The power of balance: Transforming self, society, and scientific inquiry

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THE POWER OF BALANCE

To the living memory of
John Pentland
Lou Pondy
Jim Waters
and
Minor White
and to the living presence of
Pat and Jean Canavan

THE POWER OF BALANCE

Transforming Self, Society, and Scientific Inquiry

William R. Torbert

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Acknowledgments and Preface

Because this book has been 20 years in the making, I have accumulated many pleasurable debts that I may now, finally, acknowledge. First and foremost, I wish to thank the colleagues with whom I worked and learned at Southern Methodist University twenty years ago—Gene Byrne, Pat Canavan, Roger Dunbar, Jack Grayson, Craig Lundberg, Bobby Lyle, and Mick McGill. Not only were they wonderful, lively, dedicated, challenging colleagues at the time, but all have been extremely generous in their responsiveness to drafts of the story in Section II since then.

I feel a very special gratitude to Craig Lundberg. This book would never have been reborn and would never have reached publication, after an early manuscript sat on a shelf for a dozen years, without Craig's repeated interventions, initiatives, nudging, and support. Thank you, "Uncle" Craig.

Next, I want to acknowledge the persons most responsible for my participation in ongoing conversations about political philosophy and the action inquiry approach over the past quarter century—Stavros Cademenos, Father Joe Flannigan, S. J., Morris Kaplan, Jay Ogilvie, and Jim Walsh. Stavros, Morris, Jay, and Jim have been good friends throughout this time. Joe is the quietly ebullient source of the most thoroughgoing, provocative, and productive reconsideration of the Western intellectual tradition occurring during this generation at an American university. Fortunately for me, this dialogue has been occurring at Boston College, and I have been privileged to listen in.

Many other colleagues, students, and friends have participated in the ongoing conversations and activities that have informed this book—the members of the faculty MBA core team at BC's Wallace C. Carroll School of Management, the BC MBA Alumni Action Inquiry group, the Community of Inquiry group, and the Abstract Construction Enterprises team. Judy Sherred contributed the title. Vicky Crittenden, Peter Frost, Walter Nord, Hamid Mehran, and "Safi" Safizadeh read and commented on individual chapters. Peter Reason, Paul Skilton, and Karl Weick read and commented on entire drafts. My departmental colleagues Dal Fisher and Richard Nielsen have played ongoing roles in the thinking and empirical

research underlying the book. Susanne Cook-Greuter continues to play an indispensible role in scoring and interpreting the tests for ego development stage that underlie the account of leadership development presented in this book. And my research assistant, Rosemary Tin, played an unusual role, not only in research support, but in highly critical readings of earlier drafts of the writing. I deeply appreciate the help that all of you have given me.

No matter how often one revises a manuscript, there are sentences, paragraphs, and sometimes whole sections that dull one's critical eye. No doubt, a good number of these have still escaped my better attention, but the extraordinarily careful and thoughtful editing by Kate Eastment found many of these lacunae and motivated me to address them. Grazie, grazie.

Finally, I wish to thank once again the two scholar/practitioners whose work is closest to my own in spirit and from whom I have learned most through dialogue and exchange of manuscripts across the decades—Chris Argyris and Donald Schön. Both have attended the Community of Inquiry group mentioned above, where the different members present their own current practice and thinking and receive extremely challenging critiques from the others (the sessions are taped and the tapes themselves are sometimes transcribed and analyzed).

As the reader will see, Don Schön's foreword that follows is every inch one such extremely challenging critique. A few words of context can help situate his comments. Several years ago Chris, Don, and I recognized in conversation that we viewed our work differently. As empirically based as all of our work is, I viewed their work and my four previous books as pointing toward a fundamentally different frame or paradigm of social science from the natural science paradigm of the past five centuries. They, on the other hand, both stressed the continuity between their work and the natural science paradigm of empirical disconfirmability.

Without feeling the least disrespect for the political, moral, and scientific power and significance of empirical data, I argued that our work also shows that the myths or assumptions of individuals and cultures—the stories we tell ourselves *sotto voce* about ourselves—are *not* in any straightforward way disconfirmable by empirical evidence (indeed, that "disconfirmability" is the "undisconfirmable" myth of modern science).

The question for me is what kind of social science and what kind of social action encourages (1) conversation across frames, myths, or stories; (2) testing of the validity of frames (in addition to testing of specific propositions); and (3) transformation from one frame or story to another. When I describe a frame-changing experience in my own life (Chapter 10), my point is *not to prove empirically* that I developed from one particular story or stage of development to another (though I offer a hypothesis about this, along with two distinct developmental measures

that support the hypothesis). My point, rather, is *to offer a case illustration of how fundamentally problematic any frame-changing process must be.* I have tested the validity of that chapter and of the other autobiographical chapters with the primary players described in them. I have made changes based on their comments, and have noted the one instance in which a significant difference of interpretation remained (Chapter 9, endnote 1).

As Don asks in his foreword, "How is one to tell [whether this story is one] of progress up the ladder of moral development?" I agree with him that this is the terribly testing question we must *each* ask ourselves about our own stories, and that we cannot rely on our own judgment alone for the answer. Instead, we must seek to create communities of inquiry that challenge us toward wider awareness.

Hence, my request to Don to write the foreword—even after he expressed mixed feelings about what he had so far read. Hence, my decision to publish the book as a whole, inviting your response as well.

I hope that Don's foreword and my book together alert all future readers to believe neither of us wholeheartedly—only insofar as our words help you to find ever new ways of testing the validity of your assumptions and the efficacy of your own.

William R. Torbert

Foreword

In this book, William Torbert has attempted an *apologia pro vita sua*, a confessional essay that aspires to present a new theoretical paradigm for the field of organizational intervention. It is a document of shocking grandiosity. In his précis, for example, Torbert claims that his book "embodies a new paradigm of engaged social science . . . that can have as significant an influence on global affairs in the next five centuries as the advent of modern natural science has in the past five centuries." In spite of its messianic aura, however—indeed, in some ways because of it—Torbert's book deserves to be read. It deserves to be read especially by the practitioners, theorists, and clients of the cluster of professions devoted to organizational intervention that have grown up, largely under the influence of Kurt Lewin, in the period following World War II.

Torbert is a man who has tried, to an extraordinary degree, to live a life consistent with his convictions. For nearly 30 years, he has committed himself to all-out efforts at organizational reform, sparing neither himself nor his colleagues in his attempts to achieve significant transformations of organizational life. His career as interventionist includes his involvement in an Upward Bound poverty program in New Haven in the 1960s, his years at Southern Methodist University's School of Business Administration in the early 1970s, his launching of a one-man organization, The Theatre of Inquiry, in the late 1970s, and finally, his decade-long tenure as Associate Dean and Professor at Boston College's School of Management. In each of these ventures, Torbert has made no small plans. He has set himself the very highest objectives, both from the point of view of organizations as sociopolitical systems of governance and from the point of view of personal development. Not surprisingly, his efforts have sometimes appeared, to outside observers and even to internal participants, as quixotic. Yet he has doubtless achieved something, even from the perspective of individuals whose standards are very different from his own. For example, he is credited by no less a judge than the respected *Boston Globe* columnist David Warsh with having propelled the Boston College School of Management from a position somewhere beyond the top 100 to one of the top 25 schools of management in the United States.

When such an individual reflects on the meaning of his entire professional experience and tries to draw from it a general theory of the practice of organizational reform, he is worth listening to.

Torbert's theory of intervention is notable because of the breadth and depth of its aspirations. He recognizes that because organizations are, in effect, states—systems of collective governance—their management, leadership, and reform engage fundamental issues of social and political philosophy. Plato, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Kant, and the contemporary social philosopher John Rawls figure prominently in the pages of this book as Torbert tries to work out his own theories of power, justice, and liberty. But Torbert's point of view is unashamedly normative. Organizations *ought* to exist, he believes, in order to promote the development and self-realization of their members. Hence, his theory of intervention includes a psychology of moral development—a sequence of developmental stages owing much to the work of Kegan and Loevinger—which he seeks to coordinate with a typology of kinds of power. In his view, an organizational leader's progress through stages of moral development, from "Impulsive" and "Opportunist," at the low end, to "Magician" and "Ironist" at the high end, is matched to a progress through stages in the exercise of organizational power, from "unilateral" and "diplomatic" to "logistical" and "transformative."

Finally, Torbert's theory of intervention includes an epistemological dimension. He sees both the competitive effectiveness of organizational performance and the developmental effectiveness of groups of individuals within organizations as dependent upon the creation of communities of inquiry. He means "inquiry" within the contexts of organizational action. As he puts it in his introduction,

> the power of balance is discovered only as one achieves the capacity to diagnose unique (previously undefined) situations as they are occurring and the capacity to fashion uniquely suitable actions then and there.

Torbert asserts, with characteristic panache, that the development of a social science conducive to such inquiry holds the potential for a paradigm change "as significant as the change from medieval theology to modern social science."

Perhaps the most appealing feature of Torbert's bold presentation of a theory of intervention is his refusal to divorce theory from practice. He faults the philosopher Rawls, whom he otherwise greatly admires, because Rawls gives no theory or method for transforming a relatively unjust society. He faults his mentor, Chris Argyris, for having failed in actual practice to create a working example of a true community of inquiry. And he holds himself accountable for living out his own enormously ambitious theories.

Indeed, it is Torbert's relentless concern to embody his theory in his life, holding no corner of that life exempt from inspection, that accounts for the fact that his book is a confession. Given his views, what else could he write? I confess, in turn, that I find Torbert's account of his professional practice and personal life profoundly disconcerting, frequently disappointing, and occasionally terrifying.

The big ideas on which his analysis depends are, by my standards, insufficiently articulated. For example, I have read the whole manuscript without really understanding what he means by "the power of balance," his appropriation of Plato's conception of the joining of public justice with the harmony of the soul, or by his pivotal idea of "liberating structures." The concept of action inquiry, close to my own notion of reflective practice, is developed with a blithe disregard for questions of validity and rigor that seem to me essential.

Torbert allows himself to swoop, at times, from sublime theoretical heights to a characteristically American commercialism: He caps his discussion of the comparative moral development of several groups of ophthalmologists with an analysis purporting to show a high correlation between the stages of development they have achieved and the gross revenues of their practices—hardly a Kantian test! It would appear that moral development pays off. Indeed, Torbert's fusion of developmental and commercial progress embodies a distinctive trait that has long afflicted the evolution of the mainly American field of organizational development. It is no accident, I think, that his main ventures of organizational reform have occurred at schools of business administration.

What I find most disconcerting, perhaps, is Torbert's refusal to respect conventional boundaries between personal and professional life. For example, he recounts the story of the breakup of a marriage facilitated by reference to the *I Ching*, he details his explorations of "open" relationships and group eroticism, in the same spirit in which he presents the stories of his adventures in university reform. The weakness of relying mainly on a confessional approach to the problem of documenting and testing organizational intervention comes through most clearly in these instances. Perhaps Torbert is right to frame these stories in terms of progress up the ladder of moral development. Perhaps he is not. How is one to tell? For the most part, one has only the author's word for it, only the evidence of his selective use of evidence, and very little self-critical awareness of the dangers of self-justification and Pygmalion effects inherent in confessional stories.

As I have read Torbert's manuscript, I have been reminded of nothing so much as Rousseau's *Confessions*. In the one case as in the other, I see a remarkable man preoccupied with practical and theoretical concerns of the very first importance, offering fresh ways of looking at himself and at the world, spinning out the story of his life in ways that offer the reader

very little basis on which to distinguish self-indulgent fantasy from grounded accounts of reality. But I think my involuntary association to Rousseau is telling. Torbert and his book are not to be ignored.

Donald A. Schön
Ford Professor of Urban Studies and Education
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Introduction

This book presents a new theory of power, a new practice of management, and a new approach to conducting social science.[1]

This introduction provides an overview of each of these three concerns, and the body of the book is organized into three sections. The first section concentrates on the theory of power, but with numerous illustrations. The second section concentrates on the actual experience and dilemmas of managing guided by this theory. It is a "report from the front," written in the first person by a practitioner. The third section then concentrates on describing a new kind of social science that is conducted by practitioners in the midst of the pressures of practice.

The Balance of Power Versus the Power of Balance

Since the dawn of the modern age, each intellectual and cultural arena has established its own criterion of success and has sought to maximize attainment of that ideal without reference to the other arenas of life. In politics, the ideal is power; in economics, utility; in art, beauty; in science, empirical truth. These ideals ignore one another, speak past one another, sometimes clash. "Might makes right," "Profit maximization," "Art for art's sake," and "Knowledge for its own sake" or "pure science" are all slogans that are at once isolationist and imperialistic. With such ideals, the different arenas of life may, at best, come into an accidental balance of power, or equilibrium, for a given person or culture at a given time or place. Such a balance of power is static, precarious, and necessarily temporary (if not altogether fictitious). As with the scales of justice, the slightest variation on any side can oscillate into radical imbalance.

By contrast, the ancients made the dynamic balance of the whole the ideal—whether the whole be the pantheon of gods, the whole person, or the city. Instead of a balance of power, these ancients sought the power of balance. Plato's *Republic,* for example, is about the search for the power of balance, both in the conduct of politics and in the education of leaders.

Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian* offers an intimate portrait of a Roman emperor seeking (and only occasionally discovering) the power of balance.[2]

The power to create a whole without obliterating differences (whether that whole be a self, a family, a city, or a global community) and to balance wholes of different kinds is inherently integrative, mutual, inquiring, and ethical. The power by which parts seek to dominate other parts is inherently disintegrative, hierarchical, uninquiring, and corrupting.

Since Machiavelli and Hobbes and throughout the modern period, power has been treated, almost exclusively, as a necessary evil that restricts the freedom of those over whom it is exercised and that requires countervailing powers—a balance of powers—if it is not to become increasingly corrupt—perhaps absolutely evil—and squash all freedom.

By contrast, the theory of power presented in this book views such unilateral force as the lowest, least effective, and least legitimate form of power. Unilateral force is necessary in relation to those with whom we recognize no other type of power; and unilateral force can, if exercised with the artistry of the power of balance, set the stage for more effectual and more mutual power relations. Nevertheless, in general, the theory of power presented here views unilateral force as the last choice and the least effectual type of power.

According to this new (yet also ancient) theory of power, there is a much more effective, self-legitimizing form of power—the power of balance—that invites mutuality, that empowers those who respond to this invitation with initiatives of their own, and that generates both productivity and inquiry, both transformation and stability, both freedom and order as each is warranted.

The conduct of Poland's Solidarity movement during the 1980s illustrates this power of balance perhaps more faithfully than any prior political movement in human history. Solidarity always sought a peaceful dialogue with the Communist government, rather than its violent overthrow, despite the manifest and repeated evidence that the government wished no such dialogue. By so doing, often responding with humor to oppression, Solidarity gradually and increasingly legitimized itself, even while overtly illegal. Ultimately, it has become a partner in the government and an inspiration to its Eastern European neighbors—and now it faces a new set of dilemmas.

Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts at *perestroika*—peaceful restructuring—within the Soviet sphere are certainly an attempt in this same direction. They will succeed only to the degree that his approach continues to embody the qualities described in this book (even then he may not succeed, for there is no guarantee of success when one exercises the mutual power of balance).

The recent restructurings in the Philippines and throughout Central Europe illustrate how widely peoples are now thirsting for experiences of mutual power. These major transformations emphasize the importance of developing a realistic conception of just how challenging the task of generating mutual power is. Otherwise, the turn of this century into the next will simply repeat the cycle of utopian fantasies and autocratic repressions that occurred around the turn of each of the past two centuries in the French and Russian Revolutions.

The ritual drumbeat of "empowerment" for employees in American companies shows that in many areas of our lives we Americans are also thirsting for experiences of mutual power. The big question is how to generate, recognize, and exercise such power amid the myriad pressures and preoccupations of political and organizational settings.

With the rapid globalization of technologies, finances, companies, and the media, as well as the inevitable globalization of our effects on the environment, the discovery and the disciplined practice of a self-legitimizing, mutually responsible form of power is an imperative for the twenty-first century as it has never been before.

But, at the same time, all human history up to the present warns us that seeking to exercise self-balancing power within an interdependent web of relationships is the most difficult and improbable aim we can set for ourselves (whether the "self" be a person, an organization, a nation, or a community of nations). One difficulty is that this form of power cannot be passed along like guns or money from one person or one organization or one generation to another. Each new person, organization, and generation must learn how to exercise self-balancing power from the start, just as we must each learn language from the start. But this analogy to a child learning language is not quite apt. Whereas the child is helped to learn language by parents, other adults, older siblings, television, and so forth, there is no such assured source of support for learning self-balancing power, for it is not clear where in our culture models and helpful forms of self-balancing practice are to be found.

After all, every form of addiction—whether to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, work, love, jogging, dieting, political or religious mantras, or even to limited forms of rationality—is evidence of the absence of this self-balancing power in our personal lives. And who among us can claim to be living a life without addictions?

On the interpersonal scale, only uncomfortable habits and unique actions wake us up enough to permit a full meeting with another human being and, thereby, the possibility of mutual self-balancing, the possibility of a self-balancing relationship of peers. But how many marriages or other friendships, business partnerships, or research teams cultivate such actions rather than comfortable habits and unexamined tensions?

Is not the unresolved struggle between and within the sexes in postmodern society at its best the struggle toward true peer relationship, toward true mutuality between different powers? How easy is this struggle? How many of us have experienced the full challenge and support of a lifetime friendship dedicated to mutual development toward self-balancing-in-relationship?

On an organizational scale, the family is the most intimate, the most ancient, and the most explicitly dedicated to cultivating the empowerment, self-discipline, productivity, and capacity for inquiry of the subordinates (but even the use of this term for children violates our intuitive sense of familial mutuality). The family is the only organization that has always been expected to cultivate multiple transformations among its "subordinates," ultimately developing all its members' capacities for true peer relationships, for true adulthood. Need I ask how many families fully succeed in this mission? Need I ask how many other organizations—whether military, commercial, political, or religious—even recognize the cultivation of their members' power of balance as a central element of their mission?

Section I of this book examines a number of fundamentally different types of power, shows how they relate to the worldviews held by persons at different developmental stages, and shows how organizations can be structured to help persons develop to later stages where they come to appreciate and to exercise the power of balance.

Do Universities Cultivate the Power of Balance?

Perhaps the church of modernity—the university—comes closest to cultivating the power of balance. But how close does it come? Through sports, the university cultivates the physical power of balance. But often it does so only for a few; and, for those few, at the cost of nearly total neglect of the emotional and intellectual elements of the university's mission.

Through extracurricular activities, notably drama and music groups, the university cultivates the emotional power of balance between passion and dispassion, commitment and detachment, subjectivity and objectivity. But usually it does so for even fewer than benefit through sports; and rarely indeed does it highlight the essential link between the physical-emotional capacity for improving one's performances and the intellectual capacity to conduct scientific, collaborative inquiry.

But it is the curriculum, the teaching process, and the model of scientific research of the modern university—the intellectual component of the university—that is most wanting with regard to cultivating the power of balance.

The intellectual power of balance includes the executive capacity to think on one's feet in the midst of crisis. It includes the moral capacity to act with integrity and compassion in times of pressure, adversity, turbulence, and transformation. It includes the strategic capacity to weave all that one knows, all that one intuits, and all that one neglects into actions that reverberate positively on *all* time horizons. And it includes the visionary capacity to see what one does not see—the visionary capacity to challenge the assumptions of one's current way of seeing and thinking—the visionary capacity to see other perspectives and to see through transformations in one's own perspective.

Few classrooms teach any of these, even few classrooms in professional schools that are supposedly preparing students to exercise judgment in action. Many university leaders claim that these qualities cannot be taught at all. Overall, modern science and the modern university neither espouse, nor practice, nor cultivate self-balancing power. This is a potential aim for the next five centuries of social science and higher education.

During the past five centuries, science and universities have opted for detachment as a stance, rather than commitment; for inquiry as an ideal, rather than action (as though inquiry itself were not an action); for teaching practices that more often approach inculcating dogma than mutual experimenting (for example, humanities teachers—even in small Honors seminars—typically *lecture* about Plato's *dialogues*); for scientific methods that maximize the researcher's unilateral control over variables, rather than generating mutual responsibility among the participants in the research.

In all these and many other ways, the intellectual tradition of the modern university has been aimed at creating a balance of power between the unbalanced "real world" of passionately committed subjectivity, on the one hand, and the equally unbalanced "ivory tower" ideal of detachment, objectivity, and rationality, on the other hand.

This balance of power between the real world and the ivory tower may have been a critical step in the development of civilization. But now is the time to take the next step. From their various, *unbalanced stances*, universities and all other organizations can seek to transform into *self-balancing actors*. The beauty and the horror of every lived model of the world is that it is an empirically self-fulfilling prophecy: the balance-of-power model assumes that every power is unbalanced, unilateral in its exercise, and self-interested in a limited and non-self-transforming way; and so we find universities and other organizations today. The power-of-balance model postulates that power *can* be exercised to balance oneself in relation to others and to cultivate the capacity for such mutual self-balancing, if lifetime efforts are committed to developing such power; and so universities and other organizations can become during the next five centuries, if lifetime efforts are so committed.

Over the past five centuries, European (and now also American) political and economic theory and practice have evolved two opposed and equally unbalanced stances. One stance, developed by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Adam Smith, and many others, has so far culminated in democratic capitalism and emphasizes negative freedom—freedom from constraint, "consumer sovereignty"—as an end. The other stance, developed by Rousseau, Hegel, Marx and others, has so far culminated in state socialisms of the left and right and emphasizes positive freedom. In theory, this means development toward personal fulfillment. In practice, it has so far meant obedience to someone's particular notion of order.

