feel, also potentially subject to human control.

"We know," claims Jerome Frank, "how to conquer pestilence, starvation, over-population, poverty, and industrial poisons and to stop building more and more terrible instruments of destruction. We know what needs to be done, and even how to do it, but we cannot act on this knowledge." (14)

HUMAN GAP

It is not so much the existence of modern technology that presents problems, as it is the use of such technology. And even the most brilliant technical advancements will not bail us out of our predicament, if human abilities do not keep pace with technological possibilities. It is this distance between growing complexity and humanity's capacity to cope with it that is called the "human gap" and is targeted by many as the source of humankind's most urgent dilemma.

Horrorified by this human gap many have attacked our collective ineptitudes. Arthur Koestler, for example, calls the contrast between our unique technological achievements and our equally unique incompetence in social affairs a "pathology of our species." He adds, "We can control the motions of satellites orbiting distant planets, but cannot control the situation in Northern Ireland. Man can leave the earth and land on the moon, but cannot cross from East to West Berlin."

Rene Dubos thinks it would startle Mirabeau, who first coined the word "civilization," to learn that nowadays a society is generally regarded civilized if it has indoor toilets, heats and cools its buildings with electricity, and has an excess of TV's, automobiles, telephones, and weapons.

"Gentle behavior," writes Dubos, "humane laws, limitations on war, a high level of purpose and conduct... are barely included in the criteria associated with the word 'civilization.' Arts and literature are still emphasized, but more for their entertainment value than as contributions to civility." (15)

It is not to say that anyone wishes it this way. Millions of well-intentioned individual ideas and actions have gone into creating a miserable situation. From the point of view of world order and prosperity, Aurelio Peccei, the Club of Rome's president, describes humankind's "progress" as a process perhaps

"so hectic and haphazard that world populations are utterly out of step with the waves of change it causes for better or worse. The idea implicit in this question is that, though highly advanced in other ways, modern men and women are as yet unable to grasp fully the meaning and consequences of what they are doing. Failing to understand the mutations they bring about in the natural environment and their own condition, they come to be increasingly at odds with the real world. This is the human gap - already large and dangerous, and yet destined almost inevitably to get

much wider".

Can the present trends be curbed and human capacities increased before a tragic fate overtakes humanity and perhaps all life on the planet? In studying the question more deeply, Jerome Frank spotlights once more the role of human consciousness in the creation of threats to its own survival.

"Moreover, if one looks about for a focus, "he insists," one can find only familiar and universal aspects of human nature - such as failure to appreciate the seriousness of dangers that are not in awareness, unwillingness to forego immediate rewards in order to forestall future disasters, and the general inertia of social organizations... our persistent failure to overcome the viciousness of humans to each other makes it increasingly hard to maintain the belief that humans are basically good."

HUMAN POTENTIALITIES

Avoiding other questions of human nature, Aurelio Peccei expresses optimism that humanity can develop its potentialities to meet its difficulties. He urges that

"...one must assume that the human being possesses still untapped resources of vision and creativity as well as moral energies which can be mobilized to bail humankind out of its predicament. This may indeed seem a far-fetched assumption, but many of us consider it perfectly valid. The average person, even when living in deprivation and obscurity, is endowed with an innate brain capacity, and hence a learning ability, which can be stimulated and enhanced far beyond the current relatively modest levels.

"The plain truth these considerations imply is that any solutions to the human gap as well as any guarantees for the human future can be sought nowhere else but within ourselves. What is needed is for all of us to learn how to stir up our dormant potential and use it from now on purposefully and intelligently."

The goal of person-centered approaches to psychotherapy, education, and community relations has always been to develop human potentials. Humanistic psychology, as a separate branch of psychological endeavors, has always had as its aim the development of human abilities and capacities. Though, I think, they have helped to pave the way for such developments, by and large, these movements have yet to produce an impressive increase in vital human problem-solving capacities. By remaining focused on individualistic approaches they could, as sometimes accused, be encouraging self-centeredness and apathy toward social improvement.

Perhaps we need a perception of "human" that is not founded on individuality or collectivity, that is based on something more essential. Perhaps our societies can now allow for fully autonomous individuals who have a consciousness of themselves as individuals and as part of a creative, coherent whole which is capable of acting wisely - persons who have the capacity to act congruently with this individuality and with this awareness of their totality. A person, as McDougall reminds,

"is not a mass of homogeneous clay to be moulded in a limitless fashion by social pressures. He (or she) is rather an organism with strong inborn tendencies which lead him not only to conform to social pressures but also to react against them, to struggle to preserve (a) unique individuality in spite of all they can do... The group mind and the developed individual mind are correlatives; neither can exist without the other; and the group mind exists only within the various individual minds and is in each one in so far as the structure of each one has been moulded by the life of the group."

OUR PRESENT STATE

So, we have a notion of the characteristics of large groups and their behaviors - capable of both reprehensible and admirable actions. We know that individuals in their collectives have a dramatic influence on the planet, its quality of life, and the resources it yields. We see that "individuals" and "group" are concepts, faces of one phenomenon, the individual is intense, well defined, the group is unfocused, dreamy-eyed.

Perhaps this is the place to begin, with recognition of our present state.

"The individual's consciousness of himself." F.H. Bradley writes, "is inseparable from the knowing himself as an organ of the whole; ...the belief in this real moral organism is the one solution to ethical problems. It breaks down the antithesis of despotism and individualism: it denies them, while it preserves the truth of both. The truth of individualism is saved because, unless we have intense life and self-consciousness in the members of the state, the whole is ossified. The truth of despotism is saved because, unless the member realizes the whole by and in himself, he fails to reach his own individuality." (16)

Is it possible for individuals in large groups to act in accordance with these thoughts? Is it possible to express oneself, autonomously, fully, with personal vigor, and to do so consciously and congruently with an awareness of the whole and its actions? Is there any evidence that present-day large groups could act wisely and effectively with conscious individual members?

CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

For the last ten years I have worked with colleagues on four continents studying large groups. We have convened about thirty residential programs with between 65 and 250 persons (17), including a series of meetings in Brazil involving as many as 800 persons (18). Though the evidence is small there are definite indications of a large group's ability to function effectively, with wisdom and efficiency.

I would like to present here some brief examples from large groups of people acting autonomously, with a consciousness of the whole, and together finding a wise and effective course.

ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE

"You know, my friends, with what a brave carouse
 I made a second marriage in my house
 Divorced old barren Reason from my bed
 And took the Daughter of the Vine to spouse."
 Umar-i-Khayyam

In 1975 a conference, not unlike the First Assembly of the Fourth World, was held at Mills College in Oakland, California. The gathering called together 135 helper-oriented persons from many countries to discuss the social implications of client-centered therapy. A similar disruption surprised the participants and organizers - but with a very different outcome:

In a morning's gathering of the group, the question of how to organize time for meetings and other activities is brought up for discussion. Many resist the suggestion to make a schedule, preferring to speak "personally." Many agree; many object. No statement passes without an echo of qualifications. The people argue, shout, accuse, bustling for attention and for the acceptance of his or her opinion.

To suggestions for a flexible organization of time, Terry replies: "I think we want more structure than our ordinary daily life. We want to have a definite plan whereby people can solve problems arising in the course of our time together. The scheme I envision would involve breaking into small groups and reporting back to the large community according to a definite organizational pattern." Many people nod in agreement.

Linda sums up this trend in thought: "This workshop must be organized, at least minimally, in order to take advantage of the important persons here. There is, after all, a limited amount of time to get everything done. While 'letting things happen' may be workable this time we cannot take a chance. Maybe nothing would be accomplished and this entire venture would be a colossal waste of time and money."

The community is convinced by this line of reasoning. It is agreed: We need a schedule, Linda, Paul, and Terry volunteer to form a committee with others who are experienced in working with organizations, management, and community planning in client-centered ways. The committee will formulate a plan and present their suggestions at the 2 P.M. meeting. They invite anyone who wishes to give them "input" to assist in the work.

In the afternoon meeting, the planning committee makes an excellent presentation: they suggest a flexible plan allowing enough structure of activities to advise everyone of the time and place of community events. The plan is diagrammed on large pieces of chart paper. In addition, the planners share with the community the tedious process of democratic deliberations they underwent to reach the final proposal. A suggested schedule of activities is outlined by the committee; it includes community meetings, small group encounters, special topic groups, sessions with convenors, play time, meal times, and so forth. This plan it seems, to most who speak in response to the presentation, will enable participants in the workshop to "gain knowledge and meet personal needs" in an orderly and efficient manner. The plan is complete, democratic, and thoughtfully presented. The schedule is accepted

with apparent enthusiasm by the group.

The planning committee, its pride swelling from acceptance of its ideas, suggests a "brainstorming session" to surface some of the possible topics to make up the core of the program: the special interest groups. An eager response from the people generates an enormous "shopping list." Such topics as education, healing, male and female relations, couples, men's liberation, women's rights, international issues, gay life styles, parapsychology, networking, open relationships, communal living, death and dying, children, movement, body therapies, co-counseling, person-centered gestalt therapy, psychotherapy, music, dance, art, nutrition, magic, Marxist therapy, are a few topics which are written down on the newsprint with magic marker pens.

At the peak of consumer excitement a few small voices are heard objecting, not to the plan (which they also support) or to the presentation or to the suggested topics, but to the very idea of planning. The speakers are quiet, timid, thoughtful persons: Julie, a young woman who has not spoken in the meetings until now, and a soft-spoken middle-aged man, Anthony. They share their feelings. Their ideas, at first, are unclear. They do not speak articulately or with the logic of the schedule-makers. But they unravel the expression of a vague fear that something, perhaps an opportunity, is about to be lost. Was anything genuinely new being attempted in this workshop? Was this plan the most creative one possible?

Julie hesitates, then says, "This way of doing things, following a schedule, is not new. It is secure. But, what would it be like to live, for a while, with others in a community in a really new way, governed by our natural relationship...one to the other...and our collective organic effort, whatever that may be? What would it be like to be free to move and flow and connect with others with similar interests and perhaps discover our common purpose? Do we really need a list of scheduled meetings to do this?"

Other persons, here and there, begin nodding in agreement. "Adopting the schedule, we would undoubtedly have a successful and efficient workshop," Anthony adds. "But those who did not want to follow it would have to go their own way. Yes, the structure allows them this freedom. But then this is the 'freedom' we always have. If you don't want to live in society by the existing schedules and rules, you can drop out. Artists, poets, writers, and many other creative, and also uncreative, persons do it all the time."

What is being suggested by these subversive thoughts is, "Let's see if we can all go our own ways together, to wander without a preconceived plan but with a sensitivity to the 'hidden' purpose of the whole." The remarkable thing was not so much that these small voices arose and stated this view, for they are always present, but that they were heard! And, as an organized group (not a crowd), they were answered. The group was challenged to act as with one voice, to test this unusual way of being a community, living by "intuition" -not following, but using, "reason."

The meeting was ended without setting a time for the next gathering. People would try this plan of having no plan. Even the committee that had worked so hard to formulate a schedule was enthusiastically anticipating what would come of this daring experiment.

At about 7:30 PM that evening, while reading in my room, a vague restlessness overcame me. I had an urgent desire to be with people. "It must be time for a meeting," I said to myself. Leaving my room I joined a half dozen others walking slowly down the hill to the community meeting room. Entering the doorway we were surprised to see over half of the entire group already assembled and chattering excitedly. In a few minutes nearly the complete community was assembled and someone had begun to speak of his incredulity that such a "crazy scheme," as was being attempted, might actually be working.

In the days which followed the scheme continued to work. A crude, yet natural, flow of activities was established which did not obey any predetermined pattern but nevertheless allowed the group, now a single entity, to meet efficiently, and satisfy its social and productive needs.

REMARKS

In this episode, where both personal autonomy and participation were respected, the group openly relied on intuition to arrange its community activities. No props were needed. The meetings were ordinary: people talking, saying what was on their minds. By using intuition it was not necessary to generate some mysterious ritual in a darkened room, the group used what abilities it had. Participants had a new sensitivity of their collective. A new faculty was developed in the consciousness of the group and delicately tuned to the truth of the group's desires. This allowed not only learning from experience but also "experiencing" imagined possibilities, not through models or conscious planning, but by means of the silent perception of the human heart.

A crisis did not provoke this group's learning (19). The community consciously anticipated the future by trusting in intuition. This was unexpected. As one entity the group did not formulate a clear cut plan to project it into the future; instead, it remained sensitive to each moment with an end "feeling," shaped by all the desires, dreams, and knowledge of individual members, as its goal. Rather than a product styled from the accomplishment of tasks and deadlines, the community reached its "goal" of living in the anticipated future.