Because both freedom and order are necessary *together* for humans to breathe, work, love, and engage in transformational learning, existing political and economic theories are confusing, misleading, and unfulfilling as guides for the future. For the twenty-first century, we need a theory and practice of *liberating structure*—a theory of power, a practice of management, and a method of inquiry that integrate freedom and order, empowerment and discipline, inquiry and productivity, transformation and stability—to guide families and universities, companies and nations, international agencies, and the media in generating outcomes consistent with their dreams, their duties, and their responsibilities.

The last two chapters of Section I and all of Section II of this book offer extended illustrations of some initial educational experiments that have helped to define what the theory and practice of liberating structures look like.

Educational Leadership, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Liberating Structures

As the foregoing discussion of power has already strongly suggested, once one commits to cultivating the power of balance both for the organization as a whole and for its individual members, the essence of effective management becomes the creation of an educational process for members that improves quality—quality of product, quality of organizational positioning, and quality of participants' awareness. In the business world, such an educational process amidst productive work is nowadays sometimes called "continuous quality improvement," usually without the least notion of what this entails. Continuous quality improvement requires a type of liberating organizational structure that maximizes productivity and inquiry—that maximizes accountability and the opportunity for developmental transformation toward self-balancing among peers.

Not only schools and universities, but also business firms, have every reason to seek out and learn how to implement such educational leadership and liberating structures. In today's business climate, firms frequently must cut costs and time-to-market, not by 5% or 10%, but by 25% or 50% in order to remain competitive. This requires unprecedented levels of collaboration within teams and among departments; it requires reduced supervision, increased local autonomy and accountability, and widespread capacities to resolve conflict; and it requires rapid, transformational learning on the part of individuals and groups. In short, firms will increasingly be differentiated by their capacity to cultivate their members' power of balance. Moreover, given today's rapid product cycles and the constant redefinition of business units through merger, acquisition, and divestment, entire organizations must be capable of learning, of structural transformation, and of active self-balancing as never before.

Finally, firms are becoming increasingly professionalized and service oriented, and the professional service sector of the economy (investments, law, accounting, health care, consulting, software, the media, etc.) is rapidly growing as a proportion of the entire economy. These trends are turning universities into more than just amusing and unworldly models of how *not* to organize. They are turning universities into a leading industry in the economy; and they are turning universities (as well as legal, consulting, and managed health care firms) into models of the dilemma of how to organize autonomous professionals in a productive way without inhibiting fundamental inquiry.

What kind of leadership and organizational structure integrates the apparently incompatible qualities of shared purposiveness with self-direction, of high productivity with confrontative inquiry, and of both pairs with one another? There is much at stake for universities themselves, for the professional service sector of the economy, and for the economy as a whole in examining, as this book does, the experience of particular schools that are attempting and succeeding at such an integration.

Put differently, *if it can be done at a university, it can be done anywhere!*

This book addresses three questions at the heart of both education and management—at the heart of the practice of educational leadership. These questions are:

(1) *How to learn something that improves one's own and one's organization's performance?*
(2) *How to create organizational conditions where such performance-improving learning can regularly take place?* and

(3) *What kind of social science generates knowledge relevant to, and conditions conducive to, performance-improving learning?*

Each of these questions is progressively more difficult. We cannot appreciate how difficult these questions are to answer until we recognize that very little of the learning that occurs in universities or corporate training programs today leads to performance improvements. The little that *does,* does so almost exclusively on the most primitive level of learning particular *predefined skills.* Yet the power of balance is discovered only as one achieves the capacity to diagnose unique (previously undefined) situations as they are occurring and the capacity to fashion uniquely suitable actions then and there.

Not only a personal power of balance, but a still higher order of the power of balance is necessary in order to respond successfully to the second question above—that is, to create organizational conditions for such performance-improving learning. To share in the leadership of such an organizational transformation, one must be prepared to use, to meet, and to transform other, more common types of power that may be intentionally or unintentionally arrayed against creating organizational conditions for continual quality improvement.

The rest of this book will seek to give the reader many different impressions of how distant this horizon is. I believe it critical to emphasize the distance of this journey, not in order to be discouraging, but rather to suggest its dignity and grandeur, and the necessity for many of us to make and map the journey together, rather than to await a chauffeur. Section II documents some of the stumbles and bumps, agonies and epiphanies, that attended one organizational experiment in this direction some twenty years ago.

As for the third question—what kind of social science generates knowledge, practice, and methods conducive to performance-improving learning?—it is, if anything, a more devilish question than either of the other two. As will be discussed in Section III, contemporary social science does not generate such knowledge or such conditions, and a social science that does so, such as this book attempts to begin to illustrate, represents a paradigm change as significant as the change from medieval theology to modern natural science.[3]

Notes

1. No theory, practice, or method is absolutely new, of course, and I will trace the lineage of these throughout the book. However, even the closest approximations to this theory, practice, and method do not integrate the three, as is done here, nor are they the same in many particulars, as will become clear in the body of the book. Most important

of all, the approximations to the theory, practice, and method presented here do not view themselves as representing a new paradigm of knowledge and action, as different from the secular science and practice of the past five centuries as these have been from medieval theology. This book espouses and attempts to embody, as much as a book can, a new paradigm of social science and practice.

2. Among many illustrations of this thesis, I would suggest Bloom, A., 1968, *The Republic of Plato*, New York: Basic Books; and Yourcenar, M., 1954, *The Memoirs of Hadrian*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Recent works that attempt to recover this more complex and dignified ancient perspective include: Bateson, G., 1972, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, New York: Ballantine; Needleman, J., 1975, *A Sense of the Cosmos: The Encounter of Modern Science and Ancient Knowledge*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday; and Ogilvie, J., 1977, *Many Dimensional Man: Decentralizing Self, Society and the Sacred*, New York: Oxford University Press.

3. I have attempted to illustrate this new paradigm approach to social science and social practice in one earlier book: See Torbert, W., 1976, *Creating a Community of Inquiry: Conflict, Collaboration, Transformation*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley.

SECTION I

Theory and Strategy

1 Power and Justice

This book proposes that leaders in politics, business, the media, education, and science can exercise an inherently positive kind of power that can be called *the power of balance*. It also proposes that leaders *must* exercise this power of balance *if* they are to succeed in generating and sustaining organizations that:

(1) empower their members;
(2) reliably increase their productivity and legitimacy; and
(3) transform appropriately in, and responsibly manage their impact on, turbulent environments.

A further claim is that whereas other types of power corrupt and require balancing by one another in order to limit corruption and injustice, the exercise of the power of balance generates increasing self-balancing, increasing personal integrity, increasing institutional efficacy, and increasing social justice.

In the final chapter of my previous book, *Managing the Corporate Dream*, I suggested that leaders must be able to exercise four different types of power.[1] I argued that these must be blended differently at different times, with different people, if they are to succeed in cultivating growth and transformation among individual organizational members and in overall organizational strategies, structures, and systems. These four types of power I call *unilateral power, diplomatic power, logistical power,* and *transforming power*. The ability to exercise and appropriately blend these four different types of power I call *the power of balance*.

In this book, I wish to explore in much greater depth how and why this hypothetical power of balance is necessary for achieving personal human fulfillment, for generating reliable organizational productivity under changing conditions, for cultivating social justice, and for conducting a

truly informing and responsible social science. I also wish to illustrate in greater depth what the turbulent but dignified experience of personal and organizational search toward the power of balance feels like. For, in order to develop this power, each person, organization, and society must undergo multiple transformations.

In the early 1990s, we see organizations throughout American industry and the service sectors recognizing the need not for incremental change, but for more fundamental transformation. At the same time, we see major organizations failing dramatically, at great costs in wealth and human suffering. For example, in January and February of 1990 two such failing organizations were the Bank of New England and Drexel, Burnham, Lambert. Astonishingly, both of their (now former) CEOs claimed that they did not believe they could have acted any differently. Clearly, they were not conducting an inquiry that brought criticisms and alternatives to their attention and that helped them act more effectively. Clearly, too, they were neither self-transforming nor organizationally transforming leaders.

We also see societies throughout the world—from the Soviet Union to South Africa—in a kind of turbulence that holds both the promise of constructive transformation and the threat of destructive violence and chaos. On a still larger scale, we see the human world as a whole on the brink of transformation beyond primary reliance on a balance of power among nation-states to increasing reliance on international institutions, especially in the area of international finance.

This chapter focuses on several questions about the different types of power, leading toward the question of what kind of power generates constructive transformation. The questions this chapter addresses are:

(1) What are the differences among three types of power—unilateral, diplomatic, and logistical?
(2) How does each type of power relate to a particular conception of ethics and justice? and
(3) How have political philosophers and administrative theorists before now thought about power and justice?

In the next chapter, I will offer some empirical data about the proportion of manager/leaders today who operate on the basis of each of these conceptions of power and justice and will indicate what the process of development can be toward the exercise of transforming power and the power of balance. Chapter 3 examines more closely what transforming power is, both conceptually and in practice. Chapters 4 and 5 explore which organizing tactics and long-term strategies of executive leadership and middle management reflect and further cultivate this blending of

powers. Then, in Section II, I illustrate these theories and strategies in first-person, experiential detail.

Unilateral Power

From the first systematic treatise on power of the modern period—Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*—to Nobel prize winner Herbert Simon's *Models of Man*, power has most frequently been defined as unilateral—as *the ability to unilaterally and unidirectionally cause the outcomes one wishes.*[2]

Sometimes, as with Hobbes, the ultimate unilateral power is described nakedly as the physical power to kill another. All men are equal, Hobbes tells us, in their ability to kill one another. Hobbes shows us the most primitive position that "natural man" can assume. The most primitive position is one in which the basic passion to live, along with the narrowly selfish passion to kill others in order to preserve one's own life, rule. Reason is subordinated to these passions. It serves instrumentally to choose the best ways to preserve one's life.

Hobbes draws this picture not to defend it as necessary, but rather to highlight its futility and the need for transformation. He characterizes life in this state of nature as a "war of all against all" that renders each individual's life "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

The fear of death motivates people to yield their smaller, problematic powers to a common sovereign. This sovereign uses the much greater collective power to secure an order, which however uncomfortable and unfree it may seem in a given instance, protects the people from the "war of all against all" and death. Hence, by yielding their power to an omnipotent sovereign, people increase their pleasure and reduce their pain (death and the fear of death). They "maximize their utility," in the more quantitative and less passionate language of later writers—even if the sovereign is extremely dominative and restrictive.

The sovereign must have absolute unilateral power, according to Hobbes, because any separation of powers increases the likelihood of struggle among the powers and hence of civil war and death. Hobbes carried his argument that the sovereign must have absolute power to its logical conclusion. Absolute executive power precludes an independent judiciary. In a true Hobbesian state, the law is what the sovereign says it is and what the sovereign says it means. The law is, by definition, just. There can be no appeal to a natural law, to philosophical principles, or to a Supreme Court beyond the sovereign, for such appeal undermines the absolute power of the sovereign. In a sense, then, Hobbes presents a philosophical justification for the view that "might makes right."[3]

Writing amidst the English civil war and the beheading of Charles I during the mid-seventeenth century, Hobbes could find immediate experiential validation for his concern. But to us Hobbes's position almost certainly sounds extreme, perhaps even crude. If this position seemed realistic in mid-seventeenth century England, it hardly seems applicable to late twentieth century America. In fact, however, our city streets sometimes closely mirror Hobbes's state of nature. Today, as I write this, the lead article in *The Boston Globe* begins as follows:

> It was growing dark on a recent winter afternoon when the frightening news swept through a local youth program: the van that usually drove the teen-agers home had broken down. A terrified silence blanketed the room as youths realized that they might have to walk home along the darkened city streets.
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> "A kid came to me in a total panic," said Laval Brown, program coordinator of the Dorchester Youth Collaborative. "He was terrified. He said, 'I can't walk home, I just can't walk home. Someone got killed on my street. I'll get killed too.' "
>
> The youth made it home, running all the way. But in the last eight days, three young men did not make it home alive and a fourth was fatally shot through the window of his mother's apartment. And the city's children know it. They know that at a time of mind-bending violence they cannot entirely be children on the city's streets, that they must surrender some of their freedoms to preserve their lives.
>
> Instead, they live by rules no adult ever taught them and recognize boundaries that are on no city map.
>
> "There're just certain places you don't go," explained Brian McKinney, 16, a rangy figure standing on a small porch above an abandoned lot in Dorchester. "You don't take no shortcuts, ever, 'cause people be waiting for you. Sometimes you alternate your route on the way home. Myself, I try not to know a lot of people. You can't trust 'em.' "[4]

"I try not to know a lot of people. You can't trust 'em." Obviously, a realistic approach to life under conditions such as those just described; obviously, too, a dreadfully impoverished approach to life. Surely, we wish to say, there must be more to social life than this! Yet before we explore how this may be so, we must briefly acknowledge the vast arenas of human experience that are today characterized by such conditions and such a worldview. To take just two examples: Whole countries—most notably Colombia—are deeply influenced by the corruption and violence explicitly cultivated by drug cartels and individual drug barons; also, whole countries—most notably Iraq and its president Saddam Hussein—operate in terms of unilateral, threat power both outside (Hussein has

threatened to "scorch half of Israel" with weapons of mass destruction) and inside (depopulation of the Kurdish minority and the death penalty for "insulting" the president). As I make my final revisions, Iraq has just completed the blitzkrieg takeover of Kuwait.

An Ethical System Consistent with Unilateral Power

"Might makes right" and the fear that controls behavior under such conditions is not ordinarily viewed as a serious ethical theory, but rather as the antithesis of ethics. An ethical perspective is usually thought of as providing a basis for decisions other than one's initial desires and fears. Certainly, Rousseau, Kant, and Rawls (whose views on power, justice, and ethics will be considered later) do not view might as inherently right. Indeed, we will see Rousseau argue precisely that might can*not* make right.

There is one ethical theory, however, that corresponds closely to the Hobbesian perspective on power. This is utilitarianism. I have already hinted at this correspondence between Hobbesian might and utilitarian right in writing of people's choice to yield power to a sovereign as increasing their utility.

In utilitarian ethical theory, the right or just decision is that which generates the greatest good for the greatest number. The good is that which increases pleasure and reduces pain for each. To maximize pleasure and to minimize pain is to maximize utility. In this theory, rationality is defined as the instrumental calculation of how to maximize utility—how to satisfy desires (*not* as a criterion for judging the worthiness of one's desires). This is one of the principal correspondences between the Hobbesian theory of power and the utilitarian theory of justice—that both explicitly treat desires as ends and reason as a subordinate, calculative means.

Given this correspondence, the correspondence already hinted at follows. Hobbesian political theory can be restated in utilitarian terms as:

(1) The fear of death and the likelihood of actual death are infinitely more painful than any other deprivations; hence,
(2) The pleasure of their attenuation by means of the Hobbesian sovereign will outweigh any finite pains the sovereign's particular decisions may inflict.

Because we ordinarily associate utilitarianism with neo-classical economic theory—laissez-faire market theory in particular—and because

such economic theory is ordinarily thought to emphasize *minimal* state interference in individual decision-making, the overall correspondence between utilitarianism and Hobbes is not immediately obvious. As draconian as the Hobbesian power equation sounds, however, it does not require a sovereign who is absolutely dictatorial in all decisions. Thus the Hobbesian sovereign could choose to cultivate a vigorous market system within a larger framework of executive prerogative.

Over the past generation, Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore may have best exemplified such a correlation of unilateral executive power and utilitarianism. On the one hand, there are real questions about the degree of personal, media, and judiciary independence of expression in Singapore; on the other hand, there is no question about the support for a market economy in Singapore. In 1990, Brazil's new president, Fernando Collor de Mello, is making a similar attempt: to use a strong authoritative initiative, in the form of a "shocking" economic plan, to stop inflation and create a more market-regulated economy.

The deepest correspondence between the Hobbesian perspective on power and the utilitarian perspective on economics, ethics, and justice is that both perspectives *implicitly* require a kind of rationality that weighs, compares, and organizes desires, rather than merely calculating how best to achieve them. How the Hobbesian perspective does this is clearest and most nearly explicit. Simply put, in his theory the omnipotent power of the sovereign is based on a rational contract to which people's desires are henceforward subordinate. Insofar as such a contract is adhered to, such adherence represents the victory of constructive, framing, long-term reasoning over immediate desires abetted by instrumental, calculative, short-term reasoning.

That utilitarian theory also implicitly requires an omniscient, rational sovereign who organizes the relations among desires is less obvious. Nevertheless, it does. For, in order to calculate the greatest good for the greatest number, one must assume that both individuals and society have a rational capacity that reduces all qualitatively different pains and pleasures (e.g., hunger and loneliness, or chocolate, oat bran, and hearing God's voice) to a comparable, quantitative scale (a lowest common denominator).[5] In his early book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith explicitly describes such a self-regulating inner observer (he called it "the man within the breast") within each individual. A careful reading, however, shows that Smith was inconsistent: He also recognized at some moments that such a sovereign inner conscience must in fact be explicitly constituted by each individual and is a rather unlikely eventuality.[6]

Later, Smith would describe in *The Wealth of Nations* how a competitive pricing system generates an efficient quantitative scale for comparisons, a lowest common denominator among otherwise qualitatively different

values. Just as the man within the breast purportedly serves a self-regulating function on the individual level, the "invisible hand" of the market pricing system under competition serves this same self-regulating function socially. But a pricing system cannot determine the definition of what is property; hence, the prevalence of Intellectual Property Committees in major corporations today, and the litigiousness of the software industry. Nor can a pricing system determine the value of money, money-making, and money-saving, as compared to leisure or consumption. That is, a pricing system cannot determine how a person should value his or her time (for example, writing earns me no money; consulting earns me a great deal of money; but I value writing much more than consulting).

The trick is that a pricing system can wonderfully *reflect* how people value time. But if persons are not independent valuers of their own time, guided by self-determined aims, they may fall into believing that price determines action, and they may do what pays most or costs least for that reason alone. So, a pricing system can trick people about their own self-interest, especially if it is defined as the primary rational calculus in decision making. Indeed, Adam Smith showed that he understood that the invisible hand might just as likely mislead persons about their interests as serve those interests.[7]

The United States is a country that holds "consumer sovereignty" and "everybody is entitled to his or her own opinion" as among its highest individual and social values. People are assumed to be rational in the sense of being able to calculate how to satisfy desire, but there is little tolerance for the possibility that personal and social decisions require something more than calculative rationality—that they may require the construction of a framing, regulative rationality that relates valued aims to valued actions. Religion fills this need for a regulative framework, if it is felt at all, and religion is typically considered to be nonrational—a matter of personal feeling, faith, preference. One result of this atomistic, utilitarian approach is an energetic, individualistic, entrepreneurial approach to life. Another result is a great deal of internecine conflict among regulative frames (in marriages, organizations, and communities) that people do not regard as being rationally resolvable and that they consequently do not cultivate the skills or proclivities to resolve directly.

If there is in fact a strong correspondence between the utilitarian orientation and the exercise of unilateral power, as suggested in this section, we would expect people in this country to resort to the exercise of unilateral power in the face of unresolved conflict. Hence, we would expect a high homicide rate, a high divorce rate, and a hell of a lot of litigation. All these are true of the United States.

Here, it is worth emphasizing that the exercise of unilateral power need not sound like the physical, life-and-death matter that Hobbes makes it

out to be. It may just as well appear in the guise of a rational, impersonal, bureaucratic, even scientific phenomenon. Such is the quality of unilateral power in the work of Nobel prize winner Herbert Simon who has been thinking about organizational bureaucracies during the mid-twentieth century. Simon says, "For the assertion, 'A has power over B', we can substitute the assertion 'A's behavior causes B's behavior.' If we can define the causal relationship, we can define . . . power. . . . [It is] a problem of giving operational meaning to the asymmetry of the relationship between independent and dependent variable."[8] Again, as with Hobbes, we see power defined as unilateral and unidirectional (asymmetrical). But this time the power may, presumably, be physical force, social attraction, or a cognitive structure such as an organizational chart.

Whether the writer be political scientist Robert Dahl, economist John Kenneth Galbraith, or organizational theorist Jeffrey Pfeffer, this underlying definition of power as causing change in the less powerful, no matter what the will of the less powerful, remains the same.[9] As Pfeffer summarizes, "Most definitions of power include an element indicating that power is the capability of one social actor to overcome resistance in achieving a desired objective or result."[10]

Indeed, so universally accepted is this element of the definition of power that many readers must be wondering why it merits discussion. Nevertheless, this book *does* contest this element of the definition of power. I do not contend that power *never* has an element of unilateral, unidirectional causation that overcomes resistance. But I do contend that other kinds of power can also be exercised, and that power cannot, therefore, be *defined* as *the ability to unilaterally and unidirectionally cause the outcomes one wishes.*

Another Approach to Power—Diplomatic Power

The second most common approach to power is, paradoxically, the very reverse of the first approach. In this view, power is generated not by the power-wielder but by the power-*yielder*—by the consent of the governed. A century after Hobbes, and in response to his claims, Rousseau introduced an argument against the notion of power as necessarily unilateral causation and in favor of power ~~as consent~~. In this version of power, a visible leader is successful in exercising power to the degree that he or she has the diplomatic ability to determine what the governed actually want and to present proposals that will gain their consent.

Rousseau proclaimed at the outset of *The Social Contract,*

> If force creates right, the effect changes with the cause: every force that is greater than the first succeeds to its right. . . . But what kind of right is that which perishes when force fails? If we must obey perforce, there is no need to obey because we ought; if we are not forced to obey, we are under no obligation to do so. . . . Let us then admit that force does not create right, and we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers.[11]

Rousseau goes on to argue that because coerced consent yields no obligation, legitimate power can only be founded on unanimous, uncoerced consent.

This is no mere abstruse principle of political philosophy. In business, Chester Barnard, a twentieth-century corporate president, states unequivocally, "There is no principle of executive conduct better established in good organizations than that orders will not be issued that cannot or will not be obeyed. . . . To do so destroys authority, discipline, and morale."[12]

To what kind of social contract would any and all individuals give consent? Only, Rousseau tells us, to an "association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before."[13]

How is such a condition possible, the reader may well ask. Rousseau's great insight, which inspired Kant in turn, was that a person is free only when obeying his or her rational will and that because reason is precisely internally consistent and generalizable, everyone's "rational will" will be the same. Hence, a state governed by rational will—what Rousseau called the General Will—is a state in which persons are simultaneously united with all and free to do as they wish.

The obvious question is how one discovers what truly constitutes this General Will. As one helpful step, Rousseau offered a conceptual distinction between the rational General Will and another quality that he named the Private Will or the Will of All. The Will of All is the sum total of what people desire irrespective of whether it is rational in the sense of being universalizable. In other words, the Will of All can be a version of utilitarianism or consumer sovereignty—those decisions that generate the maximum pleasure or utility among the concerned population, irrespective of their general rationality or universalizability.

For example, if slavery for some and addiction to drugs or alcohol for many is what gives the most pleasure to the most people, then the organization or state should promote these conditions, *if* the state is guided by this version of the Will of All. But because such conditions abrogate the freedom of some and the rationality of many, they will not be consented to by all, they are not universalizable, and, hence, they do

not represent the General Will. More subtly, a democratic assembly may refuse to raise taxes to cover budget deficits, and this action may very well represent the wishes of a majority of citizens, and hence the Will of All, without necessarily representing the General Will.

Another, different version of the Will of All is any claim made by a leader that certain decisions and actions represent the historical spirit or future destiny of a whole people, irrespective of the effect of such decisions and actions on those not included in the definition of that people. Authoritarian leaders like Napoleon, Hitler, Lenin, or a modern corporate chief executive can claim to act in the name of the people even if a majority opposes them. They can claim, indeed, to be acting on behalf of the General Will, courageously opposing the temporary Will of All, without any clear method for determining whether this is so. In short, this discussion sharpens the question of how one distinguishes the Private Will from the General Will.

Unfortunately, as with Adam Smith's lack of clarity about how to develop an embracing and rational self-observation by the man within the breast, Rousseau is equally unsatisfying about how to distinguish the Private Will from the General Will. It was part of his genius to distinguish clearly on a conceptual level between these two types of social will; but it was part of his limit not to provide a practical political method for making this distinction in actual cases.

Nevertheless, the notion that there is a kind of power derived not from the strength of a power-wielder but rather from the consent of power-yielders has played a central role both in philosophy and in practical affairs since Rousseau. Thomas Jefferson's words provide the most influential expression of this point of view: "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Perhaps the most obvious arena in which the Will of All exercises power is the realm of entertainment and the media. The media and entertainment personalities who have the mysterious talent to draw mass attention become the source of far-flung enterprises. Their power is based on others' willingness to give them their attention. As one player on the Hollywood scene recently put it, "All of Hollywood is parasitic except for true talent." In this formulation, true talent represents legitimate authority because it commands the power (and revenues) associated with the willingness of the population at large to attend to it.

This "diplomatic" type of power has something to do with justice or legitimacy as according with the people's will, and something—but something very much less obvious—to do with the rationality of such a will.

A Third Perspective on Power and Justice—Rational, Logistical Power and the Theory of Rights

Kant responded to Rousseau's enunciation of the General Will by concentrating on the rational element in such a will, rather than on the element of consent. In doing so, Kant did not develop a *political or managerial method* of determining the General Will; instead, he transformed the idea of freedom as obedience to rational will into an *ethical injunction* for individuals.

"Everything in nature works according to laws," Kant tells us. "Only a rational being has the power to act according to his conception of laws, i.e., according to principles, and thereby has he a will. Since the derivation of actions from laws requires reason, the will is nothing but practical reason."[14] We are free only when we exercise our rational will, not when we are compelled by irrational desires. Hence, insofar as we have will at all, we will consent to what is rational. Indeed, in Kant's view, as we can see in the foregoing quotation, not unilateral force, not consent, but reason *is* power. In Kant, "reason," "power," "will," and "freedom" all directly imply one another.

Kant's "Categorical Imperative" enjoins each of us (because he believes that upon reflection, we will find it the only rational way) to act only in ways that are universilizable. This means to act only as we would wish others to act toward us and only in ways that treat ourselves and other persons as ends (never merely as means).[15] For example, Kant suggests that in following the Categorical Imperative we would not lie, because we would not wish others to lie to us, and we would not commit suicide, because we would not thereby be treating ourselves as ends.

Kant is resolutely puritanical in his devotion to the rational:

> The pure thought of duty and the moral law generally, unmixed with any extraneous addition of empirical inducements, has by the way of reason alone . . . an influence on the human heart . . . much more powerful than all other incentives. . . . When a righteous act is represented as being done with a steadfast soul and sundered from all view to any advantage in this or another world, and even under the greatest temptations of need or allurement, it far surpasses and eclipses any similar action that was in the least affected by any extraneous incentive; it elevates the soul and inspires the wish to be able to act in this way. Even moderately young children feel this impression, and duties should never be represented to them in any other way.[16]

In this passage, again, we see the identity that Kant makes between reason and power, even in interpersonal relations between adults and children. The resulting political vision is of an ideal "Kingdom of Ends" (a phrase that Kant uses), wherein each citizen is highly independent and free, never coerced, persuaded only by rational argument, and with the right to be treated with the full dignity of an End. In this approach, legitimate or just action procedurally does not violate another's rights, and just laws provide equal protection to all citizens, regardless of race, religion, or sexual preference. Whether or not the action or the law maximizes utility or is voted as desireable is irrelevant to its justice, according to Kant.

For example, most people may be disgusted by consensual acts of homosexual sodomy among adults. Such acts may be regarded as sinful by certain religions. Indeed, the Supreme Court may rule (as it did in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, 1986) that no "right of privacy" protects one against prosecution for such acts.[17] Nevertheless, any law that discriminates by criminalizing such acts only when they involve partners of the same sex is clearly not a universalizable maxim and violates the Constitutional provision of "equal protection under the law."

Insofar as we think of power as unilateral coercion or peer pressure to conform to some irrational Will of All, the purely rational Kantian position and procedure appears to abjure the use of power altogether—to treat power and justice as mutually exclusive. As the foregoing quotation demonstrates, Kant did view these other two types of power as illegitimate. But he also viewed them as ineffectual, and this follows from his distinctive view of what power is. Power is the ability to do something rational rather than being caused to do something by internal desire or external pressure. Hence, from Kant's perspective, real power and true justice are coterminus. Put differently, for Kant power and authority are coterminus: Real power is invariably authoritative.

Whereas the Hobbesian view of power and justice emphasizes the physical, monarchical, executive function, the Rousseauvian view of power and justice emphasizes the emotional, democratic, legislative function; and the Kantian view of power and justice emphasizes the rational, aristocratic, judiciary function.[18]

This overview of the three approaches to power and justice invites us to question whether there is yet another approach to power and justice that combines all three. Historically, of course, we know that an actual social contract—the Constitution of the United States—based on the combination and separation of these three types of power, was constructed at the same time that Kant lived. But this social contract did not, during its first century, embody Kant's Categorical Imperative. It permitted slavery. Not until after the bloodiest of civil wars and the passage of

the Fourteenth Amendment did the Constitution more nearly represent a successful blending of the three types of power. And not until political philosopher John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice* in 1972 did we have a more or less complete intellectual explication of this fourth approach to power and justice.[19]

Integrating Unilateral, Diplomatic, and Logistical Power

In his description of child rearing in a just society, Rawls exemplifies how the three types of power we have so far reviewed interact with one another. First, he says, the child will learn the "morality of authority." At this stage, parents unilaterally enunciate and enforce rules of conduct; but, according to Rawls, their unilateral power is not absolute and arbitrary. It only becomes authoritative (legitimate) and only has the power to generate moral development toward principled conduct insofar as parents:

(1) make just rules;
(2) give the reasons for them in an understandable fashion; and
(3) enact the rules they enjoin when the rules apply to them as well.

In Rawls' words:

> First, the parents must love the child and be worthy objects of his admiration. In this way they arouse in him a sense of his own value and the desire to become the sort of person that they are. Secondly, they must enunciate clear and intelligible (and of course, justifiable) rules adapted to the child's level of comprehension. In addition they should set out the reasons for these injunctions so far as these can be understood, and they must follow these precepts insofar as they apply to them as well. The parents should exemplify the morality they enjoin, and make explicit its underlying principles as time goes on. Doing this is required not only to arouse the child's inclination to accept these principles at a later time, but also to convey how they are to be interpreted in particular cases.[20]

Obviously, the exercise of unilateral power that Rawls condones in a just society is no mere arbitrary or narrowly selfish use of such power for private or utilitarian ends, irrespective of its impact on others' rights and development. In fact, directly to the contrary, Rawls here advocates a loving and principled use of unilateral power.

Next, Rawls establishes the role for diplomatic power or peer consent in the development of the youth in a just society. As the child becomes a teenager, he or she learns the "morality of association." Through participation on sports teams, the school newspaper, and other such organizations with peers, the youth begins to mold his or her conduct based more on pleasing equals than on obeying superiors. In Rawls words, again:

> Someone attaining . . . the morality of association . . . is concerned to win acceptance for his conduct or aims. . . . While the individual understands the principles of justice, his motive for complying with them, for the time at least, springs largely from his ties of friendship and fellow feeling for others, and his concern for the approbation of the wider society.[21]

Again, in Rawls' hypothetical just society, this diplomatic power is exercised, not arbitrarily, but in the context of organizational goals and norms that are consistent with justice.

These experiences of the proper morality of authority and morality of association gradually lead the youth to realize that positive experiences are associated with the principles of justice behind the rules obeyed and the approbation received. Hence, gradually, as the youth becomes an adult, he or she makes the rational principles of justice fully explicit and gives them allegiance in their own right. Thus the adult becomes committed to a "morality of principle." In this way, all three types of power play a role in human development in a just society, according to Rawls, and they do so in a way that reinforces allegiance to the principles of justice from generation to generation.

What are these principles of justice? Rawls formulates two principles of justice that he believes follow from rational reflection. Interestingly and consistently, these two principles themselves reflect all three types of justice associated with the three types of power. His first principle of justice is:

> Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.[22]

His second principle of justice is:

> Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged . . . and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.[23]

Rawls's first principle of justice is compatible with Kant's Categorical Imperative. The enunciation of a system of liberties for all emphasizes rationality by the word "system," emphasizes treating each citizen as an end by the word "liberty," and emphasizes reciprocality and universilizability by emphasizing that everyone is entitled to this condition.

Rawls's second principle of justice generates additional conditions that will attract the consent and approbation of citizens and will also generate utilitarian results. Inequalities of position and wealth (to which those with less would not consent, all else being equal) are to be tolerated *only* as these benefit those with less. In other words, a person may consent to receive less income than another, if the additional income motivates the other to become a doctor and cure the less wealthy person. If persons with less income gain greater utility from being healthy than they would from the additional income, they will rationally prefer and choose this condition over that of having equal income but less health. Herewith, Rawls integrates rationality, rights, consent, and utility in his two principles of justice.

The Gap Between Theory and Practice— The Difficulty with Doing Rawls Justice

Rawls's work is a theoretical tour de force. Although it has sustained critiques from all angles of the scholarly spectrum, it has proved remarkably robust on a theoretical level. Its Achilles' heel is the question of practice.

There are three problems of practice, of which Rawls solves only one. One problem of practice is this: Once a just state is created, will its normal practice sustain its citizens' commitment to just outcomes and to maintaining the necessary institutions? This problem of practice Rawls can claim to have solved by showing how children's upbringing in a just society will lead them to adopt a morality of principle and how this principled morality will lead in turn to the two substantive principles of morality he articulates.

The second problem of practice is whether, by this theory, contemporary social practice can be considered just. The answer to this question is clearly "No." For we parents know from our own experience, as do many of our children, that few parents indeed meet Rawls's criterion of enunciating, explicating, and enacting principled rules in child-rearing. Moreover, developmental research shows that only a very small minority of adults in our society achieves a morality of principle.[24] So, there is a gap between present social practice and Rawls's just society.

The existence of such a gap between ideal and actual practice is not terribly surprising. Nor, obviously, is it a shortcoming of Rawls' theory. But it does pose a third practical question for his theory of justice and for any other theory of justice that shows a gap between the ideal it articulates and the actual current practice of society.

The third problem of practice is this: Given this gap between current practice and just practice, does Rawls's theory provide a vision and method for transforming the relatively unjust and corrupt society into one that is more just and displays greater integrity? The answer to this question is, again, "No." Although the very explication of his theory may improve legislative, executive, and judicial decision making, Rawls does not explicitly present that as a process for transforming a relatively unjust society, nor does he present any other process for transforming a relatively unjust society.

We should, however, pause to consider the efficacy of explicating a robust theory of justice as a method of social change. We see, first of all, that it is a very Kantian approach to social change. Through his theory of justice, Rawls acquaints us with our social duties and provides us with no inducements to act in a just manner other than "the pure thought of duty." We will recall that according to Kant, "The pure thought of duty and the moral law generally . . . has by the way of reason alone . . . an influence on the human heart . . . much more powerful than all other incentives." So, explicating a theory of justice can be defended as a method—indeed it can be defended as the *best* method—for influencing a relatively unjust society to become more just.

But Rawls himself does not believe that the explication of principle or theory alone is sufficient to generate justice from generation to generation, even in a society that is already just. As we have seen, he holds that in a just society parents must exercise their unilateral power over children, and youthful friends their diplomatic power over one another, as parts of a long process of cultivating adult personalities that listen and respond to the voice of reason. Moreover, the parents are to love their children and to act consistently with the ideals they preach, if they are to attract their childrens' allegiance to those ideals. In short, according to Rawls, much more than the explication of pure reason is necessary to sustain an already just society. Unilateral power, diplomatic power, love, and an awareness of incongruities between one's own reasons and actions (a precondition for developing consistency between one's own principles and practices) are all also necessary.

In a relatively unjust society, the dilemma of how to generate justice must be all the greater. Parents are less likely to be enjoining true principles of justice to their children. They are also less likely to display congruity or integrity—that is, to act consistently with whatever princi-

ples they enjoin. Also, friends are less likely to exercise diplomatic power in a manner that reinforces true principles of justice.

Hence, in a less just society, children are likely to experience their parents' power as relatively arbitrary, rather than as conveying a rational and admirable morality of authority. Likewise, youths are likely to experience peer groups as requiring conformity to relatively arbitrary norms, rather than as reinforcing their parents' teachings through a rational and admirable morality of association. And adults are likely to experience organizations in which superiors and peers also act in relatively arbitrary and internally inconsistent ways, rather than according to a rational and admirable morality of principle. Socialization of this kind breeds fear, distrust, and disrespect for designated authorities and for peers, as well as low self-esteem and little faith in one's own reason.

Under such conditions, superiors are likely to assert their authority unilaterally and without justification, especially under challenge. Subordinates are likely to consent and conform externally, especially under threat. Reasoned discourse is likely to retreat further and further from the political world into specialist, ivory tower, or bureaucratic settings.

To transform such a relatively unjust society—to narrow the gap between the actual and the ideal—requires a kind of power that goes beyond the unilateral, diplomatic, and logistical kinds of power discussed in this chapter. It also requires a conception of justice that goes beyond the utilitarian, consensual, and principled conceptions discussed in this chapter.

The next two chapters introduce the developmental process that persons evolve through if they are to approach the conception and practice of this dynamic, transforming type of power and justice.

Notes

1. See Torbert, W., 1987, *Managing the Corporate Dream: Restructuring for Long-Term Success,* Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin. This book will hereinafter be referred to simply as *MCD.*

2. Hobbes, T., 1960, reprinted from 1651, *Leviathan,* Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell; Simon, H., 1957, *Models of Man,* New York: John Wiley.

3. This is not *strictly* true, for Hobbes bases the sovereign's claim to absolute power on the prior social contract by which he claims citizens can be supposed to have granted the sovereign such power as the only sure means to preserve peace and hence life. In the strict sense, then, Hobbes argues that right makes might, and so begins a process in Western political philosophy and political history whereby sovereign power is seen to emanate from below, from the citizen—rather than from above, from God.

4. Jacobs, S., 1990, "As streets turn deadly, youth revise their survival code," *The Boston Globe,* 2/24: 1. Used by permission.

5. For details, see Rawls, J., 1972, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 167-187.

6. Smith, A., 1969, reprinted from 1759, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics. "The man of real constancy and firmness who has been bred in the bustle and business of the world has never dared to forget for one moment the judgment which the impartial spectator would pass upon his sentiments and conduct. He has never dared to suffer the man within the breast to be absent one moment from his attention. With the eyes of this great inmate he has always been accustomed to regard whatever related to himself (p. 246)." These powerful lines argue that particularly people bred in "bustle and business" are ethically self-regulating—an argument particularly difficult to accept uncritically in the post-Boesky, post-Bakker, post-North era.

In another place, Smith offers a quite different sense of our relation to the impartial spectator. He acknowledges, for example, that practice under conditions of hardship is necessary to awaken the man within the breast, and that no one willingly undergoes such hardship (pp. 255-256).

At still another point, Smith acknowledges the almost superhuman difficulty of operating amidst passions and hardships while remaining awake to the impartial observer within the breast; to become impartial in reflection is a wholly different challenge from being impartial in the midst of action: "When the action is over . . . and the passions which prompted it have subsided, we can enter more coolly into the sentiments of the indifferent spectator. . . . But our judgments now are often of little importance in comparison of what they were before, and can frequently produce nothing but vain regret and unavailing repentance, without always securing us from like errors in time to come. It is seldom, however, that they are quite candid even in this case. . . . He is a bold surgeon, they say, whose hand does not tremble when he performs an operation on his own person; and he is often equally bold who does not hesitate to pull off the mysterious veil of self-delusion which covers from his view the deformities of his own conduct (p. 262)."

Obviously, there is considerable tension between Smith's two views: the one of an impartial, omniscient spectator who, almost by birthright, dwells within our breast and whom we never dare to forget for one moment; the second of an impartial spectator to whom even the most capable of us may never awaken at the crucially decisive moments of our lives.

As the foregoing quotations show, Smith gives ample attention to each of these dichotomous perspectives. Yet, surprisingly, he never directly acknowledges the tension he illustrates. Instead, the main line of his argument is based upon the powerful presence of "the man within the breast" as an ethical regulator of conduct.

Recently, Amartya Sen has shown that the rationality construct within utilitarian theory is itself not unitary, that it in fact is open to multiple interpretations of what self-interest in fact is. This brilliant opening of economic theory from the inside indicates a path along which modern economic theory may be reconciled with the developmental theory presented in this book, which emphasizes the enormous significance of just these different interpretations of what is in one's self-interest. See Sen, A., 1982, *Choice, Welfare and Measurement*, Cambridge: MIT Press; Sen, A., 1987, *On Ethics and Economics*, London: Basil Blackwell; Klamer, A., 1989, "A conversation with Amartya Sen," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3, 1:135-150. The most recently published forum on the relationship between economic theory and organizational theory illustrates how little Sen's work has yet penetrated the thinking of those interested in organizational economics. See Bettis, R., & Donaldson, L. (Eds.), 1990, "Market discipline and the discipline of management," *The Academy of Management Review*, 15, 3.

7. Smith was quite explicit, in passing, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that the invisible hand can be interpreted as a form of deception. Our attraction to wealth and to utility as means to happiness, Smith tells us, is not really due so much to "the superior ease or pleasure which (the rich) are supposed to enjoy, as of the numberless artificial and elegant contrivances for promoting this ease or pleasure (p. 302). . . . From a certain spirit of system . . . from a certain love of art and contrivance, we sometimes seem to value the means more than the end (p. 306). . . . If we consider the real satisfaction which all these things are capable of affording, by itself and separate from the arrangement which is fitted to promote it, it will always appear in the highest degree contemptible and trifling. But we rarely view it in this abstract and philosophical light. We naturally confound it in our imagination with the order, the regular and harmonious movement of the system, the machine or the economy by means of which it is produced. The pleasures of wealth and greatness, when considered in this complex view, strike the imagination as something grand, and beautiful, and noble, of which the attainment is well worth all the toil and anxiety which we are so apt to bestow upon it. And it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner. It is this deception which arouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind (p. 303)."

8. Simon, *Models of Man*, p. 5.

9. Dahl, R., 1963, *Who Governs?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; Galbraith, J., 1983, *The Anatomy of Power*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin; Pfeffer, J., 1981, *Power in Organizations*, Marshfield, MA: Pitman.

10. Pfeffer, *Power in Organizations*, p. 2.

11. Rousseau, J., *The Social Contract* Bk. I, Ch. 3.

12. Barnard, C., 1938, *The Functions of the Executive*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 167. Barnard's reference to "authority" and the frequent reference to legitimate power as authority together raise the question why I am here calling this phenomenon "diplomatic power" rather than "authority." Chapters 2 and 3 will discuss the relationship between power and authority, so the full answer will come then, but, briefly, consent alone does not assure legitimacy and authoritativeness. To be truly authoritative, I will argue in Chapters 2 and 3, requires that power—whether diplomatic, unilateral, or otherwise—be exercised in a fashion that is rational, timely, and conducive to the development of those affected.