Those whose lives were effected by the decisions were involved in the process of "decision making." Persons were respected and the integrity of the whole was preserved. Individual creativity was expressed.

Here we see the fruit of sensitive patience and the willingness to be changed - not by novelty but - by the new reality, in all of its confusing complexity. The persons in this community did not just change philosophy, but allowed themselves to approach the problem of organizational planning in a fundamentally different way; a way which permitted the group to become an intelligent organism which could make rational choices and also incorporate intuitive faculties in its own brief life.

The outward nature of community gatherings - actually, occasions for innovative learning - is marked perhaps more by confusion than by reasonable discussion. Also, although usually offering benefit to individual members, not every workshop community becomes a sensibly and efficiently functioning entity. Some do not learn innovatively. Many stretch and squirm, but never

reach far above the consciousness of a crowd. Naturally, the examples offered here are ones where the community did achieve a oneness with its members(20).

The following example illustrates an apparently chaotic proces which results in a very precise action -a decision- without using democratic processes but, in action, achieving democratic goals.

PARTICIPATORY INTUITION

The pressure of a busy self-imposed schedule of activities is lying heavily on the group; many wish to take a break, a rest. A "day off" is proposed. While some people agree readily, others just as quickly oppose the idea.

"I like the way things are going," Francis says. "I want to continue the way we are."

"I am afraid," Lillian adds. "Back home, I live alone. Next year I will be seventy. All my best friends have passed on and I spend a good deal of time by myself. I am afraid... I don't know...if we take a holiday, that my new friends here... will leave me. I couldn't bear to be dropped after feeling so much... love."

Many are afraid of not being chosen to participate with others in activities on the free day. They do not wish to spend an "unscheduled" day alone. What would they do to fill the time?

Some agree that the day off is as much a part of the workshop as the days "on." Like the silence, the sleep, or play, it has a right to have its presence respected. It is a new activity and offers opportunity for learning.

George objects, "We can take a day off anytime at home. I have come here to learn, not to loaf around."

"I don't want to legislate a day off," Chip remarks. "To legislate, to me, seems phony and structured. I want to just flow with it. I don't need anyone to agree on the time for my day off. When I feel like taking time off, I will do so."

"But that is how it is always done," replies Michael. "Besides, the 'now-scheduled' time is what is structured and legislated. We are presently 'flowing' to a schedule. All we are saying is that if we were really flowing, we might 'flow' into a day off. Let's be open to that possibility."

In the discussion it is also acknowledged (by the many psychologists in the group) that "existential aloneness" may be the motive behind the "resistance" to doing nothing.

Two days pass and suddenly, one morning, the routine is broken. There are no morning small groups, no late morning meeting of the community, no meetings at all. A meeting is not even called to declare that no meetings will be held. It just is a holiday. A group of music-makers surround Lillian at the swimming pool; people are going to town for shopping, some go on a picnic,

some sleep late. Each person, evidently motivated by the moment, acts independently and the effect of the whole is a "day off" for the community.

LEARNING SUBTITLES

This spontaneous collective action was not impulsive; preparation was made prior to the event; it was tempered by the thoughts and opinions of the previous discussions. All apparent alternatives were discussed and considered.

The action was not intellectually determined either. No alternative was chosen. Feelings which were admitted and taken into consideration in the discussion weighted and affected the result.

And the final action was not legislated since no decision was actually stated. There was no agreement about time and place and conditions. The action was taken in the moment of need and not before and not after. At the appropriate time, based on the feelings of that moment, the community took a day off. It was like cashing a bank draft, written in advance, when the need for it arose.

In the deliberations every dimension of the problem was aired. Every need, desire, feeling, thought, opinion, (even on what may seem a trivial problem) of each person was considered. Each utterance was weighed. Everyone who wished to be, was heard. As can be expected, each side of the issue was voiced (or perhaps all thoughts which the "mind" of the group was capable of having were aired). Even the most obvious observation claimed its rightful place before the group.

The varied opinions, feelings behind the opinions, which were expressed were like randomly struck notes, sounds, pounded out on a piano keyboard producing only noise, chaos. But eventually a center was found which organized the noise into a rhythm. The same notes, those same sounds, now coming from a center, an organizing mood, became music. There was no compromise, no voting, not even a verbal consensus (21). But even if it were unspoken, there was a common agreement about the solution when it arrived. A "wisdom" subtly emerged when the organizers and other participants surrendered to an answer which surprised them. When each person became interested in every response, however timid, or forceful, or contradictory it sounded, as bringing the group closer to a creative agreement.

At some point (perhaps because reason does not fathom the unreasonable) opinions and strictly intellectual thoughts were put aside. Emotionalism, which flourished initially, gave way a common feeling which grew between members of the community. The push and shove, the lively debate, the expression of ideas and feelings, characterized a "decision making" process which did not lead to democratic decisions but in taking a wise action. The group did not adopt an organic method of consensual governance, for a time it became an organic "being". No leaders, no committee, was elected, appointed, or otherwise designated to decide the course of the group. The leaders were many, different persons at different times, promoted by the needs and the wisdom of the organism for the particular task.

By not remaining satisfied with a quick solution which would have alienated part of the community and by hearing every opinion and feeling, the wisdom

emerged. Of course, when a group decides at the outset that it will make decisions "intuitively" or by an "organic process," rough going can be expected and creativity will likely be timid in making its appearance. If individuality is worshipped for its own sake, self-preoccupation and chaos can reign; if individuals are exhorted to "work as a team" or to "build community," oppression and immobility are likely for the group. Perhaps, however, if the individual members are free to be fully autonomous and are willing to surrender to a whole beyond themselves, to contribute to the functioning of the human species as a "team" or a "community," then a harmonious wisdom may be realized in the group.

In this community a problem of the future was faced with intuition, intellect, feeling, leading to the "right action" at that time. It was decided without the necessity of many years of art, science, humanities (though these were part of the background of each individual), to seep into the decision and without the provocation of an immediate catastrophe. The knowledge of the past was lived out in a dialogue which featured the cooperative participation of each community member. The urgency of the immediate determined the moment of action. The community created a new unlegislated, non-impulsive, alternative where none was previously apparent.

The next example shows a community entering a crisis with one of its members - "all going crazy together." The group goes on a voyage, the members are participants, rising and falling, but always following, living the crisis of one of their fellows and not abandoning him or one another but coming through it together.