13. Rousseau, *Social Contract* Bk. I, Ch 6.

14. Kant, I., 1981, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, p. 23.

15. *Ibid.*, p.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 22. At certain "teachable moments," Kant's educational advice is no doubt true. Influenced by him, I have sought moments to present duties to my children in this stern and confronting manner, but at other times I explicitly bribe my children to do something good (and *once* one of them refused the bribe!). For there are times when austere rationality makes no contact with our attention; a humorous exaggeration may awaken a corresponding gleam in the child's eye, wherein the parent may imagine lurking an appreciation of the rational. And it is not only children who fall away from the rational from time to time. Some readers have no doubt fallen to sleep at some point during their attempt to read the previous pages, rather than finding themselves elevated to a higher wakefulness. I personally could not even bring myself to read an entire book of Kant's until my forty-fourth year.

17. *Bowers v. Hardwick* 106 S. Ct. 2841 (1986). Justice Blackmun's dissent in the 5-4 decision best articulates the right of privacy doctrine that had been evolving over the previous twenty years, since the contraception decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut* 381

US 479 (1965). Patrick Devlin propounds the Will of All perspective, that what disgusts "the man in the street" may be criminalized, in *The Enforcement of Morals*. London: Oxford University Press. H.L.A. Hart responds from a General Will perspective in *Law, Liberty, and Morality* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1963). I am indebted to Morris Kaplan for organizing these arguments in his March 5, 1990 address at M.I.T. on "Lesbian and Gay Rights: Privacy, Equality, and Community."

18. Some familiar with Kant may object that his approach was "legislative" rather than "judicial" because he spoke of persons as ideally legislators in a Kingdom of Ends (indeed, because every citizen is, presumably, King in a Kingdom of Ends, one might argue that Kant's vision was "executive"). This confusion of the three branches is to be expected in a theory that sees all human action as subordinated to reason, but because he himself recognizes his discussion of the Kingdom of Ends as idealistic, and because relations among the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court may come as close to instantiating this ideal as those of any other historical governing body, it seems to me fair to summarize his thought as judicial and aristocratic in nature.

19. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. See also my fuller treatment of these issues in Torbert, W., 1974, "Doing Rawls justice," *Harvard Educational Review*, 44, 4: 459-469.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 465-466.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 472-473.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Kohlberg, L., & Turiel, E. (Eds.), 1973, *Recent Research in Moral Development*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

2 From Political Philosophy to Developmental Psychology

The previous chapter reviews three distinct conceptions of power and justice, as well as a fourth conception that integrates all of the first three types of power and justice. Starting from the most common definition of power as the unilateral cause of outcomes one desires, we next discussed diplomatic power that attracts others' consent and then described the logistical power of reason to will what is consistent and right irrespective of inducement and desire. Finally, we examined the Constitutional and Rawlsian conception of power and justice as including all of the first three.

We saw that the first two types of power and justice—unilateral power and utilitarian justice, on the one hand, and diplomatic power and consent, on the other hand—are rooted in satisfying desires. By contrast, the second two types of power and justice are rooted in a rational, principled conception of individual rights and socially just relationships.

None of the four approaches to power and justice so far examined explicitly shows how relatively unjust settings can be transformed into more just settings. Yet all of them suggest, at least implicitly, that a key ingredient in the necessary political alchemy of transformation is a constructive rationality, a rationality that frames desire. Hobbes gives us a specific rational contract that is to transform the state of nature into civil society, while claiming that no rational distinctions between less and more just societies are possible once society itself is created. Rousseau conceives of a principle whereby rationality can operate continuously in the generation of social decisions, not just once in an initial contract. Yet he cannot give us any specific laws or institutions through which it works. Kant tells us a specific law—the Categorical Imperative—that a truly rational individual would give himself or herself. Yet he does not tell us how any individual develops this degree of rationality, nor how society as a whole

encourages such development, nor how such a general principle is to be applied to concrete and unique circumstances.

It is Rawls who first shows how a just society would organize social institutions and families to encourage the development of principled rationality in new generations. But he does not tell us, any more than the others, how one can transform a relatively unjust, corrupt society into a more just one.

Surprisingly, it is the most ancient of Western political philosophers—Plato—who tells us most about why power ordinarily corrupts and about a kind of power that generates integrity and justice in conditions where by no means everyone is committed to justice.[1] Early in *The Republic*, Plato introduces a character, Thrasymachus, who argues that "might makes right." But Thrasymachus is confounded by Socrates' questions. May not sheer strength used unilaterally turn out to have effects different from those initially imagined, Socrates asks. If so, the mighty one will not have succeeded in doing right even from the point of view of achieving his own intention, let alone from any other perspective. For example, by building up German power and starting World War II, Hitler presumably intended anything but his own suicide in a bunker, anything but the governing of Germany by four alien powers, and anything but the creation of the state of Israel.

Not only may there be a great gap between intentions and outcomes, but also between different intentions at different times. Even if Hobbes's sovereign holds all power, his will may not be one across time. Now he exerts power in one direction; now in another. He himself may not recognize the conflict between his different decisions. Nevertheless, gradually, Hobbes's state (or a modern corporation) may begin to lose power as it falls into unintentional inner struggle. In short, unilateral, unidirectional power can generate unintentional effects and system disintegration over time.

Lord Acton's famous line, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," seems to be based on the intuition that the greater one's unilateral power, the more unbalanced and enslaved to one's irrational desires one becomes, the less one attends to one's effects on others or oneself, and the less effort one makes to guide and limit one's actions according to any criterion of rationality. This process of feeding desire and avoiding the negative feedback that would feed one's awareness gradually reduces one's awareness, responsibility, rational consistency, and moral integrity, until one is absolutely corrupted.

The question arises whether there is a type of power that *increases* awareness and integrity? Plato answers "Yes."

A Type of Power that Increases Integrity and Justice

What type of power increases integrity and justice, and how a person, a corporation, a city, or a state cultivates such power, is the subject of the last two thirds of Plato's *Republic*. There he details the 50-year education of philosopher kings and queens, as they struggle out of the dim cavelight of received opinion and into the sunlight, moonlight, and starlight of an awareness that spans the inner world of intentions, thoughts, and desires and the outer world of acts, objects, and effects. Such an awareness can follow the interplay that occurs at each moment (and across great periods of time) in oneself, others, and institutions among mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes. This awareness generates ever self-renewing learning, responsibility, integrity, and mutuality by seeking to discern, appreciate, and correct incongruities among these different "territories of experience" (intuitive mission, rational strategy, behavioral operations, and tangible outcomes). Put differently, this awareness never treats one's current sense of these four territories of experience as sacred, but rather seeks ever again to taste them.[2]

Through the sober and ecstatic cultivation of this awareness, and through what this awareness shows, such servant leaders[3] develop a preeminent concern with the balance, the sanity, and the beauty of the whole (the lifetime self, the commonwealth, the planet, or the cosmos) rather than identifying with partial, limited interests.[4] Rather than corrupting, such power enables, empowers, dignifies.

Once these potential leaders learn "the true sanity of natural awareness of the whole" (I ask the reader to tolerate these still under-defined terms for the sake of further testing throughout this book), they must learn something still more difficult—they must achieve a still more challenging balance. Namely, they must return to the cave of received opinion, where no one will easily imagine that there is another, better world (all around them), and where few may be willing to do the work and run the risks of turning from where they sit watching TV images.

There, in the cave of received opinion—in the political turmoil of the by-no-means fully-just-state nor fully-enlightened-society—the philosopher kings and queens will work, often unrecognized for who they are by all but their immediate peers and students. They will work to curb corrupting influences, to discipline martial natures, to encourage the development of aspiring spirits, to create true fellowships of inquiry, and, insofar as is consistent with performing those tasks, to protect themselves from unjust calumny and resentment.[5] They will thereby treat social life

as a whole, or any discrete organization such as a business or a classroom, as an educational process for the transformation of souls.[6]

What is most impressive about *The Republic* is that Plato does not assume a just state to begin with, like Rawls, nor a widespread inclination toward Kantian rationality. Given this societal distance from, and relative uninterest in, justice, it hardly seems surprising that Plato should envision a 50-year moral education as necessary for the formation of leaders capable of balancing amid this complexity.

Despite our society's extension of technical graduate education into the late twenties, the notion of a *moral* education process that continues til one's *fiftieth* year no doubt seems utterly implausible to most of us and is only now being rediscovered in the study of adult development.[7] This very sense of implausibility is one measure of the distance of contemporary culture from an appreciation of an inquiring, integrative power of balance.

Contemporary Philosopher Queens and Kings

As implausible as the foregoing scenario of a 50-year moral development process for aspiring leaders may seem, it can be illustrated in the biographies of a number of the most remarkable twentieth-century business, political, and religious leaders of the Western world. The following examples are offered very briefly and are intended simply to confirm the plausibility of such leaders, not to prove irrefutably that any one of the persons mentioned fully fits the ideal. After mentioning several leaders briefly, we will examine more closely why the notion and the practice of transforming power is necessary for an adequate and realizable conception of justice. Then, in the rest of this chapter, we will begin to demark the developmental path through which a person evolves from the conceptions of power and justice already described toward the point of exercising transforming power. In so doing, we will also see why such evolution is so rare, even though it may be highly desirable from a societal point of view. Then, in the following chapter, we will define transforming power more closely and will examine in greater detail two leaders who appear to have exercised transforming power on a very large scale during this century.

Our first brief example here is of the Schlumberger company and its former CEO, Jean Riboud. In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the best managed company among the Fortune 1000 by many different financial measures was Schlumberger Ltd., an oil field drilling and services firm. Its CEO, between the ages of 55 and 65 at this time, was Jean Riboud, a Frenchman, a Socialist, and a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps.[8]

Riboud's manner was qualitatively different from most other CEOs of major corporations in many ways. The concentration camp experience left him unforgettably aware that a leader influences the whole political/ethical quality of an organization. He spent ninety percent of his time on personnel-development issues, seeing the development of the people of the company as his central responsibility and as the company's central capital asset. He maintained a profound aesthetic commitment to living his life in the presence of nature and other works of art and at a tasteful pace—for example, taking six weeks of vacation each year at his country home in France.

Riboud also generated enlivening liberating disciplines for his best subordinates, challenges that took them beyond their former selves. For example, at one point there was speculation within the company about which of two potential successors he would promote first, thus indicating his choice of heir-apparent. In fact, he promoted both men on the same day, making each the vice-president of *the other's* former area! In this way, instead of annointing a personal favorite, he created a major, publicly visible test for each man of his ability to take the lead under unknown conditions and to make alliances across functions of the company—abilities any company president very much needs. In these varying but related ways, Riboud demonstrated a profound concern for the common good of the company and for the continuing education of his subordinates.

Our second example is a woman, much less well known to the public than Riboud, even though she headed a much larger organization. Jeanne de Salzmann became the recognized leader of a spiritual work at the age of 61 when its founder died. This spiritual work does not publicize its existence or seek converts, but some 100,000 or more persons around the world, including leading artists, movie stars, business people, and scholars, participate. Madame de Salzmann's power of balance was literal as well as social and metaphysical. A teacher of sacred dance, she continued to lead and to demonstrate mindful movement well into her nineties and attended meditation meetings, walking with an unimaginably calm, self-contained, and regal bearing, until her death at 102.

Socially, Madame de Salzmann created an environment that reversed the fate of most spiritual organizations, which fragment into separate sects after the death of the founder. Under her watchful gaze, instead, a group form of leadership developed that reunited previously warring factions.

Spiritually, her voice, richly flavored with French and Russian, bespoke a continual conscious interplay among a rising biological energy, a permeating intelligence, and a spontaneous generosity. She describes the effort, in this school, to develop aspirants' awareness through liberating disciplines:

> Unexpected conditions were brought about in order to upset habits. . . . This put the pupil on the spot. What his intellect had become capable of conceiving had now to be experienced with his feeling. . . . Then the body, in its turn, was required to collect all the energy of its attention so as to attune itself to an order which it was there to serve.[9]

Our third example is Mikhail Gorbachev, who became leader of the Soviet Union in his fifties. Like Riboud, he had been wrenched from the secure cave of received opinion early in his youth—first by the terror of Stalin's Great Purge, then by having to substitute for his father who was away fighting in World War II.[10] (Plato's Myth of the Cave makes the real world outside the cave sound better than life in the cave, though difficult to reach. In the twentieth-century, the dis-illusioning real world has often enough been hellish by contrast to the "normal" life of one's immediate locality, and all too easy to reach.)

Later in his life, Gorbachev would experience more ideal real worlds as well. His travels to Italy and Germany were eye-opening and inspiring to him, and he was to some degree protected from the corruption of the Brezhnev regime in Moscow by being stationed for the decade of the 1970s in far away Stavropol.

But by far the most immediate and significant influence on Gorbachev was his marriage to Raisa, the university professor who was very much his peer, if not his superior (he calls her "my general"), in their never-ending conversation. Such a marriage of equals is far more extraordinary in Russia than in the United States. It has resulted in more than one "revolution of the mind" (one of his definitions of *perestroika*) for him, as he has, through her tutelage, assimilated both aesthetic culture and political/economic ideas such as competency-based pay. Now, he attempts, in one of the least likely societies in the world (in terms of its history of violent political autocracy), to engage in a nonviolent, educational, political process that transforms a nation and the souls of its people.

As I write this in early June 1990, Boris Yeltsin, an opponent of Gorbachev's, has been elected president of the Russian republic. Weakened by internal strife, Gorbachev is being castigated as relatively conservative and indecisive. Given the magnitude of the transformation at hand in the Soviet Union, it is highly improbable that a single leader will remain at the helm throughout. As *Time* magazine's Man of the Decade for the 1980s, there can be little doubt that Gorbachev has already demonstrated transforming leadership by any meaningful definition, whether or not he continues to do so. Moreover, his most powerful and just actions now may be to empower the separate republics, to resist the acceleration of change, or to resign at the right moment and in the right way. In any event, transforming leaders tend to move toward, not away from, trouble.

Our fourth example is neither a man nor a woman. A number of extraordinarily successful businesses operate, in effect, through a group form of leadership, even though they also maintain the traditional CEO, COO, and CFO titles and roles. The advantages of a group form of leadership, when members have the alertness to engage in that subtle dance, are numerous. Effective group leadership embodies power among peers, empowering power, confronting and transforming power, mutual balancing, the liberty to act strongly in one's own way because others will act strongly in theirs, and multiple sources of access to power by other members of the organization. Hence, group leadership of this kind generates a culture of initiative and mutual responsibility.

Motorola, currently one of the most successful of U.S. manufacturing companies and recent winner of the national Malcolm Baldrige Quality award, operates in this mode. Indeed, three of its top officers play three of the four mutually balancing leadership roles of traditional societies. These four roles are the Chief, the Warrior, the Priest, and the Clown. George Fisher, the Chairman and CEO, plays the role of Chief—a post-modern Chief who is deeply committed to education. Not only is Motorola now thought to do the best in-company training in America, but Fisher is Arizona's executive liaison for education (Motorola being the largest employer in the state). He is also on the Board of Trustees at Brown University. Gary Tooker, the President and COO, is the front line operations man, or Warrior. Chris Galvin, the third generation of the founding Galvin family to join top management, is the Priest (his father, Bob Galvin, also still maintains a Priest-like presence as Chair of the Board's Executive Committee). Interestingly, Chris Galvin is the most junior member of the senior team and has worked his way up through the organization. So, while he represents the security and continuity of an intergenerational trust, his relatively junior status and his method of ascent also implies that nothing—except, perhaps, competent work—is *too* sacred at Motorola today. Nothing is such a "sacred cow" that it cannot be challenged.

But it is the presence of the fourth character on the team—the Clown or Court Jester—that goes furthest to assure that not just short-term action but also fundamental inquiry occurs among the four. His presence cheerfully forces each to extend his vision beyond himself and—even rarer—to extend his vision, often laughingly, to himself. Like a court jester, this person finds ways to assure that truth will be spoken in the corridors of power. The person who plays this role is not mentioned as among the top officers of the company in articles about its success;[11] but he attends the extended, agenda-less sit-arounds that frequently occur among the four. His manner—visionary yet practical, effervescent yet confronting, playful yet at work by 6 A.M. most mornings—generates continuing spontaneity,

laughter, long-term focus, and attention to execution and follow-through. This unusual executive style, and the dance among all four roles of Chief, Warrior, Priest, and Clown, give the group as a whole a rare power of balance amidst the enormous pressures of managing a global, high technology corporation today.

Our fifth example is a man who succeeded in peacefully transforming the largest organization in the world through an educational political process. Angello Roncalli was exiled from headquarters for nearly thirty years of his career, then unexpectedly selected as a temporary, caretaker CEO at the advanced age of 76.[12] Roncalli chose the titular name Pope John XXIII, appointed his bitterest enemy as his secretary of state, called the Vatican II Ecumenical Council, and encouraged a true and full debate over matters of doctrine, church organization, and relations to other faiths. With Pope John symbolizing in his every reconciling move the capacity to meet all things and all people in faith, the Catholic Church transformed itself during the early 1960s from a defensive posture against modernity and against scientific inquiry into an active movement embracing the dilemmas of modernity and of inquiry.

These five, apparently highly diverse examples of leadership in business, politics, and spiritual organizations all in fact exemplify significant common characteristics. All are examples of extraordinary success in conventional senses of success. All are deeply concerned with developing their own and others' awareness, as well as with accomplishing particular tasks. All recognize that personal and organizational transformation cannot be generated by force, by attraction, or by reason, but rather requires an aesthetic artistry and mutuality that generates challenge and free choice. And all are aware that justice is not a static quality to be attained by some single mechanical or deductive method.

A Paradigm of Just Action

We can return to Rawls's theory of justice to begin constructing a more dynamic paradigm of just action, for he provides the building blocks to go beyond his own conception. We saw that Rawls argues that in raising children who will preserve a just society, parents must formulate rules comprehensible to their children, enact a consistent morality themselves, and gradually make the underlying principles explicit. This is an educational paradigm that depends for its felicitous effects on a parental awareness that embraces the realms of intuitive principles, rational rules, their own actions, and their effects on their children *and that observes and corrects errors and incongruities in translations from one realm to another* (for no one can be expected to get this right to begin with, or once and for all

time). I emphasize this last part because it is this dynamic feedback and correction process that must be present if the process is to become increasingly just, and it is the process that Rawls misses.

Rawls enunciates an analogous dialectic for each individual in his recital of the primary goods that all rational persons will want, whatever else one or another may want idiosyncratically. He names four primary goods:

(1) intuitive self-respect or self-esteem: "Without it nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them" (p. 400);
(2) a "rational long-term plan of life given reasonably favorable circumstances . . . [for] the good is the satisfaction of rational desire" (pp. 92-93);
(3) the liberty and opportunity to develop and exercise the action competencies necessary to realize a rational life plan; and, finally,
(4) the income and wealth that results from such competent work.

Again, we see the need to cultivate an awareness that embraces the realms of the intuitive whole, the rational strategy, plan, or rules, congruent action, and outcomes *and that observes and corrects errors and incongruities in translations from one realm to another.*

As we will explore in Chapter 4, an analogous, dynamic process of cultivating an embracing awareness of mission, strategy, operations, and the bottom line, *and of observing and correcting incongruities among them,* is necessary for continual quality improvement in business enterprises and other organizations.

As we will explore in Section III, Chapter 13, an analogous dynamic process of cultivating an awareness of paradigm, theory, research methods, and data—*and of observing and correcting incongruities among them*—is necessary for a liberative and responsible social science.

In political life, the paradigm of just action is again analogous. An action is just if it:

(1) gradually explicates the underlying principles of justice;
(2) elaborates laws and policies consistent with those principles, as well as internally consistent with one another;
(3) duly administers this justice in a way that is both substantively and procedurally congruent;
(4) gains increasing voluntary compliance by the citizenry; and
(5) *observes and corrects incongruities among principles, laws, administration, and effects on the citizenry.*

Development Toward Transforming Power

How can persons develop toward leadership capabilities that include Plato's awareness of the whole, Rawls's parental awareness of principles, rules, own actions, and effects on others, and the dynamic awareness of—and courage to correct—incongruities among these territories of experience?

Recent advances in developmental theory and research can help us to understand again what Plato seems to have grasped over 2,000 years ago.[13] Starting from earliest childhood, persons can repeatedly reconstruct the world in the face of dilemmas that their current assumptions and consequent logics do not resolve well. As Plato saw, however, few persons in ancient or contemporary society continue through these developmental transformations during adulthood to the later constructions that intentionally cultivate "the true sanity of natural awareness of the whole"—awareness that from moment to moment seeks to encompass the four territories of experience (intuitive mission, rational strategy, behavioral operations, and tangible outcomes).

Each construction of the world that we recreate in our development has a certain internally consistent logic of its own and relates to certain elements of objective reality particularly well (see Table 2.1[14]). For example, the typical eight- to twelve-year-old child is an "Opportunist" focused on mastering external reality through sewing, bike riding, Nintendo playing, counting, and so forth. All of reality, including other people, is viewed as external and to be manipulated. Power is quite naturally and unreflectively viewed as unilateral. Ethically, anything goes, if you don't get caught. No pain, no problem. Obviously, this view of reality corresponds to the first notion of power and justice described in Chapter 1—Hobbesian power and utilitarian justice. Not too many adults continue to view the world within these assumptions; many who do are in prisons; among the organizational managers that colleagues of mine and I have studied, little more than 2% are measured at this stage (see Table 2.2[15]).

Each succeeding construction "dethrones" the assumptions of the previous construction and transforms them from their role of framing and governing reality to a new role as variables within a wider reality. Thus, for example, the typical early teenager gradually comes to realize implicitly that there is an inside as well as an outside to certain realities, such as people. People are recognized as having an internal point of view as well as external behavior. One is likely to be more attractive to others and hence more successful over longer periods of time with others, one gradually comes to realize implicitly, if one takes others' expectations and preferences into account in shaping one's own behavior.

Table 2.1
Governing Frames at Successive Developmental Stages

Stage	*Name*	*Governing Frame*
1	Impulsive	Impulses rule reflexes
2	Opportunist	Needs, interests rule impulses
3	Diplomat	Expectations rule interests
4	Technician	Internal craft logic rules expectations
5	Achiever	System success in environment rules craft logics
6	Strategist	Principle rules system
7	Magician	Process (interplay of principle/action) awareness rules principle
8	Ironist	Intersystemic development awareness rules process

Table 2.2
Distribution of Managers by Developmental Position in Six Studies

Samples: *n*	*Study 1 First-line Supervisors (37)*	*Study 2 Nurses (100)*	*Study 3 Junior & Middle Managers (177)*	*Study 4 Senior Managers (66)*	*Study 5 Executives (104)*	*Study 6 Entrepreneurial Professionals (13)*
Developmental positions:						
Impulsive	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Opportunist	0	2	5	0	0	0
Diplomat	24	9	9	6	3	0
Technician	68	54	43.5	43.5	47	22
Achiever	8	31	40	33	39.5	39
Strategist	0	4	2.5	14	14	39
Magician	0	0	0	0	0	0
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

At the extreme, such a "Diplomat" becomes a conforming chameleon, taking on the coloration of the Will of All of whatever group he or she is currently relating to. Certainly, many of us parents worry as we see our children sacrifice their integrity to some current "in" fad. But ordinarily, of course, our children retain and continue to develop the skills from the previous stage, and their new concern with shaping their own behavior to meet others' expectations represents an enlargement of their selves, not a diminution. They can now control not only the outside world through their behavior, but also their own behavior through a coordination of

viewpoints. (Soon, we can also hope, they will transform toward being fired by a cooler passion—to control the viewpoints, behavior, and the outside world by a craft logic that "properly orders" reality.)

Again, the logic of this Diplomat stage corresponds to one of the positions on power and justice discussed in Chapter 1—the notion of attractive, diplomatic power and the ethic of consent, in Rawls's term "the morality of association." People will consent to be led by he or she who represents what they are attracted to, or who represents their preferences, or who represents their viewpoint well—irrespective of the internal logic of those attractions, preferences, or viewpoints. Rousseau was aware of the potential tyranny and irrationality of the Will of All ("Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they"[16]). Rousseau hated the power of "society" in his own life and thought and wished to replace it by a more Spartan (he preferred Sparta to Athens) and rational General Will. In fact, he himself felt mortifyingly how difficult it was to disentangle either his behavior or his thought from the imperative of performing for others.[17]

The Diplomat typically performs an integrative function in organizations, adhering to and even championing current norms and customs. This integrative function is not necessarily in the service of rationality or justice, however—Rousseau's very point. A recent book on power, Kenneth Boulding's *The Three Faces of Power*, completely misses this point and dangerously conflates the Diplomat's type of integrative behavior that conforms to existing patterns of preference with the much later stage type of integrative power that can question and transform existing patterns into a more inclusive and just pattern.[18] There is a world of difference—no, *several* developmental worlds of difference—between the two (Table 2.1 shows the Diplomat as Stage 3 and the Magician and Ironist [who exercise transforming power and the power of balance, as will be discussed in Chapter 3] as Stages 7 and 8; so Stages 3 and 7 are four "worlds" apart). The Diplomat's integrative tendencies will only support justice in an already just world.

A good many adults remain at this stage of development throughout their lives, though few of them rise into management at all, let alone executive leadership, perhaps because the imperative of conforming involves following more than leading. In my studies with colleagues, we find about 8% of managers at this stage; of this 8%, about 80% are junior managers and 20% senior managers; put differently, persons measured as Diplomats make up about 11% of all the junior managers in our samples, but only about 4% of the senior managers and executives, and none of the entrepreneurial professionals (see Table 2.2).

Most late teenagers or early adults transform to the next logic of development. Confronted by conflicts among viewpoints that do not take

one another into consideration (e.g., one's boss wants one to work late, one's spouse wants one home for dinner), a person can develop a deep yearning (not necessarily ever expressed in these words) to move from simply internalizing this conflict toward an internally consistent viewpoint that prioritizes different actual claims. Every field of human endeavor—whether swimming or math, carpentry or philosophy, music or marketing research— contains and conveys such craft logics, such standards that make some normative claim to objective validity. At some point, most persons transform from doing something because it is "the thing to do" societally or among their immediate peers and do it (or something else) for its own intrinsic value, as an end itself.

Kant's entire philosophy is the purest expression of the intuition that people can develop such a rationality. He worked out how this capacity qualifies us as having profound individual rights to be treated as ends in ourselves and as belonging to an ideal polity that he called the Kingdom of Ends. If the end is good and the means are rationally consistent in their subservience to the end, then it follows that one ought to will the end, and nothing but the end, consistently. In short, perfectionism is a logical deduction from this perspective and a typical empirical characteristic of persons at this stage of development (often accompanied by a total aesthetic disinterest in anything outside the particular arena one chooses to concentrate on).

Of course, not everyone at this "Technician" stage is so thorough, so verbal, or so philosophical in their allegiance to a single logic as Kant. But my research with colleagues (see Table 2.2 again) shows that more managers at all hierarchical levels are found to have an overall allegiance to this Technician worldview than to any other (45.1% in all our samples taken together).

In other words, consistent with Plato's view that few leaders evolve to an awareness of the interplay of all four territories of experience, our samples show that a majority of all managers (the 45% at the Technician stage, the 8% at the Diplomat stage, and the 2% at the Opportunist stage) focus their awareness on *one* (or another) of *three* of the territories of experience. The focus of attention at the Opportunist stage is on the physical world and tangible symbols of power and control. The focus of attention at the Diplomat stage is on the behavioral world and on emotional symbols of status. The primary focus of attention of the Technician is on the world of thought and on intellectual symbols of excellence and consistency (see Table 2.3).

As Table 2.3 shows, and as we discussed in the previous chapter when reviewing Rawls's theory of justice, it is only at the next stage—which I have named the "Achiever" stage—that persons attempt to coordinate the interplay of all three of the territories of experience just mentioned: the external, the behavioral, and the strategic.[19] Such managers exhibit a

Table 2.3
Philosophical Position and Focus of Awareness Consistent with Each Developmental Stage

Stage Name	*Focus of Awareness*	*Political/Ethical Position*
Opportunist	Outside world, effects	Hobbes/utilitarian
Diplomat	Socially expected behavior, practice	Rousseau/consent
Technician	Internal logic, thought	Kant/rights-duties
Achiever	System success in environment, interplay of plan, practice, effect	Rawls/justice
Strategist	Theory of historical development of system-environment	Hegel-Marx/ affirmative action
Magician	Interplay of consciousness, thought, action, and environment in Eternal Now	Gandhi/mutual, transformational "truth force"
Ironist	Interplay of self & other systems in Kairatic History	Plato-Michnik/ action inquiry

preeminent concern for overall system effectiveness in the environment, rather than for advancing their personal power, or for maintaining existing organizational norms, or for interpreting everything in terms of a particular craft logic (e.g.. engineering, accounting, or marketing). However, their preeminent concern is with implementing an existing *strategy*, not with creating a new, more effective, more just strategy. Like Rawls's citizens, these managers will act in a way that maintains an already just and effective organization, but are not going to be the initiators, intervenors, or leaders in creating a more just, more productive system. About 36% of the managers in all our samples are measured at the Achiever stage.

Table 2.4 presents a summary of the managerial style characteristics associated with each of the four stages of development reviewed in this chapter—the Opportunist, Diplomat, Technician, and Achiever stages. (This summary is drawn from my previous study, *Managing the Corporate Dream*, where an entire chapter is devoted to the logic and practice associated with each stage.)

So far this review of four stages of development illustrates a sequence of transformations through which persons can evolve. It also shows how

Table 2.4
Managerial Style Characteristics Associated with Four Stages of Development

Opportunist	Short time horizon; focus on concrete things; manipulative; deceptive; rejects feedback; externalizes blame; distrustful; fragile self-control; hostile humor; views luck as central; flaunts power, sexuality; stereotypes; views rules as loss of freedom; punishes according to "eye for an eye" ethic; treats what can get away with as legal; positive ethic = even trade.
Diplomat	Observes protocol; avoids inner and outer conflict; works to group standard; speaks in cliches, platitudes; conforms; feels shame if violates norm; sin = hurting others; punishment = disapproval; seeks membership, status; face-saving essential; loyalty to immediate group, not "distant" organization or principles; positive ethic = nice, cooperative.
Technician	Interested in problem-solving; seeks causes; critical of self, others based on craft logic; chooses efficiency over effectiveness; perfectionist; accepts feedback only from "objective" craft masters; dogmatic; values decisions based on merit; sees contingencies, exceptions; wants to stand out, be unique; positive ethic = sense of obligation to wider, internally consistent moral order.
Achiever	Long-term goals; future is vivid, inspiring; welcomes behavioral feedback; effectiveness and results oriented; feels like initiator, not pawn; appreciates complexity, systems; seeks generalizable reasons for action; seeks mutuality, not hierarchy, in relationships; feels guilt if does not meet own standards; blind to own shadow, to the subjectivity behind objectivity; positive ethic = practice day-to-day improvements based on self-chosen (but not self-created) ethical system.

these different worldviews implicitly operate with approaches to power and ethics that parallel the four explicit philosophies of power and ethics introduced in Chapter 1. But, like the explicit philosophies in Chapter 1, none of the different developmental worldviews so far discussed envisions or generates transformation—transformation of individuals, organizations, or states from one stage of development to another; transformation from reliance on one form of power to another; transformation from a relatively unjust structure/process to one that is qualitatively more just. We have now accounted for 91% of all the managers in our six samples, but we have yet to find any with a sense of history and transformation.

Such a sense dawns at the next stage of development, the Strategist stage. The next chapter begins with a description of the Strategist.

Notes

1. Pitkin, H., 1972, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, Berkeley: University of California Press. As Pitkin has so carefully argued, the very structure of *The Republic*, wherein Plato assumes a fixed class structure and a need for a "noble lie" (rather than a direct explanation) to "keep people in their proper place," in effect provides a very tough test of whether one can generate justice in unpropitious conditions—conditions in which few are, by the nature of their relatively fixed worldview, prone to seeking out and enacting justice (the dialogue does not assume an altogether fixed class structure; indeed, parents and leaders are specifically prompted to be on the lookout for youths who ought to be in a different class from that into which they are born).

2. There is a wonderful Islamic story that when the now-revered mystical love poet Rumi first met Shams of Tabriz, Shams asked Rumi which of two elders was the wiser. Rumi chose the one who claimed to have tasted God fully, whereas the other's best known comment was that he thirsted for God continually. Shams chose the second, whom he saw as having by far the greater spiritual thirst, thereby maintaining continual direct contact with God. Upon hearing this response, Rumi immediately left his friends and students and cloistered himself with Shams for several months. His later love poetry was inspired by the love they shared.

3. McClelland, D., 1975, *Power: The Inner Experience*, New York: Irvington/Halsted. In his provocative but unsatisfactory book—alternately unsystematically thoughtful and thoughtlessly systematic—McClelland expresses the essential service of transformational leadership well: "The positive or socialized face of power is characterized by a concern for group goals that will move men [sic], for helping the group to formulate them, for taking initiative in providing means to achieve them, and for giving group members the feeling of competence they need to work hard for them" (p. 263).

4. *The Republic* may well be the most complex, ironic, and artful book ever written, challenging new readers each generation for over two millenia to develop a more inclusive and discriminating awareness through wrestling with it. All readers of this briefest of synopses and interpretations should, therefore, be warned that few Plato scholars share my interpretation. Allan Bloom's extended interpretive essay in his *The Republic of Plato* (see endnote 2, Introduction) is a helpful introductory indicator of the complexity of the text.

In speaking of the cultivation of awareness as "sober and ecstatic," I am referring not only to some of the lyrical phrases in *The Republic* (e.g., Book VII, Section 517), but also to Socrates' speech in the *Symposium* about the path of learning that leads toward the vision of a single science of beauty everywhere (Section 210), as well as Alcibiades' following speech in which he describes Socrates' influence on him.

5. The unnatural deaths of so many male transformational leaders—e.g., Socrates, Jesus, Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Harvey Milk—suggests that a concern with self-protection is utterly realistic, but also raises many questions.

6. George Will's *Statecraft as Soulcraft: What Government Does* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983) is a modern statement of this view of politics. As Will discusses, James Wilson, among the Constitutional Fathers of this country and an early Supreme Court Justice, also shared this view of politics.

7. See, for example, Alexander, C., & Langer, E. (Eds.), 1988, *Higher Stages of Human Development: Perspectives on Adult Growth*, New York: Oxford University Press; Kegan, R., 1980, *The Evolving Self*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Kegan, R., & Lahey, L., 1984, "Adult leadership and adult development: A constructivist view," in Kellerman, B. (Ed.), *Leadership: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ:

Prentice-Hall; Torbert, W., 1989, "Leading organizational transformation," in Woodman, R., & Pasmore, W. (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Change and Development* (vol.3), Greenwich, CT: JAI Press; Torbert, W., 1990, "Reform from the center," in Mitchell, B., & Cunningham, L. (Eds.), *Educational Leadership and the Changing Contexts of Families, Communities, and Schools*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Wilber, K., 1980, *The Atman Project: A Transpersonal View of Human Development*, Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.

8. Auletta, K., 1984, *The Art of Corporate Success: The Story of Schlumberger*, New York: Putnam.

9. De Salzmann, J., 1973, "Foreword," in *Views from the Real World*, New York: Dutton.

10. Sheehy, G., 1990, "The man who changed the world," *Vanity Fair*, 53, 2.

11. See, for example, the April 1990 *Forbes* article on Motorola.

12. My article "Leading organizational transformation" (see endnote 7) describes Pope John's lifetime developmental path and is largely based, in turn, on biographical information in Hebblethwaite, P., 1985, *Pope John XXIII*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday. (Because I teach at the Jesuit-founded university Boston College, readers may wonder whether this illustration is somehow partisan, so it may be relevant to mention that I am *not* Catholic.)

13. See endnote 5 of this chapter.

14. There is a separate chapter devoted to each of these stage descriptions in my previous book *Managing the Corporate Dream*. The fullest and best analysis of how the governing frame of each stage is successively dethroned is found in Kegan's The Evolving Self (see endnote 7).

15. Scoring of the first five studies done by professionally trained raters, based on Loevinger, J., 1978, *Measuring Ego Development*, vols. 1 & 2, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Study 1 is by Smith; Study 2 is by Davidson; Study 3 is by Torbert; Study 4 is by Gratch; Study 5 is by Quinn and Torbert; Study 6 is by Hirsh (using a distinct, textual analysis of tape recorded interviews to measure stage). Citations follow: Smith, S., 1980, *Ego Development and the Power of Agreement in Organizations*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, George Washington School of Business and Public Administration; Davidson, J., 1984, *The Effects of Organizational Culture on the Development of Nurses*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston College School of Education; Torbert, W., 1983, *Identifying and cultivating professional effectiveness: "Bureaucratic action" at one professional school*, paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Public Administration, New York; Gratch, A., 1985, *Managers' prescriptions of decision-making processes as a function of ego development and of the situation*, unpublished paper, Columbia University Teachers College; Quinn, R., & Torbert, W., 1987, "Who is an effective, transforming leader?" unpublished paper, University of Michigan School of Business, Ann Arbor, MI; Hirsch, J., 1988, *Toward a Cognitive-Developmental Theory of Strategy Formulation Among Practicing Physicians*, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International.

16. Rousseau, J., 1950, *The Social Contract*, New York: Dutton. Book 1, Chapter 1.

17. Although he railed against the values of "society" in his *Social Contract*, Rousseau had been known as "the Dancing Bear" in Paris: "His moralizing had become fashionable. He was a fashion himself—a kind of wild animal captured from the lower ranks of society and exhibited for the fascination of those at the top. By parading his boorishness and playing the role of a 'bear' . . . Rousseau collaborated in this game. 'Thrown into *le monde* without having the right tone and without being able to acquire it . . . I pretended to despise the politeness that I could not practice.' . . . When the sense of loss (of self) became unbearable, he broke with *le monde*. First he changed his dress.

He renounced his wig, his sword, his white stockings, his watch, and . . . his forty-two fine linen shirts. . . . Finally, . . . he left Paris . . . and began the feverish period of writing that was to end six years later after the publication of three books that changed the course of cultural history: *La Nouvelle Heloise, Emile,* and *The Social Contract.*" Quote from Darnton, R., 1985, "The social life of Rousseau," *Harpers* (July, 69-73).

18. Boulding, K., 1989, *The Three Faces of Power,* Newbury Park, CA: Sage. Boulding's names for the three types of power he discusses suggest just how completely he conflates "harmony for its own sake" with "just harmony." He speaks of "threat power, economic power, and integrative power—the stick, the carrot, and the hug" (p.10). Obviously, confrontation, rather than a hug, may be in the true interest of long-term integration and justice in a given instance. Diplomatic integrative power is based on love of sameness and devaluation of what is different. As the significant presence of racism, classism, sexism, and ethnocentricity in human affairs attests, this "diplomatic" form of integrative power is always at work. Boulding is clearly *not* referring to this form of power when he speaks of integrative power, for he associates integrative power with love of variety (p. 117). But his failure to recognize diplomatic power as a distinct and fundamental category of power is a serious omission in itself. It also generates confusion as between the *espoused* type of power associated with an activity and the *empirical* actuality. For example, Boulding speaks of the scientific community as "a non-limited culture of learning . . . within (which) integrative power, especially in the form of love of truth, is supreme" (p. 118). This is certainly the ideal, espoused value of the scientific community; but as Thomas Kuhn has shown (1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press) when the current presuppositions of a scientific subcommunity are challenged in practice, its limits as a culture of learning can become all too evident; the love of truth often seems to recede, and threat and exchange power become more evident.

19. Some of the best contributions in recent years to our overall understanding of political economy, sociology, and ethics have been by scholars who, like Rawls, have proposed conceptions that illuminate the interplay of the three disciplines (which focus, respectively, on the outcomes of external exchanges among strangers, on the behavioral norms to which we consent in groups of which we are members, and on the internal logics of different value systems). For example, Gerald Cavanagh, Dennis Moberg, and Manuel Velasquez show a hierarchy and interplay among utilitarian, rights, and justice perspectives that is consistent with the analysis presented here, except that they do not include the consent perspective (1981, "The ethics of organizational politics," *Academy of Management Review, 6,* 3: 363-374). Likewise, Etzioni, A., 1988, *The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics,* New York: Free Press. Etzioni shows a hierarchy and interplay among an economic/utilitarian/individualistic perspective, a sociological/emotional/collective perspective, and a Kantian perspective. Etzioni rather mixes the descriptive sociological and normative Kantian perspectives together, blurring the likely gap between the actual norms of a society based on an irrational Will of All and the ideal rational norms that Kant elucidates. On the other hand, this blurring is in a sense the point of his argument—that even persons in a capitalist society taught an economics that assumes self-interested behavior often act in altruistic or principled fashion. Other scholars emphasize the degree to which capitalist economic assumptions and the political rhetoric of self-interested individualism obscures the satisfactions of a more communal orientation (see Bellah, R., et al., 1985, *Habits of the Heart,* Berkeley: University of California Press; and Mitchell, T., & Scott, W., 1990, "America's problems and needed reforms: Confronting the ethic of personal advantage," *Academy of Management Executive,* 4, 3: 23-35.

3 Developing Toward Transforming Leadership

The previous chapter shows how the four different conceptions of power and justice introduced in Chapter 1 relate to four stages of managerial development. It also shows that a very large proportion of all contemporary managers in our research samples—91%—measure at one of these four stages. Yet none of the logics of these four approaches to managing or governing addresses the dilemma of helping individuals or organizations develop to later stages, or the dilemma of transforming relatively unjust settings into relatively just settings.

The previous chapter also briefly introduced five leaders who, it was claimed, exercise transforming power and/or the power of balance. The introduction was so brief that it certainly *proved* nothing. At best, it whetted the reader's interest in the possibility of such leaders. This chapter addresses how leaders may continue their development beyond the Achiever stage toward the possibility of exercising transforming power. It also outlines how transforming power operates.

Development to the Strategist Stage

It is at the next stage of development beyond the Achiever, the "Strategist" stage, that a person ceases to take the existing overall structure of social systems for granted as appropriate (or at least as inevitable) and therefore becomes interested in what a normative (a best, a just) structure would be.

How and why persons transform from the Achiever stage to the Strategist stage is a significant social mystery that scholars have only recently begun to address in theoretical and empirical terms.[1] One

internal reason for transformation beyond the Achiever stage is that the complexity of the reality that Achievers permit themselves to see can motivate a person at this stage to begin developing an explicit, unique, theoretical synthesis (not an analytic, craft logic like the Technician's) that provides greater guidance for action. Also or alternatively, the gradual recognition that systems effectiveness and justice can require not just a change of actions, but a change of goals, structures, and values, leads some to develop a synthetic theory that accounts for and helps to generate transformations of frame in self, organization, or society.