MARVIN'S PLAY

"It is not an illness to be treated, but a 'voyage.' Socially, madness may be a form in which - often through quite ordinary people - the light begins to break through the cracks in our all-too-closed minds." R.D. Laing

A lull has occurred in the meeting.

"I am furious," announces Marvin, his brown eyes glaring, bulging slightly. He sits erect, alert; his mouth looks relaxed. A cigarette trembles minutely between pink, tense, fingers. Marvin is dressed in black. His blond beard, resembling boar's bristle in the afternoon sunlight, disguises his fifty or so years.

"I would like to speak now."

Marvin's voice is low, sure.

A quiet descends upon the book-lined room. This is not the contemplative silence we have grown accustomed to over the past week; it is not that loose noiselessness which punctuates speakers who "work" with the group psychologically - speaking of their personal problems and eventually beating on a pillow, screaming, or arm wrestling someone. This is a hush, like that motionless expression of first snow. A stillness of expectation, waiting, sixty-five held breaths. What will happen now?

"I would like to do my work now. It is very heavy. You say you want

something hot? Well, I haven't seen anything like this here. It is very hot; very heavy work."

Shrugging off idle images of blood and glass, I shift my weight slightly to free my legs. No one speaks. The room stirs now as many people draw close to Marvin. Attentive, ready, "We are listening," they are saying with this shuffling implosion of the wide circle into a tight closed disc surrounding him.

"I want to stage a happening. I want to play Lori, my wife, to understand her. And I want Steve to play Marvin. There are two of us - Lori and Marvin. The others will be here. I feel the need of your support. I want to go through this with you."

His words are chosen carefully: "I will set the stage. Lori and I are married. I have loved many women but none like Lori. We are married ten years. I love my three children. We live quietly". He inhales deeply from the cigarette and crushes it deliberately in the thick glass ash tray at his side.

"There was a young girl who used to come to our house. She would come in and out often. Until about fifteen years of age. Then one day she told Lori she was pregnant. Her parents were not aware. She did not know what to do." He shifts his posture slightly in the chair. Slowly, with very controlled movements he lights another cigarette. Every move, every word, is measured. No extra motions, everything is there, nothing is left out. Delicately he sculpts the drama. There is the sense that a play has already begun. The audience is among the actors, the actors also part of the audience. Tension lines the faces of the players surrounding the main protagonist.

"Lori decided she wanted to help the girl. She arranged a flight to New York and an abortion. The whole thing was agreed to by the parents. They were very grateful. The girl and Lori went. The abortion was successful. Soon after returning the girl left town and we lost touch."

"Marvin," Sally, a young social worker, is speaking from the floor near his feet. "Uh, Marvin, uh...did you make the girl pregnant?" she asks, her voice fading to a whisper.

Marvin's mouth smiles, the eyes continue to glare, "No, it was an...an ordinary pregnancy." The group releases a hushed laughter. Even collective responses are cleverly crafted into the drama, it seems. The group is not merely following Marvin: it leads, it follows, it goes together with him. This play is being brilliantly directed. But who is the director?

"Then in 1970 the girl returned. Five years later. She was very sick, dying. She came home to the parents. Lori became very involved with her. In love with her? She visited the girl every day and was more and more with her. "Then one day, Lori announced that she was going to move to the parent's house. She was going to stay with the girl until the end. I was astonished, but agreed. I would take care of the children. The same afternoon she left.

"In the weeks that followed Lori became more 'inside' herself...or...'inside' that girl. She took over everything in the household. Slowly, but determinedly, she directed all the care. She even instructed the parents.

They became nothing more than servants to the daughter. Lori was the arms and legs and voice of her now completely invalid, nearly lifeless, beloved friend. Lori was a tyrant, ruthlessly driving herself and others. She hardly rested. Every bit of energy was devoured by the dying girl.

"And then, just before the girl's death, the parents called me. They could no longer stand it. Something had to be done about Lori. She was completely mad. Of course, I was concerned. I went to speak with her. But she barely recognized me. I thought I got through to her, but I did not. I came several times but did not seem to help her at all. In two more weeks the girl expired.

"One day as I arrived the father avoided me. He left in the car and did not look back. Lori was in the library, a far-away look in her eyes. We fought. She was completely lost in that girl - bewitched. I wanted her back. The children needed her. The parents of the girl wanted her out of their lives. Lori exploded in rage. She was wild, furious. Every scrap of energy remaining in her was thrown into an insane eruption. In the end, she screamed at me, 'You murderer!'

"These words still ring in my ear."

Marvin sighs deeply. In the silence the surrounding group is motionless. It has no sigh, no breath.

"The father," Marvin resumes in a faint voice, "who could take no more returned with the doctor. Lori was given an injection and within moments she was calm. They took her to the hospital. I did not see her again... for nearly a year.

"This is all very heavy to me. I would like to understand her love. Telling you is helping."

"You would like to understand Lori's experience so you can love her? Is that it?" a young woman learning to become a professional counselor asks.

"Yes, that's it," Marvin replies. His voice is becoming stronger, his eyes brighter.

"In other words you want to act out the experience of Lori. You want to play the part. In order to feel what she felt?"

"Yes, exactly."

"And what is my part?" Steve asks worriedly.

"Well, I want you to play Marvin. I picked you. You are me. I saw it. There you are now, exactly opposite me. You are perfect. At first I wanted Bill. But he is Lori, not Marvin. I need you, Steve, to be Marvin: confused, needy, not understanding, self-righteous, impatient."

"And what do you want from the rest of us?" someone in the group asks.

"I want you all to clear out to the edge of the room. Just me and Steve. No

one else is to interfere. I have given Steve instructions. If he wants to stop at any time, he can just say so and I will stop the play. I trust Steve."

"I feel good about that," Steve adds.

"That sounds okay. Let's get on with it. This is Marvin's time," one of the students of psychodrama says. He is accustomed to people screaming or crying, flooding the emotions, and harmlessly beating a pillow with their fists.

"Wait a minute," Marylin begins haltingly. "I am uncomfortable about this. I am not sure why. I guess I don't know for sure what you are planning to do. I am a little afraid of what might happen."

"I trust Marvin," Alice argues. "We should support him like we have everyone else in trying to improve himself. Let's go ahead"

"Mainly, I guess," Marilyn continues, "I am concerned that you are going to do something that is going to end like your wife's experience...you know, going to...to a mental hospital. Marvin, are you...are you going to do something that will result in you being taken away?"