One external reason for transformation beyond the Achiever stage can be promotion to senior management. Such a promotion brings the person into a relatively fluid, structureless, "political" world where structures are being created, rather than regulating activity. The new senior manager may respond to this new world either with cynicism or by constructing a theory to guide his or her activity through the otherwise ill-marked terrain. Indeed, both of these steps often happen in sequence in the transition to the Strategist stage—a cynical (or tender) relativism first destroying the myth of objective reality and then gradually emphasizing the need for a synthetic, post-objective theory that coordinates multiple realities.

These concerns begin to open one's eyes to all that is not currently socially well defined—to empty market niches; to gaps in political leadership that invite unique interventions; to differences in assumptions based on race, class, sex, ethnicity, or developmental stage that are not well managed; to social possibilities that have not previously been fittingly conceptualized; to conflicts of interest that the current system does not resolve; and to the dynamic process in time through which organizations and the social environment continually reconstruct themselves. The developmental theory presented here is, obviously, one such synthetic theory that highlights differences in assumptions and the potential for structural transformations across time.

In our six contemporary managerial samples (Table 2.2), we find the remaining 9% of the nearly 500 managers measured at the Strategist stage. The few persons at the Strategist stage are evidently viewed as good candidates for leadership, or else promotion to executive roles motivates the transformation toward the Strategist stage. Of those who are measured as Strategists in these samples, 78% are at senior management levels of organizations, compared to only 42% of the Achievers, 35% of the Technicians, 21% of the Diplomats, and none of the Opportunists. Put differently, only 3% of the persons in the three junior manager samples measure at the Strategist stage, whereas 15% of the three senior management samples measure as Strategists.

Why organizations may like to promote the relatively rare persons with a Strategist orientation, and how that orientation can reframe situations,

is marvellously illustrated by the following story told by a woman who was scored as having transformed from the Achiever stage to the Strategist stage during the period in question. Here she describes how she related to her boss at a Big Eight accounting firm during the year when his evaluation would control whether she was promoted to manager. Her boss was known as "the assassin" because he never recommended promotion.

> Two years ago [she says] I thought there was an answer out there. Other people know it and I don't, and I'm frustrated not knowing how to act. Then I realized that's not it. It's not what you know, it's how you think about providing clients service. It's like one switch goes off in your brain and another goes on.
>
> I was working with a manager that I knew had a style very, very different from mine. And I knew if I was going to make manager this year, it was crucial that I get this guy on my side, that I make him see I was ready to be manager. . . . I figured the only way I know how to approach this is to talk to him about it—be honest and get things out on the table that no one talks about. I said, "Steve, I am scared to death of working for you this year because I know you don't promote people. I know you think I'm screwing up because it's different from the way you do things, but trust me. It will work. I know it."
>
> He is very task oriented, wants to look at budget analyses, (so I said) "Steve, there's six people on this project. I don't need to look at a written report to tell you what is going on. . . . I have delivered everything on time, haven't I?" He said, "Yes." "My project team is happy?" "Yes." I said, "See, it's not that I do it worse, it's that we're different, and it's not that I can't learn from you." . . . I think that was the pivotal point for me in changing because I realized we had two different styles. His had worked for him for a number of years. I could learn from him, but I could never be that way. And that's when I realized my style was no less valid. My way was not the wrong way. I don't need to continue looking for "the" answer.
>
> I had several conversations with him about our differences. I don't think any staff person had ever confronted him on his evaluations of them or his approach. . . . And I think he got a lot from me. It was the first time I felt like I gave to somebody who was my superior. And everyone told me, "Sharon, what did you do to Steve? He gave you an 'Outstanding.' He stood up and supported you."[2]

Most of our studies did not involve the collection of direct measures of business success by manager (different jobs often don't compare). But Hirsch's study of entrepreneurial professionals[3] did take a close look both at how opthalmologists at the Technician, Achiever, and Strategist stages

thought about their businesses and at the gross annual revenue for each business in 1987. The results are dramatic and startling and certainly suggest how Strategists think about the wider environment and why later stage managers are more likely to be promoted based on their business results.

Let us listen first for how differently, in Hirsch's interviews, a Technician, an Achiever, and a Strategist think about what "it takes for someone to be successful in ophthalmology practice these days?"

Technician: You have to have technology, because you have people coming in wanting it (technology). Keeping up with it is the biggest challenge. You won't have the surgery if you don't keep up. Now don't misunderstand, you have to be honest with the patient and with yourself, first, and, you know, really care about them; then on top of that, come through with the technology and letting your patient know what you can do.[4]

Achiever: I read a lot—some of the business books, articles in the paper, and my ears are always open when I go to meetings or seminars. I realized a while back that my success is totally dependent on my staff. I could be the best ophthalmologist in the world, but if my staff is bad then you're never going to build a practice. So that is the basis. I try to instill in my crew a sense of the need to think things through and then to do what they think is right. They know my guidelines as the guy who is running the show, but I want them to use their brains. . . . If they make a mistake, then they make a mistake and we just sort of, you know, start talking about it.[5]

Strategist: To be successful you have to get beyond your own narcissism. You have to conquer your own narcissism to understand what it must really be like to be a patient or someone who works for you.

You would think that to be financially successful that you have to be greedy, but of course, there are many people who are greedy but who aren't successful. If you're too greedy you can't keep other good people around you. . . . If you want to build an organization you have to be able to find out what it is other people want, and then give it to them.

Most ophthalmologists coming out of residency today are well trained, and even if they're not, the technology allows them to turn out a reasonable product. . . . To be commercially successful, technology has to be simpleminded so that lots of people can do it. So . . . there's a level playing field in technology.

The real answer is who can take the technology and wrap around it their personal creativity to create a product that people want to buy. . . . I have invested what creativity I have in creating an organization that can effectively deal with the ophthalmic environment in the 1990s rather than most practices which still think we're in the 1960s.

> Let me give you two examples. Lots of ophthalmologists in the area know that sending flowers to patients after surgery is something that I do. . . . They know that I do it and they see that I keep seeing more patients and doing more surgery, yet they cannot bring themselves to do this. So why is this? . . . The explanation is that the second guy cannot humble himself to recognize the patient in a token of love or esteem. . . . He cannot overcome his own technocratic isolation if you will.
>
> Let me give you another example: We are opening up our third branch office and I was astonished to learn that the ophthalmologists in this new area make their patients drive 45 minutes to a different hospital for Yag laser procedures because they are too cheap to buy a Yag laser. . . . Well, I just felt that this was a violation of principle and so I thought why not take a chance, why not spend fifty thousand bucks and see if the patient doesn't appreciate the difference. Ever since we spent that, I mean that was big . . . that was craziness . . . some very interesting things have happened. First of all, all the other doctors dislike me, but of course they're willing to use the machine; secondly, the patients love it and they tell their friends who are of course patients of these other practitioners, which reinforces their dislike of us . . . ; and my staff really has a sense of pride about the whole thing and what we're here to achieve.[6]

The overall difference that one hears in these three statements about what it takes to be successful in ophthalmology—the difference between the Technician's focus on technological expertise, the Achiever's concern for the immediate staff working well together, and the Strategist's theory of the total organization in the environment, along with a sense of how the leader must transform ("beyond narcissism")—is directly reflected in the overall scale of the businesses of ophthalmologists at the three different stages of development and in the gross annual revenues of those businesses.

The Technicians—insisting on hands-on participation in every technical phase of their operations—are able to see essentially one patient at a time.

The Achievers—delegating significant aspects of the operation to their staffs, with oversight—can see essentially three patients at a time.

The Strategists—able to see critical gaps in services, move into unoccupied niches, and create contracts that motivate partner physicians—are able to create multisite practices and see three times again as many patients.

Table 3.1 shows the results in terms of gross annual revenues by practice for these 13 ophthalmologists. Without the foregoing explanation, the results would be utterly astounding. Annual revenues show no consistent relationship to age or number of years in practice. Instead, they vary dramatically by stage of development of the entrepreneurial

Table 3.1
Developmental Stage and Gross Annual Revenues for 13 Entrepreneurial Professionals

n	*Developmental Stage*	*Average Age*	*Average Years Practice*	*1987 Annual Gross Revenues*
5	Technicians	45	14	$ 330,000
5	Achievers	40	9	$1,300,000
3	Strategists	43	13	$4,200,000

physician; so much so that the average annual revenue for practices at each stage is not just *somewhat* larger, but approximately *three times* as large as the average for practices at the prior stage. Moreover, there is no overlap between sizes of practices at the different stages: the smallest practice at each stage is more than twice as large as the largest practice at the prior stage.[7]

If human development were no more than a matter of setting a goal and achieving it, then managers who aspire to senior management would do well to set themselves the goal of becoming Strategists. But of course, human development is not merely a matter of goal achievement; instead, it is a matter of transformations that restructure one's very self as well as one's sense of the natural, social, and spiritual worlds and one's style of managing. Not only will such transformations inevitably feel risky and profoundly confusing, but one's very way of thinking and acting—still largely structured by whatever worldview one currently inhabits (even if one is dissatisfied with it)—will frustrate efforts to change.

First Glimpses of Transforming Power

This is the key "trick" or "secret" of transformation—that it can be generated neither by internal motivation alone nor by external pressure or opportunity alone. An exercise of unilateral power can force changes in external behavior but cannot transform the meaning-making structure of a system. Developmental theory tells us that transformation to a qualitatively different and more inclusive way of making meaning requires playful, reciprocal initiatives between system and environments, child and parent, student and teacher, manager and mentor.

Hence, a person exercising *transforming power invites mutuality*—a mutual exercise of power guided by a living awareness of what is currently at stake for the particular systems participating in the transforma-

tion. The chick seeking to crack the eggshell from the inside may not succeed alone; but if the mother hen cracks the egg before the chick is ready, the chick will surely die. Only if both cooperate appropriately from inside and outside can transformation occur.

Transforming power cannot be insolently and unilaterally wielded. Instead, it *requires a continual, humble effort—not just to be rational, but to be aware of the present moment in all its fullness.* This awareness effort includes and transcends one's own material interests, emotional preferences, and intellectual theory about the situation, as well as those of the others and the institutions involved. This effort also transcends the narrowness of the present and experiences how the past is growing into this moment and the future is growing out of it.

Strategists are frequently visionary pathfinders of unusual accomplishment, but insofar as they rely primarily on the intellectual content of their vision they substitute intellectual categories for conscious action. Henry Kissinger, for example, in addition to his many accomplishments, eroded the organizational effectiveness of the Department of State, left our presidents overreliant on the National Security apparatus, and paved the way for Iran-Contra. William Norris, founder and longtime CEO of Control Data, whose notion of creating new markets in areas of social need had the potential to transform our understanding and operation of business, prosecuted his ideology to the point of the near financial ruin of Control Data. The Strategist stage ophthalmologist quoted above is so enamored of his theory about getting beyond narcissism that he talks on about it at great length—narcissistically? He is cogent and he is obviously unusually successful in business terms at the time of the study; but he may be narcissistically so in love with his theory that his colleagues' resentment eventually rebounds negatively on him. The terrible temptation and danger of the Strategist—whether it be Hegel, Marx, or Freud who came up with vast theories of intellectual, social, and personal development in the nineteenth century—or whether it be Henry Kissinger, William Norris, or an adherent of the developmental theory proposed in this book—is that he or she may very well come to rely on a plausible and powerful theory, rather than on continuing efforts of awareness.

In order to avoid such outcomes, *transforming power* is not merely open to, but *actively seeks, challenge and contradiction.* Indeed, properly appreciated, each moment of potential transformation is such a challenge, because the person seeking to exercise transforming power is relating to systems that do not initially share an understanding of what is at stake.

The person seeking to exercise transforming power, however, must seek challenges to his or her approach in every way possible—by taking on dilemmas of increasing complexity or social scope, or dilemmas that go more deeply to the heart of the culture as a whole, or by discovering new ways of conducting inquiry that better show the negative

consequences of his or her perspective and action.[8] The active search for such challenge is essential precisely because the Strategist perspective is likely to be a powerful one that permits one to exercise significant influence—even transformation—in the wider world. The Strategist's perspective can therefore easily outshine and subordinate other perspectives. It can generate ego-inflation and an associated blindness and lack of living awareness that can make the very strength of the Strategist demonic. To confront and thwart this tendency, transforming power must be understood, to put it in the strongest form possible, as self-mortifying. It would rather *not* influence than inappropriately influence. This is how far transforming power goes to seek challenge and contradiction.

As the foregoing paragraphs also imply, *transforming power is nothing if not timely.* A distinguishing feature of a Strategist stage theory—and of developmental theory in particular—is that it explicitly draws the attention of the person holding the theory to the question of timing in action. However, any theory of development and transformation, such as this one, clearly has general, universalistic elements to it, and may be applied "in general" without specific attention to the uniqueness of the given situation. This, again, is a danger of the Strategist who tends to identify with the theory. In fact (or, more precisely, in *act*) transforming power is never properly applied in general, but always in response to the unique circumstances of particular situations and systems—always in response to a living awareness that revivifies and revalidates (or else disconfirms) the general categories of the theory.

Put differently, transforming power is not enacted in a deductively logical fashion. It does not deduce a specific action from general principles. Instead, *transforming power is enacted ana-logically.* It seeks analogies between a general theory and an independent apprehension of the present situation, felt from the inside as a participant in it.[9]

Finally, *transforming power empowers all who come within the radius of its influence, including those who oppose its influence.* The exercise of transforming power is intrinsically a cooperative "positive-sum" game, not a competitive "zero-sum" game. It generates greater power: a greater range of awareness, control, and influence for each person or organization that transforms to a later stage of development. Also, because it seeks challenges, tests the feedback received for validity, and defers to validated negative feedback rather than defending against it, the exercise of transforming power empowers opponents as well. As stated above, transforming power invites mutuality; the more others are empowered and the closer they come to exercising transforming power themselves, the more nearly mutual occasions of influence become.

This way of operating is evidently extremely unfamiliar to most people, for not a single member of our managerial samples measured at the "Magician" or "Ironist" stages, where self-challenging transforming

power "comes naturally."[10] Indeed, the very stage names—Magician and Ironist—have been chosen in part to convey the unfamiliarity of these realities.

The Magician and Ironist Stages of Development

When
! **if** !
the Strategist recognizes the Faustian bargain
unintentionally struck
in allowing a powerful theory derived from experience
to frame further experience
(rather than continuing the effort to be
vulnerable to[11]
aware of
and learning from
experience)
he or she *may* begin to make an effort
to observe, participate feelingly, and act
in all four territories of experience
simultaneously.[12]

In an effort not to allow his or her experience to be framed by any particular attentional warp, the aspiring Magician actively exercises attention. Such a person seeks awareness of pattern, circulation, and interruption

- in the color of one's daily rounds;
- in one's blood and breath and bodying forth of voice and gesture;
- in the shards and dramas of one's feeling and thought;
- in the very movements—sometimes so lugubrious, sometimes so agitated, so rarely either animated or intelligible—of one's/elf: attention.

The objective is
no form of domination
no principle
no comfortable cult or ritual practice
(rather, mutual influence
among the four territories of experience).

Socially and historically, these efforts toward circulating awareness and mutuality explore pattern and interruption within and among four scales of experience:

- personal sexual/political/vocational actions;
- familial, friendship, and work group roles and processes;
- organizational policies, strategies, and structures;
- cultural/religious mythologies.

For example, the Motorola vice-president whom I have described in the previous chapter as holding the Clown role in meetings with Fisher, Tooker, and Galvin is measured at the Magician stage, unlike any of the managers in our larger samples.[13] He describes a method he uses to run meetings. The content of the method has a developmental quality to it, as we will see momentarily; this self-formulated, developmental theory of managing meetings suggests that the Clown may be a Strategist, but not necessarily a Magician.

Nevertheless, the way this executive came to use the method, and the reason he uses it, suggest that his preeminent concern is not to have the right theory of how meetings work best, but rather to pay ongoing attention to what is occurring in the different territories of experience. When the Motorola executive first invented this theory, he was so concerned that he might trap himself in a particular "attentional warp" and not listen carefully enough to what was really going on in meetings that he did *not* use the theory for five years after he initially confirmed its effectiveness. After coming to Motorola and being charged with helping to transform the culture of the company over several years, he realized that the meeting method he had invented enacted the envisioned culture of high competence, high participation, and high learning. Hence, he began to use the method again (not in every meeting) because of the analogic between the group process it generated and the organizational mission envisioned.

This method combines a developmental sense of how meetings move with repeated opportunities for the other members to influence the content and direction of events. He speaks of this "octave" method (he was a mathematician as an undergraduate, with an interest in the Pythagorean octave) as follows:

> The first note "do" is the leader's vision for the whole meeting. It has to be both crisp and inspiring. It's got to surprise people just a little—jog them awake, make them reconsider what they came in prepared to do.
>
> "Re" is the first response, the first chorus from the group. The leader has got to allow for this if he wants a creative, committed meeting. How he choreographs that first response determines how far the meeting can go.
>
> "Mi" is the first concrete decision of the meeting. If it's taken early on and makes sense to everyone, there's a general loosening up, and the rest of the meeting is likely to fly.

> "Fa" is primarily the group's note again, so the leader's structure should be something that brings out the chorus, something like breaking into small groups on different issues.[14]

This meeting strategy integrates leadership with participation and generates increasing mutuality between leader and members, *if* the leader is in fact exercising his or her attention. The leader must listen for implicit cues and invite explicit feedback about when stage change is needed. The leader must also listen to what members say throughout, but especially during the alternating episodes when their role is intended to be primary. Hence, the approach is self-challenging, generates transformations within the meeting itself, is attuned to timing, and invites mutuality.

Pope John XXIII

To take another example of expanding rather than shrinking attention, let us listen into Angello Roncalli's efforts at awareness at two different points in his life: at the age of 49, five years into his exile in Bulgaria (he had displeased members of the Papal Curia); and again at the age of 76 in his early actions as Pope John XXIII and in calling the Vatican II Ecumenical Council.

Having taken as his motto "Obedience and Peace" upon entering exile, Roncalli meditated especially on the phrase "Under the guidance of obedience, always on the cross" at his 1930 annual retreat. The very fact of engaging in regular meditative retreats (and his meditative retreats were of many kinds—from daily prayer and journal writing, to monthly days of reflection, to his annual, more extended retreat) is evidence of exercising attention and of seeking mutualities among his daily practices, his theory, and his ongoing experience as a whole.

In the direct analogy between his experience and that of Jesus, we can hear the intimate relationship between vulnerability and awareness: for to obey is to say "Thy will, not mine" like Jesus on the cross; to feel and to renounce one's own will is to suffer a wound; to be wounded is to draw closer to the condition of Jesus on the cross.

In his journal during that retreat, he wrote "I . . . choose poverty with Christ, rather than riches; insults with Christ . . . rather than honours; I desire to be accounted worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed wise and prudent in this world."[15] These formulations are, of course, easy enough to say. To live them is another matter. And to show, by the character of the rest of one's life, that they are not mere excuses for being unwise and imprudent, is yet another matter. How fully Roncalli lived them is suggested by his unwavering practice of never so much as

conversing about, let alone intriguing to get, another position closer to home. A letter to a friend shows how this is not merely an outer, ethical stance, but an ongoing spiritual discipline, combating the slothful,[16] egotistical imagination: "I let others waste their time dreaming about what might happen to me," he wrote. "The idea that one would be better off somewhere else is an illusion."[17]

Here, Roncalli has reached the Magician stage of development, in which the person appreciates that all constructive and productive spiritual and material work begins, no matter how great the suffering, with acceptance of one's present position in time and space. Such acceptance in turn motivates a renewed search for uplifting, transforming power ("Thy will, not mine"). This "search for the Holy Grail" is itself, as the Grail legend tells us, what transforms a barren kingdom into a fruitful one.

As I stated in *Managing the Corporate Dream*:

> The transformation from the Strategist stage (to the Magician stage) is from being *in the right frame of mind to having a reframing mind*. . . . A reframing mind continually overcomes itself, divesting itself of its own presuppositions . . . (engaging in) an ongoing jousting, at one and the same time, with one's own attention and with the outside world."[18]

At the 1958 papal conclave, when Roncalli was 76 and *not* among the five cardinals mentioned as leading contenders for the papacy, he had become what Cardinal Bacci called for in his opening address:

> We need a pope gifted with great spiritual strength and ardent charity. . . . Rather than someone who has explored and experienced the subtle principles belonging to the art and discipline of diplomacy, we need a pope who is above all holy, so that he may obtain from God what lies beyond natural gifts.[19]

But if Roncalli truly had become "a fool for Christ," that is a sublime category that many persons cannot easily distinguish from mere foolishness. "He's an old fogey," a reporter asking about him at the Vatican was told.[20] Nevertheless, despite his 28 years as a Vatican diplomat, no one mistook Roncalli for the subtle diplomat that Bacci advised against.

From the moment he was elected, Pope John XXIII began surprising people. Now his "reframing mind" was applying itself, not just to his own experience, but to the group dynamics, organizational structure, and cultural myths of Catholic Christianity through the millenia. In this way, he displayed his transformation beyond the Magician stage to the Ironist stage, where a concern with "indirect," "masked" interventions that support systems development over time supercedes direct displays of

transforming power. The Ironist acts in this veiled, ironic manner—not in order to mislead others, but rather in order not to overpower them. At most stages of development, persons will be disoriented at most times by actions that reveal all four territories of experience at once, and they are likely to misinterpret and withdraw from such moments. "Naked" transforming power is awesome and confounding in its very vulnerability. Hence, the Ironist only rarely "opens the kimono," focusing instead on actions that do not invite "on the spot" transformation, but rather set the stage for more gradual transformation.