"Well, I don't know exactly what the outcome will be. But, I am prepared," Marvin replies, staring down at the floor.

"I think you are saying you are taking responsibility for whatever happens. Is that right?" Francisco asks.

"Yes, that's right."

"Well, then, let's get on with it," someone at the outer edge of the circle shouts.

The space around Marvin swells to the room's edges. He places a flower pot near a throw rug (representing Lori's bed) in the center of the room. Borrowing a woman's wooden shoes, he slowly and deliberately places them next to the "bed." Twilight shadows have already crept into the room veiling the faces of some to the people pressed against the walls. The mood surrounding Marvin moves as though governed by vast and mysterious forces like those which decide the course of planets and the length of days.

No one is saying to Marvin, "Don't do this." In fact, the group, as a whole, seems to say, "Go ahead, we're with you." But, at the same time, vague premonitions, an undefined fear, invades the questioners. It seems they are saying, "We are not sure we can totally support what we all are about to create. Please help us Marvin. Can you clarify your intentions so we may understand?"

Deeply involved in his own mental processes, Marvin is also intensely engaged with each commenter, each sound, each movement. Without divulging the ending, he is constantly changing the play, responding to his inner need and to the group.

Finally, someone says, "Please! I am feeling more and more powerless here. My control is slipping away to nothing. I am becoming a wallflower, standing here on the edge. I am supposed to agree not to interfere. Just to watch.

But you, Marvin, give no assurances. You agree to nothing. I don't know if you are going to break things up, hurt people, hurt yourself, or what. I cannot go along. I want to be here. I want to participate but I do not like this."

"Yes, you are quite correct," Marvin replies. "I need your participation. Like right now. What you say helps."

"Are you going to break anything, Marvin?" Sally wants to know.

"I cannot guarantee."

"Are you going to hurt anyone?"

"It is not my intent to hurt anyone."

"I think if he tries to hurt someone," Bill replies, "we can stop him. After all there are many of us."

"I don't think so," says Marilyn. "We are such a distance from him. I am afraid. I would like a lot of strong men around the circle or I do now want to do this play."

"I want an assurance that no persons or property will be damaged or I am leaving!" Virginia rises to punctuate her remark.

"Wait a minute," Marvin hurriedly replies. "I need you all to be here. We are almost finished."

"Did your wife break things?" Sally asks.

"Yes."

A long silence...

"It is late," Bill interrupts. "Dinner is ready. I suggest we adjourn now and after eating return to this play. Those who wish can come. Those who do not want to return, need not show up."

"I don't think that will be necessary," Marvin says thoughtfully. "I don't need to go further, to act out Lori's trauma. I feel what she felt. You helped me. I am getting what I need right now."

"It seems to me," Sally adds, "that this community here is saying to you Marvin: 'We are with you. We are with you so much that, at this moment, we don't have a firm foundation for our own fantasies of what you might have been planning to do. If you had gone further into madness, the ground may have collapsed under us all. We would not be able to stand or go further with you. To give support, we need to go with you.'"

"I feel your support. I needed you to go with me. But I needed you to be strong, so I could be strong, so I could face myself. I needed you to care, in order to feel my caring. I've got what I need, not what I thought I needed. Suddenly, I understand the love of two strong people."

"You are finished?" someone asks.

"Yes," Marvin's shoulders drop as he lights a cigarette. He relaxes. He understands. He knows about madness. He knows about his love. It is over.

Marilyn breathes deeply; Virginia relaxes in a chair; Steve stretches out on the floor, his hands behind his head - they understand about madness. No one had to go through with "it." Yet, all had gone through something together. They faced a crisis each moment and without turning to "professionals." They entered an uncharted world with Marvin and all came to learn something about this world together.

"What had Lori done?" someone asks as the group members shuffle from the room.

Passing through the swinging glass doorway, Marvin replies, matter-of-factly:

"Exploding insanely, she threw loose objects at me and, tearing off her clothes, shattered a plate glass window with her naked body."

AFTERWORD

Marvin came to his encounter with the community with a readiness: he wanted to understand his loved one, his own love, his relation to the group and he was ready to do what was necessary. The community approached the encounter also with a readiness: to support and encourage Marvin's growth in awareness through what they thought would be a psychodramatic expression of emotion. The cultural pattern which this community had established conformed very well with Marvin's intentions. He was prepared to achieve his desires by screaming, kicking, shattering glass with his body in an outpouring of violent and confused emotionality.

Somehow the group sensed that Marvin's plan was dangerous. Even if he assumed responsibility for his actions, the group did not accept a solution that would result in harm to him; together, through individual searching, the members of the group (including Marvin) created an alternative.

The drama was one coherent act, during which the goal changed. Marvin changed; the culture was transformed. He followed his desire to understand himself and it took him in a surprising direction - not toward violence but away from it.

Conventional thinking would regard this change as an example of the "group will" putting "pressure" on the individual to come into line and conform his behavior to the established pattern - the "group norm." But one must not forget that Marvin began with the intention of conforming to the cultural norm of explosive display of emotions and the group enthusiastically, at first, supported this approach and was prepared to assist in the action.

No, the group will did not shape his behavior, the collective did not rule the individual and neither did the individual rule the collective. They were inseparable. Each moment required a direction from the "group mind," which included Marvin. And from each person, including Marvin, a decision was required: to go ahead or to stop, to enter deeper into the unknown - without cultural agreements to point the way - or to withdraw. Each moment required

the participation of active autonomous persons. At any point a crisis could have been provoked and the group could have entered a different kind of learning cycle, singling Marvin out as a deviate or troubled person and using the resources of the group to solve that "problem." Instead, this community employed innovative learning from the beginning of this encounter. Each person was capable of giving up his or her preconceptions of what should happen (and this included Marvin himself) in order to follow what path was actually unfolding. The community, as seen in previous examples, could solve the crisis of madness once someone was identified as "mad," but the challenge faced by this community was, "Can the crisis of madness be solved before someone goes mad?"

The community avoided acting in a strictly self-assertive manner, as a closed or completed entity, rejecting Marvin, because he began to lead the group in an unfamiliar pattern. The entire group face the newness of the situation as one entity which included Marvin, innovating moment by moment, as it went along a mysterious and unpredictable -but purposeful- path. Marvin was not abandoned to become a "problem" of the community and he was not denied self-expression.

Step by step, slowly and surely, the culture was transformed by a collective (Marvin with the group) search for the way that would bring new understanding and confront a new situation, not just a way that would reproduce the existing culture, create drama, or produce entertainment. And thus in this process a new, a more sensitive, culture was created.

Marvin surrendered to the whole; the others surrendered to the whole. In this whole a solution was reached which violated no one. Marvin and the community members went right up to their limits, nudging those limits, of mutual tolerance, testing the strength of autonomy and participatory responsibility, entering into the "madness" from which he felt he must learn.

Marvin, as he related afterwards, understood the love he yearned to understand. He was drawn into a fresh understanding of the relation between his wife and himself. He was led to a new clarity of action in his "real" life, outside of this special meeting.

And this group, as a single entity, learned how to patiently follow its inner stirrings, to be "autonomous" and to express itself, to state its desires and draw its limits, to define itself. At the same time, it also learned to surrender itself to a purpose larger than self-preservation. It did not reject a part of its body which threatened its equilibrium, but integrated that member, in his wholeness -it integrated with "madness" in a more complex wholeness.

REFLECTIONS ON LEARNINGS

I am not sure how useful it will be to summarize what I have learned (or think I have learned) from experiences with these "laboratory" large groups. Compared to the complicated tasks facing large groups on the planet, these examples illustrate only trivial events. There are many other examples, more dramatic, of groups facing crises, and members entering into a unity from which several members reported "psychic experiences" and unusual feats were accomplished. However, I do not recite these episodes because I do not think they would weigh the conclusion differently. The examples indicate to me that it is possible for groups to harmonize in a manner that uses the full capacities of their members for coherent action beyond the individual's capabilities.

I can only hint at some of the factors which seem to accompany such groups. Some I have suggested may have only peripheral value. Others perhaps are left out of my list. Undoubtedly, for example, the composition of group membership is a critical factor which has been given no attention, since, though I can recognize its value, I have no knowledge of how to compose the group for maximum learning.

The process of a group becoming a conscious whole probably cannot be systematized - though it probably follows a very definite pattern. And even were this not true, we know so little about the essence of human nature that it is difficult to isolate all of the relevant factors. There is even the danger in listing incomplete knowledge that others will follow it religiously and further handicap, by doing so, the discovery of truth. On the other hand, to say nothing does not necessarily advance understanding either. So, I list these learnings in the hope that they communicate, until they are revised, not the dimensions of a creative community, but the sense of that community and its individual members.

As each person, in the episodes described, learned his or her private truths, the collection of persons, the one entity, learned how to manage a situation never before encountered. The crisis it faced, new also to individual members, demanded a concerted action, an effort which became characterized by broadening, rather than simplifying, possible avenues to a solution.

Gradually, the community, as well as its members, became aware of the many contexts which intersected in its crisis. The personal world of each person contributed hundreds of frameworks from which to perceive the problem and its possible solutions. Vying for attention were also "democracy," the "human rights" of individuals, "community responsibility," "science," and other archetypes and ideologies. A legion of beliefs, standards, rules, and values were stirred in a caldron of doubt until the new, unfamiliar, mixture yielded its own contextual answer.

Each large group we have just considered behaved not as a blinded crowd but as a sensible, feelingful, organism. The group asserted itself in becoming one coherent body and through its concerted actions. The one entity did not turn against one of its members, as is common to crowds looking for an enemy, and even in many otherwise sensible organizations. The community allowed full expression to the autonomy of its individuals and to their integrative aspects. The communities illustrated here lived in the portal between the attractions of individualism and collectivism.

I do not know of interventions or techniques which could bring about that harmonious state of "oneness." Though the organizers play a key role, neither they nor others make it happen. There do seem to be some factors which accompany a creative community. I will try to sketch these here.

Readiness

Though I do not know specifically how to bring it about, I can see that it can be prevented. Composition is critical. Even one person (as we experienced more than once), with the intent to do so, can sabotage the movement of a group toward becoming a conscious entity.

One of the most important characteristics, therefore, that participants can bring to the creative formation of community is goodwill. One need not be agreeable, nice, congenial, or even cordial, but must have a goodwill toward finding a way that builds a creative community. What one does does not seem to be so important as the readiness he or she brings to the meeting with others.

Part of this readiness is characterized by an ability to translate easily between feelings and ideas, to be congruent in relationship with others, to be able to experience empathic understanding of the internal frame of reference of others and to follow it intuitively - if necessary - without understanding it intellectually.

A personal quality which seems present in individuals involved in innovative learning communities is the readiness to change, to see the world differently, to alter their actions as a consequence of interactions and decisions of the group. This does not mean that they are mindless robots following the group. It suggests they are flexible and open to new "truths" as they emerge.

This readiness can perhaps be better described as a state of expectancy - but without expectations. Expectancy is a sharpened, shifting, alertness to creative alternatives; it is open-ended anticipation of surprising event. Expectations are the imprisoned forms of expectancy, formed perhaps to avoid the uncertainty of freedom. Expectations, hoping for a predetermined outcome, images of what should happen or what one desires to happen, but in a particular manner, veil the truth and limit its possibilities for expression. To face a meeting with others with an excited alertness to learn, not knowing how or what one will learn, is expectancy. To look forward to an interesting and entertaining meeting in which a lecturer will provide stimulation is expectation, and often prevents real learning and leads to feelings of disappointment as well.

Openness and an ability to live in the moment (even when faced with engaging anticipations of the future), in uncertainty and doubt, and to follow intuitively the expressions of the collective organism are important aspects of this attitude of good will. With every situation it is essential to be able to follow, to lead, to remain still, in accord with the creativity of the moment's mysterious dictates.

Members of communities which reach a creative state seem to constantly question the fundamental values of that community as well as values of the larger society to which they belong. Objectives and processes of the group are challenged. New values are put to the test as soon as they are adopted.

Familiar approaches are rarely found satisfactory for very long. In the community "yes" sometimes signifies no, ordinary conventions like "making conversation" are seen as superficial, being "friendly" is regarded as unfriendly, being "polite" is insulting, and behavior which is usually shunned - like speaking of one's own personal problems - is, in the new situation, often encouraged. Together with the new physical surroundings, the new collective life-style, new eating habits and sleeping habits, these unfamiliar conditions constitute a new culture.

For example, in the outside society, self-expression is limited, people are

not encouraged to scream out their rage, to break furniture, to express violent feelings. In the workshop we encounter new forms of acceptable self-expression which becomes acceptable. In the episode featuring Marvin, we saw a new culture established on the basis of this self-expression, of psycho-dramatic release of emotions. This was quite a deviation from the Northern European society. But then the group began to apply this new cultural remedy to every case. And with Marvin, we see this value challenged by the group and the culture surpassed, not directly, but led by Marvin, to another context with new values.

In this kind of community process, a delicate sensitivity is also required. There occur moments when it is essential that the attention of the group be focused on the methods its members are employing which weaken critical faculties. There is always the danger that the group will become the victim of thought control. An emotionally charged intimate contact between persons, situation of ambiguity and confusion, the elicitation of personal confessions, the utilization of music and body movements, fatigue and repetition and other less specific factors, are all elements of such group gatherings and should be noticed and challenged by the community. These kinds of group behaviors and practices are the same as those used by interrogators of war prisoners to extract confessions; by religions to evangelize converts; by cults to provoke change; all aimed at eliciting the self-transcendent nature of the human at the expense of his or her autonomy. It is this facility with which human beings can be persuaded to merge and surrender with some larger whole, that must be balanced by each individual's maintenance of a critical and rational capacity - a genuine common sense - as well. A familiar saying from Arabic folklore puts it well: "Trust in God, but tie up your Camel first."

Autonomy

In the large group which has reached a creative state, each person, with the support of the others, may behave more spontaneously than usual; individual expression is liberated and encouraged. Not every person is accepted by every other person, but generally the right to be different is respected. The group permits each person to add his or her contribution even if it is incomprehensible at the moment. Nothing is ruled as out-of-order or inadmissible, even though the new contribution may add to the complexity. Autonomy does not have to rob the collectivity of its integrity; likewise, integration of a group does not have to defeat or even be at the expense of individual initiative and growth.

Learning from direct experience is valued by the workshop participants. Although this can result in self-preoccupation, especially at the beginning of a program, direct experience and autonomy are important contributions to the group consciousness. By following their personal learnings in the context of community life and by not withdrawing from the collective experience, members learn how to learn in new and unexpected situations.

It has been said that it is part of human nature to move towards transcendence of self. But on the subjective level it is often in the midst of fiercely exaggerated individuality, when people are fully expressing their uniqueness that a unity - not sameness - is perceived. When they have "unity" as a goal to strive toward, it may elude their best efforts and plans. Perhaps the desire for individuality, shared by many persons at once, creates one

individual consciousness out of the many. Perhaps it is the consciousness expressed by each person's presence with the others that motivates and guides the group. In the group there is a moment when there are no longer words, the people look at each other and realize that the wisdom they seek is not in some person, some super teacher, but it is right there among them. The essence of the community comes not from one person with answers but out of a group of persons with questions, not fully aware that a wisdom is hidden within their searching.

Although it is probably impossible to specify an individual's actions, or even the group's actions, which lead to an intelligent organic unity, there is a simple metaphoric description which captures the nature of these autonomously cooperative actions. Michael Polanyi gives the example of solving a jigsaw puzzle in this regard:

"Imagine that we are given the pieces of a very large jigsaw puzzle, and suppose that our giant puzzle be put together in the shortest possible time. We would naturally try to speed this up by engaging a number of helpers; the question is in what manner these could be best employed. Suppose we share out the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle equally among the helpers and let each of them work on his lot separately. It is easy to see that this method, which would be quite appropriate to... shelling peas, would be totally ineffectual in this case, since few of the pieces allocated to one particular assistant would be found to fit together... The only way the assistants can effectively cooperate, and surpass by far what any single one of them could do, is to let them work on putting the puzzle together in sight of the others, so that every time a piece of it is fitted in by one helper, all the others will immediately watch out for the next step that becomes possible in consequence. Under this system, each helper will act on his own initiative, by responding to the latest achievements of the others, and the completion of their joint task will be greatly accelerated. We have here in a nutshell the way in which a series of independent initiatives are organized to a joint achievement by mutually adjusting themselves at every successive stage to the situation created by all the others who are acting likewise." (22)

The outcome of the large group, like the outcome of the jigsaw puzzle, is intended, is awaited expectantly, but not premeditated by any person contributing to bringing it about. An "invisible hand," to use Polanyi's description, guides the process to a joint discovery of a hidden "picture" of the system of things. At each step of the process, the most competent person, the one with the right "piece of the puzzle" is the leader of the large group. Each person is alert for opportunities to add a new "piece" and fit together a larger and clearer "picture" of understanding. Any organization of the group under an authority could reduce the effectiveness to that of the single director and could even paralyze autonomous participation.

The one limitation of the jigsaw puzzle metaphor is that ordinarily the picture which is forming through the placement of pieces has been painted before the whole has been divided. The large group is more complicated. The "picture" is not only unknown to any of those supplying "pieces," but it is likely that many alternative "pictures" are possible. Carl Rogers, for this reason, favors the metaphor of an artist sculpturing some form out of a piece of wood.

The sculptor works to let the form emerge from his or her own intuitive sources and the limitations of the wood. If you can imagine several hundred sculptors, each coordinating his or her effort - as with the jigsaw puzzle - to bring out the optimal creation from alternative possibilities, then you would be close to the coordination of autonomous members forming a wise and effective community.

Humility

Although these community groups are organized around some principle, such as the desire for self-improvement or the desire for novelty or social improvement, the central control is very flexible. The organizers do not take an active role in control. Individual staff members act independently, as any community member, there is no ruling collective, only a relaxed maintenance group which eventually disappears (as a group) in the most "successful" communities.

There are a few examples of people organized around real-life situations. For example, the people of Salgado, in a small village in the northeast of Brazil, were formed into an organic whole after facing the crisis of a drought (23). One of the great liberators of truth in these laboratory groups and in such natural groups as the village of Salgado is the humility to regard an opinion, an idea, another's feeling as superior to one's own - when it is. In these communities topics of controversy are held open until every voice is heard. Easy answers are not immediately accepted. The group does not panic but can tolerate discomfort together while they search for the truth. People listen empathically to each other. They make an effort to understand and feel the other's world. The community develops, as a body, an empathic nature. It understands the inner world of its members; it understands its own nature.

From Brazil there is another small example of this innovative process and its reliance on humility. Coordinators there have worked with peasant groups to help them learn their own story - to grow in self-awareness as individuals and as a class. A sincere openness to truth played a key role in the approach of these coordinators and the outcome of the learning groups. As Paulo Freire recalls,

"Dialogue, as the encounter of men addressed to the common task of learning and acting, is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility." (24)

Surrender

One time, having no structure organized for the meetings may result in an elevation in the consciousness of the group. Another time, however, the group may come to know itself through a highly organized structure. What seems far more important than the specific form of organization for meetings - with leaders or without leaders - is the willingness of each member to surrender to another point of view from their favorite perception, feeling, or opinion. This readiness to accept an idea superior to their own is a preparation for meeting the truth.

This surrender is not passive or weak and it may come gradually. Marvin and his colleagues transformed the culture of that community slowly, step by step. Marvin himself was strong-willed. He dominated the action and was not coerced into changing his drama. He wanted and got a consensus of the group by following sensitively the "will" of the group. In this sense he surrendered his will, his personal desire - but so did others.

Thusly, the culture was transformed. Marvin and many others at first wanted to use the cultural form of psychodrama to gain self-knowledge. They were loyal psychodramatists, using their culture, perfecting it; they believed in this culture. Yet, their real goal was self-knowledge and when they felt that this goal would not be achieved through the existing culture, they changed it. They invented a new form. Instead of one person on stage in front of an audience living his drama, they created, as the day wore on, the fact of each person being intimately involved with the protagonist, helping him shape the path to self-knowledge that each could follow.

"As soon as a man has surrendered himself to the crowd," writes Elias Canetti, "he ceases to fear its touch...no distinctions count, not even sex. The man pressed against him is the same as himself. Suddenly it is as though everything were happening in one and the same body."

When each individual has rid himself or herself of role, status, desire - surrendered to something Parger- and feel equal,

"It is for the sake of this blessed moment... that people become a crowd."

Concludes Canetti (25).

The participants of a large group, verging on creativity, also surrender somewhat their past experience. Solutions that worked at home or were successful in the last workshop are not necessarily effective in the new situation. This may be difficult to accept for groups or individuals who have been successful at following their learnings - even from direct experiences. It is possible to find examples of this principle and also the power of cooperative groups in such unlikely collections as Japanese -and even some American- business firms. "Americans," writes William Ouchi,

"believe that decision making by consensus will produce camels when we want horses, but the Brookhaven plant of GM has achieved superlative levels of quality and efficiency through participation. We (American businessmen) believe that specialization leads to productivity, but company Z achieves higher productivity than company A with lower specialization. We believe that creativity stems from individual maverick genius, but the most creative, innovative of our high technology companies have been the first to explore the type Z organization. We believe that the typical US rate of 26% annual turnover and of 8% average absenteeism are an irreducible minimum, but annual turnover among European firms averages 12% and among Japanese firms 6%, with lower absenteeism rates as well. We believe that, fundamentally, only high pay and rapid promotion will spur the most talented to achieve,

while company Z and Brookhaven have both found that commitment and participation are far more powerful in conflict over the proper division of profits."

Ouchi's advice for acquiring abilities?

"The first skill to be learned is the skill of recognizing patterns of interaction in decision-making and problem-solving groups. Just as one can learn in medical school to interpret an x-ray meaningless to the untrained eye, so one can learn to 'see' group interaction in quite different ways than that of the lay person. Learning to see when a group moves too quickly to a solution in order to avoid discussing the real problem, learning to observe how some members interfere in subtle ways with an open discussion, learning to note when the group drifts off course - all of these are acquired skills." (26)

This observation is also a learning gleaned from the large workshop groups already described.

The particular person surrenders to the whole, but not blindly and senselessly giving away his or her intelligence. This surrender is one of elevating -not lowering- the person's faculties of wise, thought and action.

Trust

Carl Rogers' great genius for listening empathically to his client was surpassed only by his faith in an actualizing tendency which moved the client toward growth. This same actualizing or formative tendency of the universe which organized the individual's inner world into new complexity also operates within the large group. Accompanying the formation of a wise and effectively acting large group is a trust in this formative tendency. Members trust that a wisdom can emerge which will organize their group into new and surprising complexities. Besides the potential for destructiveness every group contains a treasury of wisdom and creativity. This is one of the best kept secrets in the social sciences.

FINAL ANALYSIS

You may feel disappointed in the rather vague listing of factors associated with wise groupings. Apart from the obvious limitations in my own understandings and the lack of space here, I have resisted more precise descriptions. I think this is because I am doubtful that we can arrive at a recipe for forming organic large groups and if we did, such a thing would likely cause more harm than good. Furthermore, I feel that even a more lucid description of the sense of these groupings requires the reflection of others who have lived similar experiences. I hope that these others will contribute their thoughts to the construction of further understanding.

So, here, I offer nothing new, except perhaps a pattern. Many have urged the development of human potentialities; many see the connections between human capacities and the survival of the species; it must be obvious that groups are instrumental in the species' survival. Even the few examples of creative

and innovative communities from large groups in "laboratory" workshops are not unknown. In writing about the roots of Russian society Nikolai Vakar 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 unanimously agreed upon was commonly administered in behalf of all... In the village as in the household, all decisions had to be unanimous." (27)

In learnings from the study of such groups, nothing beyond what can be recognized as time-honored virtues can I summarize to give an indication of the conditions which might provoke wise and effective acting groups: good will, humility, surrender, trust. But perhaps the urgings of religion were never meant to merely indicate the cultivation of a pious appearance to society but to transform the societal consciousness. Perhaps these are technical devices -not virtues- to be used in this transformation.

"In the final analysis," writes Rene Dubos, getting to the heart of my thesis,

"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 which is essential for the further development of civilization. We should aim at some form of political unification of humankind, but global unity will be viable only if it is compatible with the cultivation of diversity and of pluralism in our habits, tastes and aspirations".

Good advice. And there is room, I believe, for optimism. Human beings have the excellent habit of imposing their own will, their choices, on the course of natural events. It is in fact a characteristic which makes the future unpredictable using rational means.

"Human beings," continues Dubos, "have been and remain uniquely creative because they are able to integrate the pessimism of intelligence with the optimism of will."

Although nothing "new" is offered in this paper, this does not mean there is therefore no real urgency and no action required. Perhaps we can change the trends, and can begin now to follow the urging of Robert Ornstein:

"We cannot wait for biological evolution or for political programs, or, even for new ideas. What is needed rather, is a shift in mode of consciousness by many people away from the egocentric, 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 the relationship among seemingly disparate activities and systems". (28)

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