Three small vignettes from the beginning of John's papacy can serve as illustrations—the first two both occurring on the very day of his investiture. First, in naming himself Pope John XXIII, he "resurrected" a dishonored name. Despite its evangelically positive associations (John the Baptist, the Apostle John), the name was considered to have been rendered unusable by the Avignon Antipope who had last used it. Pope John XXII had massacred, cheated, and perjured his way to the papacy at the time of the split in the Catholic Church prior to the Reformation. Giving himself the name challenged no one but himself. Could he transform the associations with the name? Could he continue a healing process within the Church from the corruption and splits of the Medieval period? Throughout the early modern period after the Counter-Reformation, the Church had adopted a rather formal, rigid, and defensive form of sanctity against its earlier corruption. Was a more outgoing, loving, reconciling, charitable type of action now possible?

Second, before sleeping his first night as Pope, he called in Monseigneur Tardini, who represented the conservative, institutional perspective in the Curia—the very one that had exiled John from Rome for so many years. Tardini could expect nothing better than to be exiled in turn, and had already chosen an orphanage in which to serve. Instead, John asked Tardini to become his Secretary of State. John's effort was not to exercise transforming power directly on Tardini on this occasion. Indeed, he used unilateral power in the interview itself. For Tardini objected, and John made it "a matter of obedience," as is the Pope's prerogative.

So, John used unilateral power, but in precisely the opposite direction from what one would have expected, in order to create an ongoing jousting between his and Tardini's points of view that might gradually generate personal and institutional transformation. He thus signalled his welcome of any who considered themselves enemies into an intimate, continuing conversation.

This episode wonderfully illustrates how the power of balance empowers even opponents and thereby generates both increasing justice and self-legitimation. It also illustrates how the power of balance blends the different types of power, using each type ironically to create conditions that transcend the need for that type of power. From this ironic kernel

grew the powerful (because genuine) conversation among perspectives at the Vatican II Ecumenical Council and the restructuring of relationships both within the church and between Catholicism and other faiths.

The third vignette—Pope John's proposal for Vatican II itself—was as surprising as the first two. No such council had been called since Vatican I during the Counter-Reformation. Because that council had been called despite the pope, and because such a council was impossible to control unilaterally, it was commonly assumed that no pope—least of all an old, caretaker pope—would call one. When John first told his trusted confessor, Capovilla, what he was considering, Capovilla argued against its many hazards and urged him to build on his many strengths instead; in particular, John's "charisma of paternity."

John prayed on this advice for several days. Thus he took Capovilla's advice seriously and respectfully but ended up challenging him back rather than accepting it. He replied: "The trouble is, Don Loris, that you're still not detached enough from self—you're still concerned with having a good reputation. Only when the ego is trampled underfoot can one be fully and truly free. You're not yet free, Don Loris."[21] Thus most pointedly did John refuse to accept the relatively invulnerable, hierarchical, paternal role as primary, preferring the mutuality and vulnerability of the Ecumenical Council. His exercise of the power of balance was thus shown to be not for the sake of misleading others or protecting himself, but rather for the sake of leading the institution as a whole gradually toward the challenge of reframing itself.

Gandhi

For me, the most influential example of mutuality, transforming power, and the power of balance has been Erik Erikson's book about Gandhi, called *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Non-Violence.*[22]

Gandhi incomparably demonstrated the blending of existential inquiry and political efficacy in leading India to independence from British dominion over a thirty-year period. From his leadership of an early labor strike in Ahmedabad to his famous tea with the British Viceroy, Gandhi would always befriend his adversaries and address them as equals, not as superiors—as partners in a mutual struggle.

The Ahmedabad strike in 1918, for example, began as a lockout of the workers by the employers. The mutuality among many of the key players in the conflict is astonishing. It seems, at first glance, an enormous coincidence that the preeminent mill owner knew Gandhi, had donated money to his ashram in a time of need and asked him now to concern himself with the situation as a mediator. It seems an even greater coincidence that the sister of the mill owner was the person, elected by accla-

mation, who presented the workers' strike threat to the mill owners. It is, if anything, still more surprising and improbable that when pressed by his fellow owners to discipline his sister, the brother refused, on the grounds that he would not do so were she his brother and had she inherited half the property. "I have no right to prevent her from doing her duty."[23] It is perhaps a little less surprising that the sister, "frightened by her unexpected role," should now write to Gandhi asking for his help.

These familiar and familial interrelations among the counterplayers—among protagonists, antagonists, and syntagonists—are not, however, coincidental at all. They derive, rather, from Gandhi's approach of testing everyone's conscience[24]—his own as much as anyone else's—in his immediate relations, in power struggles between organizational factions, and in regard to the meaning of cultural symbols. As a result he was always an "intimate" power to be reckoned with, whether primarily disturbing or primarily inspiring. He attracted those who, like Ambalal, the mill owner, and Anasuyaben, his sister, had already tested their own consciences to some degree (Ambalal had married a lower caste wife, contrary to social pressure, and then treated her as an equal, as he now also did his sister).[25]

Gandhi's treatment of everyone as peers extended to the thousands of workers as well. Rather than addressing them indirectly and patronizingly, Gandhi wrote and distributed leaflets almost daily and met each day with between five and ten thousand workers under a famous, monumental babul tree on the bank of the Sabarmati River. There he developed the Worker's Pledge for this particular socio-spiritual drama with them: They offered the owners a compromise wage, precisely in the middle between the owners' offer and the employees' demand; said they would not resume work for anything less; and pledged nonviolence during the lockout-turned-strike. Under the babul tree, Gandhi added:

> Some of you probably think that everything will be all right after a week or two of suffering. I repeat that, though we may hope that our struggle will end early, we must remain firm, even if that hope is not realized and must not resume work even if we have to die. Workers have no money, but they possess a wealth superior to money—they have their hands, their courage, and their fear of God. If a time comes when you have to starve, have confidence that we shall eat only after feeding you.[26]

Here Gandhi ups the ante—transforms it—from the material realm of wages to the spiritual realm of what one is willing to die for. As Gandhi had stated when he first designed such an oath in South Africa, it is to be taken by each person separately, not by a vote; and it is to be taken in order to gain power over oneself (in a very Kantian sense), not power over one's opponent.

Gandhi was unbelievably clear and straightforward about the type of power he was using and the type of justice he was seeking. Unlike the city's British Commissioner, whom Gandhi told in a letter, "You desire to do good, but you rule not by right of love, but by force of fear,"[27] Gandhi's principles were represented, in part, by such statements as these two in his Sixth Leaflet (March 3, 1918): "When workers make a demand merely because they think themselves strong enough to do so, regardless of the employers' condition, they will have succumbed to the modern, Satanic ideal of justice"; and "That action alone is just which does not harm either party to a dispute."[28] In these two statements, we see again, as in the oath itself, how Gandhi's approach challenges the workers themselves—that is, his own party in the dispute—how Gandhi explicitly disavows the Hobbesian version of power and justice, and how he regards his efforts as serving the empowerment of opponents as well as proponents of his position.

Erikson comments on the timing of these particular pronouncements of Gandhi's, as follows:

> It is fair to assume that at this point relations between Gandhi and Ambalal (the mill owners' leader) became rather strained; for it is almost a rule that powerful opponents, in their stubborn bewilderment over being faced with this new nonviolent kind of struggle, become more ruthless.[29]

The mill owners now offered their own compromise wage to workers (less than demanded by the pledge). Many were tempted to accept. At this point, Gandhi suddenly announced that he would fast to mark his commitment to the pledge and until the workers received the demanded increase, or he died.

Erikson explores the ambiguous moral nature of this action, for even if its intent is not to force the employers to act in a certain way, its effect is to generate extreme diplomatic power on them. Gandhi himself was aware of the moral ambiguity of his action but would undertake such fasts sixteen more times during the independence struggles over the next thirty years.

In this particular case, an awkward compromise to save everyone's face was eventually arranged: The workers received what they demanded the first day they returned to work; they received what the mill owners offered on the second day; and then whatever an arbitrator determined from the third day on. In fact, the arbitrator granted the full amount that Gandhi and the workers had been requesting.

So, Gandhi "won" in the material sphere—just the sphere he claimed was less important. It was less obvious that he generated permanent

transformation in the workers' and the mill owners' souls. There is no doubt, however, that a number of key players were permanently transformed—found a new vocation of social change through spiritual discipline. Moreover, Ahmedabad continued to experience unusually cooperative labor-management relations for the next generation. And, of course, this was the first encounter in a generation-long spiritual exercise that led to the transformation of India's political status.

The difficulty in determining, especially in the short run, whether true transformation occurred in this instance is characteristic of all transforming actions, for such actions influence what we choose to look at and how we see it, what we choose to measure and how we measure it, what we choose to do and how we do it. Hence, the influence of truly transforming action only gradually becomes apparent in a changed pattern of future commitments and actions.

I read *Gandhi's Truth* when it first appeared in 1969, the year after Martin Luther King's assassination. I had nearly managed to get myself killed by angry blacks in the summer of 1968 while directing an interracial summer school dedicated to participatory education and nonviolent transformation.[30] (Obviously, I still had a good deal to learn about the how-to of it all.) I had the opportunity to share a weekend at a conference with Erikson and his wife, Joan, in the fall of 1969. Their personal charm, dignity, relatedness, and mutual joie de vivre—(I remember them dancing Viennese style among some hundred varied contemporary styles)—multiplied the inspiration I felt from the book itself.

There was much that was moving in the book for me. Most strikingly unforgettable was Erikson's pause in the middle of the book to address Gandhi directly through a letter. Once again, I was delighted by the sense of mutuality and respect with which Erikson adressed himself to Gandhi: "I will put my critique into words which I hope I would have had the courage to address to you were you alive,"[31] he says at the outset; and at the end,

> All this, God help me, is not by way of an accusation or even a clinical judgment. I can only view with awe a man who (making himself more transparent than any of the saviors and saints of the mythologized past) improvised every item in the inventory of saintliness—nakedness, poverty, silence, chastity, and charity—without being baptized or ordained in any traditional investiture; and who attempted to apply the power of that position in every waking minute to the Here and the Now as lived by the masses of men."[32]

In between these two statements, Erikson examines the many ways in which one can question whether Gandhi fully practiced mutuality:

- his abstinence from sex;
- his apparent unwillingness to learn anything significant from anybody, particularly his wife, that was not approved by his own "inner voice"; and
- his tendency toward masochism and sadism deriving from an intolerance of ambivalence in self and others ("You seem either unaware of—or want to wish or pray away—an ambivalence, a co-existence of love and hate, which must become conscious in those who work for peace."[33])—a tendency especially injurious in his relations with his own sons.

Conclusion

I was as horrified by Gandhi's failures (as I saw them) in the arena of familial intimacy as I was impressed by his authenticity and success in the arena of transformative politics. There must be a "power of balance," I felt (though I gave it no name then), that was less coerced and coercive in the realm of diplomatic power.

There must be, I believed, a power of balance that anyone, living an outwardly ordinary life in familial and organizational settings, could embody. This power of balance would have room for Pope John's unilateral coercion of Monseigneur Tardini and for the logistical subtleties of the Motorola vice-president's "octave" meeting strategies, and even for Gandhi's forms of diplomatic power on occasion, just as it would also have room for the transforming power that both Pope John and Gandhi most clearly exercised. But the power of balance would, precisely, *have* each subordinate type of power (including transforming power) rather than *being* (fully identified with) any one type of power. It would exercise each type of power occasionally and intentionally, not always and assumptively. Moreover, the power of balance would always be exercised in the service of increasing mutuality, development, and inquiry, no matter which of the subordinate forms of power it displayed at a given time.[34]

Only a theory and practice of this type of power can ultimately generate a more just organization or society from a relatively unjust beginning state. Only this kind of power is self-limiting and self-legitimizing because its aim is to support the development and empowerment of others and because its practice is to challenge itself and publicly test whether it is in fact accomplishing this. Hence, only this type of power generates genuine authority—authority based not on unilateral power or custom and longevity, but rather on just action (as defined in Chapter 2).

In my own early attempts as an adult at leadership of socially innovative organizations, I exercised power as little as possible in order to

empower others. Only upon reflection afterwards did I begin to realize that these situations had required a greater exercise of power (at times unilateral, at times logistical, at times transforming), and that what I had in fact enacted and thus modeled for others was *not* exercising power. My own action had not been ana-logically consistent with my aim—my self-disempowerment had contradicted my espoused aim of empowering persons. To make matters worse, I discovered that a large proportion of my coworkers tended to assume either that I was utterly naive or that I was mysteriously devious and manipulative. So, even my self-disempowerment had powerful and negative effects on others.[35]

The inescapable question, both in theory and in personal practice, was what kind of power has positive effects. This chapter outlines a theoretical answer to this question. The following chapters carry this theory further and begin to show in greater detail how this theory came, gradually and partially, to inform my own leadership practice.

Notes

1. Dal Fisher and I have written one article on a research study that examined 17 managers, of whom 10 had evolved from the Achiever stage within the past four to eight years. The article is entitled "Transforming Managerial Practice: Beyond then Achiever Stage" in Woodman, R., & Pasmore, W. (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Change and Development (Vol. 5)*, (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1991). My recent paper "Cultivating Post-Formal Adult Development: Theory and Practice" (Cambridge, MA: Fifth Adult Development Symposium, July, 1990) reviews the two streams of empirical work on how to cultivate transformation from the Achiever to the Strategist stage. The theoretical work in this emerging field is well represented in Alexander, C., & Langer, E., 1990, *Higher Stages of Human Development*, New York: Oxford University Press.

2. This quote taken from the Fisher and Torbert paper referenced in the previous note.

3. Hirsch, J., 1988, *Toward a Cognitive-Developmental Theory of Strategy Formulation Among Practicing Physicians*, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-205. As the frequent elipses suggest, the practitioner's statement was actually much longer than is here reproduced, throwing an interesting light on the issue of his espoused lack of narcissism!

7. Obviously, the number in this study is very small, and obviously, too, an entrepreneurial practice "shows" the effects of the entrepreneur more clearly than it is possible to trace a manager's effects in a large organization. Also, as already noted, the method of assigning subjects to stages of development in this study is different from the Loevinger sentence completion test used in the other five studies. Consequently, strong generalizations from these findings are unwarranted. Earlier studies, however, have shown statistically significant differences in managerial behavior by stage of development, so there is a developing body of empirical support for the proposition

that a manager's developmental worldview has a definite influence on behavior and outcomes. See Merron, K., Fisher, D., & Torbert, W., "Meaning making and management action," *Group and Organization Studies*, 12, 1987, pp. 257-274.

8. For example, Chris Argyris has, over the past quarter century, devised a variety of techniques for publicly testing the validity of social observations and inferences among the very participants in a social situation where there are different and conflicting perspectives. His most recent publication on this topic is Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & Smith, D., 1985, *Action Science: Concepts, Methods, and Skills for Research and Intervention*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

9. See my discussion of analogical thinking in chapter 9 of *Managing the Corporate Dream* and in my description of Pope John XXIII in "Leading Organizational Transformation" (full cite, note 10). See also Alan Watts, *Nature, Man and Woman* (New York: Pantheon, 1958) on feeling inside.

10. The question of the point in human development when truly mutual, self-challenging transformational power is exercised is crucial if the entire concept and reality of transformation is to be rescued from the rash of atheoretical and empirically unverified claims by contemporary business authors, consulting firms, and New Age gurus that they can sell the key to transformation (e.g., Peters, T., & Waterman, R., 1982, *In Search of Excellence*, New York: Harper & Row; Waldman, P., 1987, "Motivate or Alienate? Firms Hire Gurus to Change Their 'Cultures'," *Wall Street Journal*, 7, 1987, p. 19).

There is a growing social scientific literature on transformational leadership introduced by James MacGregor Burns's book *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), wherein he distinguished between transactional leadership based on an exchange between leader and follower that fundamentally changes neither, and transformational leadership that changes followers' (not leaders') values. In *The Leader* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), Maccoby bases his case studies of six leaders on Burns's concept of transformational leadership, as do Noel Tichy and Mary Devanna in their study of business leadership, *The Transformational Leader: Molding Tomorrow's Corporate Winners* (New York: John Wiley, 1986). As valuable as these are as early studies of this important phenomenon, none involves any validated and generalizable empirical measures of leaders' stage of development; and none specifies the mutual, self-challenging characteristics of transforming power. Hence, it is impossible to distinguish espoused claims of transformation from the actual practice of same.

The work of Bernard Bass and his colleagues is providing valuable empirical knowledge about transforming leadership, although this work is limited, too (what work isn't?), in this case because the studies are based on persons' perceptions of leadership and its effects, without independent observations of the exercise of transforming power or developmental measures of the effects on followers. Bass, B., 1985, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, New York: Free Press; Bass, B., Waldman, D., & Avolio, B., 1986, *Transformational Leadership and the Falling Dominoes Effect*, Technical Report No. 86-99, Binghampton: SUNY, Binghampton School of Management.

Kuhnert and Lewis have made an argument about what stage of development managers must reach before they are likely to exercise transforming leadership in their 1987 article "Transactional and Transformational Leadership: A Constructive/Developmental Analysis" *Academy of Management Review* (12, 4, 1987, pp. 648-657). Their article, however, represents a purely theoretical treatment; also, their conclusions vary significantly from the work presented here. They argue that leaders at the Achiever stage can exercise transforming leadership, whereas the argument here is that managers at the Achiever stage are still two stages of development removed from the full exercise of transforming power. They claim that Achievers "have developed a subjective frame of

reference that defines selves, not in terms of their connections to others, but in terms of their goals and commitments. . . . At this stage, leaders are able to take an objective view of their goals and commitments; they can operate from a personal value system that transcends their agendas and loyalties. In other words, they can operate as transformational leaders . . . (who) know the limitations, the defects and the strengths of all perspectives" (p. 653). In my view, Kuhnert and Lewis have here mistaken the ability to be objective about what it takes to reach a goal (their first sentence which correctly characterizes the 'victory' of the Achiever stage) with the ability to be objective about the status of the goal itself and, indeed, about whole perspectives (their second and third sentences, which characterize capabilities that emerge conceptually at the Strategist stage and in practice at the Magician and Ironist stages). To offer a homely example, a person may know and do what is necessary to earn $1 million (the goal) without being able to question whether or how that will make him or her happy (the intuitive purpose), or whether happiness is an appropriate end value.

11. Nussbaum, M., 1986, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Nussbaum has done modern philosophy and politics a signal service through her so judiciously articulated emphasis on human good—human excellence—as essentially vulnerable. This vulnerability to contingency can heighten one's awareness to the present. See also Norman, R., & Reynolds, C., 1990, "A Symposium on *The Fragility of Goodness*," *Soundings*, 72, 4.

12. See my 1973 book, *Learning from Experience: Toward Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press). Several of the journal entries at the end of the final chapter of Section III attempt to convey specific instances of efforts toward such awareness of circulation.

13. The Clown or Trickster role is in many ways archetypal for the Magician stage. It unites the opposites of masked performance and authentic spontaneity. It also unites the opposites of vulnerability and power. It unites, as well, the opposites of actor within a setting or story and narrator of the story. See the superb treatment of Trickster in Doueihi, A., 1984, "Trickster: On inhabiting the space between discourse and story," *Soundings*, 67, 3: 283-311.

14. *MCD*, pp. 129-130, 212-213.

15. Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, p. 130.

16. Sloth—spiritual inactivity—is the central of the Catholic seven principal, capital, or deadly sins, in Dante's version. These notions (sin and sloth), so unfashionable today, gain some credibility, perhaps, in the essays of "The seven deadly sins" edition of *Parabola: The Magazine of Myth and Tradition* (10, 4, 1985).

17. Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, p. 131.

18. *MCD*. pp. 211, 213.

19. Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, p. 281.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 308.

22. Erikson, E., 1970, *Ghandi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Non-Violence*, New York: Norton.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 326. The next short quote is also from that page.

24. "Conscience" is perhaps the closest word in our common language for what calls us to expand our awareness to all four territories of experience, especially in times of temptation, crisis, or judgment. Learning how to listen to our consciences—in order to hear what they are telling us, inarticulately at first, about incongruities among our deepest intuitions of our destinies, duties, and dignities, our strategies for life, our moment-to-moment actions, and our effects on ourselves and others—is what Gandhi

was teaching himself and others in his every meeting. This learning process is, of course, not at all straightforward, nor terribly safe in any conventional sense. Gandhi himself suffered a nervous breakdown in the year following the Ahmedabad event.

25. The following letter written from Gandhi to Ambalal after Gandhi heard from Ambalal's sister, Anasuyaben, illustrates how Gandhi 'meddled' in others' intimate affairs: "I do not wish to interfere with your business affairs at all. However, I have . . . no option but to write. I think you should satisfy the weavers for the sake of Shrimati Anasuyaben at any rate. There is no reason to believe that, if you satisfy these, you will have others clamoring. Even if that should happen, you can do what you think fit then. Why should not the mill-owners feel happy paying a little more to the workers? How could a brother be the cause of suffering to a sister?—and that, too, a sister like Anasuyaben? I have found that she has a soul which is absolutely pure. It would be nothing strange if you took her word to be law. You are, thus, under a double obligation; to please the workers and earn a sister's blessing. My presumption, too, is doubly serious; in a single letter I have meddled in you business and your family affairs. Do forgive me" (p. 296). (The reader will note that the substance of Gandhi's arguments in this letter primarily address themselves to the diplomatic form of power and the consent form of justice—mill owners should feel happy doing what their workers want; the brother should not act contrary to the wish of a sister.)

26. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

28. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Publication Division, 1958, p. 233. (Erikson, *Gandi's Truth*, pp. 341-342.)

29. *Ibid.*, p. 342.

30. I have retold this early story of my own efforts to find the relationship between effective and self-legitimizing social organizing and valid, transforming inquiry in my 1976 book *Creating a Community of Inquiry*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley.

31. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, p. 229.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

34. Nielsen, R., 1990, "Dialogic leadership as ethics action (praxis) method," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9: 25-43. In this article, Nielsen offers an unusually rich synthesis of theory and actual leadership cases that demonstrate these characteristics of transforming power, and the other characteristics mentioned earlier in the chapter.

35. The reader will find a similar pattern of "self-deauthorization" in another story of trying to learn how to manage through the use of action inquiry that is retold in Chapter 14.

4 Exercising the Power of Balance in Organizational Leadership

Generating Continual Quality Improvement

During a quarter of a century of experiences of organizational leadership and consulting, of service on Boards of Directors, and of teaching and parenting, I have gradually come to understand leadership and power in much the way it has been described in the foregoing chapters.[1]

From the perspective of organizational leadership, the four territories of experience that efforts at integrative awareness seek to embrace can be translated into four types of activities:

(1) *Responding to external emergencies/opportunities* (which may arise unexpectedly at any moment);

(2) *Accomplishing role-defined tasks* (which tend to arise and be completed within a one-week to one-year time frame);

(3) *Defining and implementing a major, strategic initiative* (which typically requires on the order of 3-5 years); and

(4) *Clarifying organizational mission and encouraging continual quality improvement of the congruity among mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes* (which is best imagined as requiring 7-21 years, or a generation, because organizational members determine the value of this process and commit actively to it only gradually).

Because these four time spans interpenetrate one another and influence each other, effective management over any extended period of time requires juggling and balancing all four kinds of leadership all the time. (Indeed, on closer observation, each of the four kinds of leadership has both long-term and short-term qualities, e.g., there will be occasions when

the success of the longest term aims depends upon one's immediate response to an unexpected opportunity.)

Because tasks relating to the two short-term kinds of leadership are more "externally" determined at any given time, whereas initiative toward the two long-term kinds of leadership are more "internally" determined (if they are being exercised at all), demands relating to the different kinds of leadership can be in considerable tension with each other. If a leader is at all passive in structuring time, the more immediate, more external demands will gain preeminence, driving out ongoing inquiry and strategic initiative. If, at the other extreme, an administrator fails to perform effectively in regard to the two shorter term time spans, he or she comes to be regarded as unhelpful and unrealistic ("incredible") by children, students, subordinates, peers, and superiors.

Most leaders tend to deal with the tensions among the types of leadership by choosing one activity to focus on as essential (e.g., the firefighter constantly battling emergencies, the bureaucrat mired in routine, the "farsighted" strategic planner) and ignoring the other territories of activity insofar as possible. Such an approach is almost certain to generate greater incongruities among the territories of experience and reduce organizational effectiveness over time. But, because one's predecessor is likely to have taken a relatively lopsided approach like these, when one enters any given leadership role, one is likely to find significant tension and incongruity across the four territories of experience. If, however, a leader actively and awaredly juggles and balances the four kinds of leadership over time, the demands of each time span increasingly come to complement and support activities relating to the other three time spans. Obviously, though, to do this juggling and balancing requires a continuing effort of awareness to embrace these four territories of organizational experience to begin with—an effort that few, if any, other organizational members may be making. Instead, different members are likely to have radically different views of what is wrong with the organization and how to fix it. Some of these differences emanate from their different stages of development.

In theory, the four time spans of leadership correspond roughly to the stages of development and types of power discussed in the previous chapters:

1. *Immediate opportunities and emergencies* often call for the use of *unilateral power* (simply because there may be no time for anything else); these are the qualities of situations most visible to persons at the *Opportunist* stage of development.

2. *Routine, role-related procedures and tasks* represent the institution's predetermined *consent* to these activities, and are the qualities of jobs that persons at the *Diplomat* stage seek clarity about and feel responsible to fulfill (with the ambiguity that if their immediate reference group is

committed *not* to fulfill the expectations of the official hierarchy, then Diplomats will tend to favor the expectations of their immediate reference group). Within this same time horizon of a year or less, but with a different attitude toward it, *Technicians* find their primary excitement from carrying out *three- to nine-month logistical projects* that promise greater organizational efficiencies.

3. *Achievers* and *Strategists* seek meaning within *three- to five-year time horizons* and a more complex *juggling of logistical, consent, and unilateral powers*. Achievers particularly enjoy the implementation of *strategic plans*, or the building or rebuilding of a division or franchise. Strategists relish the development of strategic plans and the full-blown entrepreneurship of bringing a new kind of product or service to market, as the examples of the entrepreneurial opthalmologists in the previous chapter so well illustrated.

4. *Magicians* and *Ironists* will be preeminently attuned to creating contexts for *inquiry into* the real call of an *organizational mission* and into the full experience of organizing across the territories of purpose, strategy, operations, and environmental impact. They are keenly attuned both to the intuitive implications of mission and to learning from and *correcting incongruities that arise in translating from mission to strategy to operations to outcomes*. They will also be (intuitively, if not explicitly and theoretically) aware that reorienting virtually any organization in the world today toward such ongoing existential inquiry and *continual quality improvement* will require at least one—probably many—organizational transformations, which can be achieved only through a subtle, ironic, mutuality-enhancing process, here called *transforming power* and *the power of balance*.

Given the total absence of Magician- and Ironist-stage managers from our large samples reported in the previous chapters, it should not be surprising that whereas the first three time spans of leadership are very well known, the fourth time span is not familiar. Nor should it be surprising that most popular nostrums today hold that five to seven years is an appropriate time span in office for a chief executive officer, because that should be enough time to design and implement one significant strategic initiative, and because the leader is likely to have burned his or her political capital by that time. Obviously, this sort of advice envisions no such task as institutional self-study, nor a leadership process as subtle, as flexible, and as profoundly constructive as that of an Ironist exercising the power of balance.

Recently, however, American companies have increasingly been exploring what a commitment to continual quality improvement means. One thing that is clear from the experience of Motorola, Ford, Xerox, and the few other companies that have committed to some such process, and from the many more Japanese companies that have made such a commitment, is that it requires a decade or more.[2] Indeed, one view of the

Japanese experience with learning the process of continual quality improvement is the whole sense of what quality improvement requires has evolved decade by decade since the 1950s. During the 1950s companies first learned a highly defined, empirical method—Statistical Quality Control—for reducing product defects or deviations from standard. Next, in the 1960s, the focus shifted from fitting a standard (Technician-like efficiency) to a product's fitness for use (e.g., the durability of a car) (Achiever-like effectiveness). Then, in the 1970s, the focus of quality improvement shifted again toward a more qualitative variable—fitness for the explicit requirements of the consumer (Strategist-like integration of service/process concerns with product/task concerns). Finally, in the 1980s, the shift was toward fitting the intuitive, latent requirements of the consumer (Magician-like integration of the invisible/spiritual with the visible/material).[3] It may not be necessary for American companies (or not-for-profits, or government agencies, or schools) to take forty years to evolve through these different layers of sophistication toward an embracing commitment to continual quality improvement. Indeed, the in-depth illustration offered in this chapter is of an American process that meets the latent requirements of both the consumer and the organizational participants, and that improves managerial quality as well as product quality. Nevertheless, only persons with no sense of the scale of the task in developmental and organizational terms will imagine the process of institutionalizing continual quality improvement as a task of less than a decade.[4]

An Illustration of Exercising the Four Types of Leadership and Institutionalizing Continual Quality Improvement

It took more than a decade of diverse organizational experiences for me to begin to appreciate how deeply embedded each of us is in a given stage of development and how easy it is for our different interpretive schemes and action-logics to generate unexpected outcomes and mutual distrust among organizational players. From the very outset of my career, I had envisioned the possibility of a transforming kind of inquiry (I did not think in terms of power then, nor was I aware of the phrase "continual quality improvement"). Being guided by this mission of discovering and institutionalizing transforming inquiry probably helped me to learn more quickly than most about the barriers that ordinary organizational life erects *against* the kind of on-line inquiry necessary for continual quality improvement. Why? Because this sense of mission, which few shared, caused me to bump into every imaginable psychological, sociological,

and political barrier repeatedly (some of these early bumps are retold in Section II).

By the time I accepted the position of Graduate Dean at the Boston College School of Management (now the Wallace E. Carroll School of Management at Boston College) in 1978, I was determined to discover how an environment of ongoing, transforming inquiry could be generated, institutionalized, and sustained over a generation's time. Such inquiry, I now realized, involved a clear-sighted appreciation of power. It also required an ethical artistry of enactment that not only questioned and challenged myself and others, but also truly accepted all of us as we are at any given time, not just as we might ideally become.

Writing now, twelve years later in 1990, the result of the work at Boston College appears to be enough of a success to provide some concrete illustrations of the dilemmas one is likely to encounter in such an effort. I will first offer a brief overview of what has occurred in this organization over that period. Then I will describe some of the critical incidents in greater detail, in order to illustrate the interplay of the four time spans of leadership and the four types of power. Finally, I will describe specific organizational procedures that encourage continual quality improvement at the managerial level as well as at the product level.

Between 1978 and 1980, the school's faculty invented and implemented a new model of MBA education that focuses on teaching students action skills as well as analytic skills, that teaches students how to integrate both types of skill under the pressures of live action, and that invites both students and faculty to examine and improve their effectiveness within the program itself. In short, the program itself came to model "continual quality improvement" some time before many U.S. businesses began to try to accomplish the same thing. Indeed, as I will illustrate below, the program goes beyond other existing continual quality improvement programs because it addresses not just improvement in product quality, but also improvement in managerial quality; not just improvement between time periods, but also improvement within given time periods; not just meeting the explicit requirements of students and businesses, but also meeting their latent requirements; not just meeting external standards of quality, but also increasing internal congruity among mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes.

By 1982, the program rose from below the top 100 to be ranked among the top 30 in the country in one poll of management school deans. By 1987, the steady rise (even during the serious recession of 1980-1982) in average first year salaries offered by businesses to graduating classes resulted in a ranking among the top 25 programs nationally on this criterion.

In that same year, the dedication of students to the program was suggested by their successful initiative to create a graduate school seal,

with the motto "Through cooperation and integrity, we prosper" (surely a unique sentiment among MBA programs in the brief Age of Trump). At the same time, recent alumni of the program successfully funded an endowment of the Diane Weiss Presentation Competition—an event that concludes the first year and is the culmination of team consulting projects with businesses, projects whose aim is the actual improvement of the business, not just a paper "about" the business. All first-year full-time students participate in this integration of theory and practice, which is unique to the BC program. These presentations were endowed in the name of Diane Weiss, a student who had led her team to a first place finish in those presentations, graduated first in her class, and then died of cancer only a year afterwards.

Also in 1987, I had announced my resignation from the deanship and my desire to return to the faculty to continue implementing the MBA program through teaching and writing (e.g., this book). So unique and attractive was the program at this time that a well-known scholar-practitioner gave up his tenure at another university in order to take on the graduate deanship at Boston College (without tenure).

In 1988, the success of the school in attracting and retaining excellent faculty over the previous decade was recognized by the university in giving the school the authority to grant a Ph.D. in management (representing a whole new strategic thrust).

And finally, in 1990, a national commission on the future of graduate management education, responsive to the evidence of success in the Boston College program, has called for similar reforms, toward cultivating "reflective practitioners" in MBA programs nationwide.[5]

Exercising Power to Generate Organizational Transformation

How did the theory of power presented in the previous chapters help me to play a constructive role in these developments? First, I should acknowledge the possibility that all the theory did was to preoccupy me in a relatively harmless way seeking to create an atmosphere of inquiry, so that I did not altogether obstruct the positive institutional developments just mentioned. If this is true, then if other administrators preoccupy themselves similarly for a quarter of their time (presuming an equal division of one's time among the four different types of leadership), who knows what mischief their institutions may be spared!

There is some evidence, though, that both my interest in inquiry-in-action and my sense of balancing the four types of leadership and power played some role in the positive outcomes just outlined. One direction

that the question of mission took my attention in 1978 was in search of an analogy that would best capture and interrelate:

(1) what the MBA program ought to do for individual students;
(2) what the MBA program ought to do for itself—to become an increasingly effective organization;
(3) what the MBA program ought to do to best represent the university—a Jesuit university;
(4) what the MBA program ought to do to strengthen the wider arenas of professional education and of the global political economy.

Asking this question led me to spend time on activities that I would otherwise "not have time for," such as a series of interviews with faculty members about how their different fields defined effectiveness, how they viewed the school's effectiveness, and how they viewed their own professional effectiveness.

These interviews gave me an opportunity to become much better acquainted than I would otherwise have been with my colleagues *prior* to negotiating any particular issue (that might make us temporary opponents) and showed me how much commitment there already was within the faculty toward action-oriented courses for students at the school. The interviews also revealed a widespread but not heretofore publicly stated perception of institutional inertia at the school. Different faculty members called it "a climate of not doing much," "an organizational inferiority complex," "a negative self-concept about research production," and "a pervasive sense of mediocrity."

I shared this self-perception at an open faculty feedback meeting, and the ensuing discussion galvanized a number of faculty leaders to realize that pet projects and pet peeves should be put aside and that the school should agree on some new initiatives. After years of failing to vote in any new programs, the faculty approved a major restructuring of the MBA program and five other new initiatives during the next six months. This is one example of how institutional self-study can help to shape and support specific strategic initiatives and the ongoing operations of an organization.[6]

In the meantime, I had discovered that a key motto of the Jesuit Order was the phrase "Meditation in Action."[7] This motto marvelously expresses a commitment to cultivating wider awareness and effective action simultaneously and showed me that the Jesuit character of the university was in no sense irrelevant or a potential impediment, but rather a strong support for an action-oriented MBA program.

This was also the time when the first serious critiques of MBA education were beginning to appear. They suggested that the overly analytical

orientation of MBAs might be contributing to America's economic decline.

At the heart of all these otherwise disparate discoveries was the question of *how to cultivate effective action in oneself and others.* As political philosophers Hannah Arendt and Hannah Fenichel Pitkin have emphasized, true actions begin something new in public, questioning and reforming existing assumptions and structures.[8] According to Arendt, *labor* is necessary and repetitive; *work* contributes new artifacts and services based on established skills and structures; effective *action* reawakens us to our most profound common purposes, duties, and pleasures by confronting our habitual behavior while accomplishing something new in a new way.

So, effective action, properly understood, does not just generate specific outcomes, but rather reawakens us to fundamental purposes and tests whether specific structures, performances, and outcomes congruently embody those purposes. In this sense, effective action is precisely irritating to everything in us that wishes to behave mechanically and habitually, without widening our awareness and learning. Certainly, there is much in each of us that is quite comfortable amidst our routines of eating breakfast, reading the newspaper, doing a project at work, or speaking to our children. The oft-heard comments on the job, "If they'd just let me get my work done . . . ", "If they didn't waste so much time in meetings . . . ", "If there weren't so damn much politicking . . . " can be reheard as a dislike of the action demands of any job, as a dislike of the effort of widening one's awareness. (Of course, when this attitude is widespread, the meetings and the politicking *do not* tend to be exercises in widening awareness.) One of the principal organizational tests of effective action is whether it can transform such an atmosphere into a political climate that cultivates effective managerial action. Only in this way can continual quality improvement truly become institutionalized in an organization.

This sense of mission—cultivating effective action—aligned a need in American management with a characteristic of a Jesuit university, with a need of our particular school of management, with a perennial concern of students that their education be more practical. For me, this sense of mission provided a thread of meaning throughout several long years of effort that might otherwise have appeared chaotic and disheartening.

Chaos *did* threaten from the outset, and emergencies *did* occur, as they so often do in managerial settings; and these realities required the use of other types of power besides the benign power to gather people together to talk. From the day I entered my new position, I discovered that I had inherited a subordinate who was in such a career crisis that she could perform no work, nor reach a clear decision about what she should do. On the day that I had asked her to present me with a written statement of her intention to do the job or else to resign, she handed me a letter

announcing the former. After she left my office, I discovered that she had dropped another letter on the floor that announced the latter. I spent a sleepless night deciding whether for the good of the office and the school I must unilaterally insist on her leaving, only to discover upon arriving at the office the next morning that she had just had a fight with every other member of the office; whereupon the decision that she resign became mutual.

I remember approaching my first, informal public meeting with students looking forward to introducing myself and learning about them, only to discover a united front demanding that a particular teacher be removed from class in midsemester or that their money be refunded. A series of very careful and very lucky conversations resulted in the instructor's voluntary withdrawal and replacement by a much more competent faculty member.

I remember my shock when I learned that one department at the school refused even to meet with me to begin a conversation about reform of the MBA curriculum, on the grounds that I did not have the authority to force any changes. I had no intention of forcing any changes, but that department was so adamant about not altering its priorities (or even examining them) that I did ultimately have to arrange a "show of force" to get a more mutual conversation started.

Gradually, I realized that I would have to invent my way beyond a bind that faculty colleagues could repeatedly construct without any difficulty. On the one hand, any suggestion of unilateral action by a dean was viewed as illegitimate. On the other hand, they wished to have administrative guarantees that efforts toward restructuring the MBA curriculum would be rewarded. I could have wasted time and sown ill will by waxing sardonic about this mixed message, but my interviews with faculty had made it all too clear that this was the predictable response to a prior experience of a dean who had exercised power in a divisive and disempowering way. So, instead, I got to work with others inventing our way out of the bind.

As with my handling of the emergencies just recounted, my method amounted to little more than constant conversation. I would insist on the scale of the challenge and would refuse to settle for compromises that did not respond to the challenge; but otherwise, I would listen as carefully as possible for plausible proposals. Then I would act as mutually as possible, *even when* unilateral action seemed more and more indicated. I discovered that one key is to be open, with whoever seems to be the antagonist, about the factors that are leading me toward unilateral action because of the environmental limits on choice that I perceive. This tactic invites the antagonist to challenge my assumptions. If they are wrong, I am glad to give them up, and the other sees that I am influencible. At the very least, I have offered the other the respect of a consultation and have eliminated

the feeling of being surprised or knifed in the back, thus generating some sense of mutuality even if I do ultimately take what the other perceives as unilateral action. It took constant discipline and forbearance on my part to learn this lesson, and though it may sound incidental to the reader, I believe this tactic alone increased my managerial effectiveness more than any other lesson I learned.

This approach led to results as diverse as a $100,000 grant from IBM and an agreement from the university administration to grant faculty who taught in a restructured core MBA program a one course teaching remission for their work together as a team. The diplomatic power represented by the consent and support of these outside parties for this new initiative was undoubtedly more meaningful and persuasive to many members of the faculty at the outset than the internal logistical power of the innovation itself, or its strategic appropriateness to the challenges facing American management.

It is not surprising that organizational members' commitment to a proposed innovation should be low at the outset and based more on externalities than on its intrinsic merit, however great that may be. The question becomes how to invite and generate greater commitment. So far, we have seen how unilateral and consent power blended with the inquiring/transforming power of the initial effectiveness research with the faculty to set the stage for a new strategic initiative. Who were to be the primary actors in developing the actual strategy? Could this question be answered in a way that simultaneously generated higher commitment to the innovation by the faculty? Putting what initially seemed like two separate problems together suddenly generated an obvious solution.

A "Continual Quality Improvement" *Team* to Champion Continual Quality Improvement

To create a strong and coherent restructuring of the MBA program, I sought the commitment of highly credible members of each department to form a core team that would plan, seek support for, *and initially implement* the new program. The primary actor was to be a team, acting in a new way. Because there was widespread defeatism about the likelihood that the faculty would approve *any* proposal, I wanted to create the most competent and committed and credible team possible that would *enact*, not merely argue for, a new way of doing business together. In my consulting engagements with business clients in recent years, I have found that *creating a team that enacts what it advocates is the most attractive and persuasive vehicle for continuous quality improvement.*

The core team meetings quickly became unprecedented demonstrations (through the revealing minutes we sent to the rest of the faculty) of mutual empowerment and mutual critique. We adopted a process of "teaching" one another and then receiving critiques of our teaching. The minutes of our second meeting, for example, included the following critique of my "teaching" effort:

> In critiquing Torbert's teaching, the other members mentioned: being overwhelmed by the background materials; confused by lack of discussion of them; too much lecture; insufficient concrete examples; rushed; no use of board, no summary; event more an example of administrative leadership than teaching.

Also, to counter the well-known, interminable indecisiveness of faculty members, we agreed to try out a procedure for making rapid decisions and then reviewing them, rather than trying to get them right to begin with. Again, the minutes tell the story:

> The core team tried to make a series of important decisions in a very brief period of time (circa 15 minutes). The first decision concerned how the core team would make decisions. The suggested structure was a six step process: (1) someone proposes a decision (which can include amendment of a decision made at a previous meeting); (2) this person listens, without comment, as other members ask questions and point out dangers; (3) the proposing member then makes one response to all the foregoing comments (with whatever amendments s/he chooses) and (4) asks "May I assume consensus in favor of my proposal?" (5) dissent is registered silently by a raised hand; (6) if a majority raise their hands, the proposal is rejected and the group discusses why it did not trust the proposer and the amendment process to improve the decision at future meetings.
>
> The purposes of this process are (1) to make decisions quickly; (2) to emphasize the power and responsibility of proposers; (3) to emphasize the continual possibility of amending proposals later; (4) to confront faculty members' habitual predisposition to disagree and to discuss matters at length.
>
> The core team first agreed to test this process. After using it to make its next two decisions, the team agreed to accept it as its decision-making process for the foreseeable future.

This process of doing-while-planning engendered great enjoyment and enthusiasm within the core team itself, as well as a few whistles of delight from our more playful colleagues. But when we first presented our

proposals to the school's Educational Policy Committee, our complex, extremely demanding, radical plan was virtually laughed out of court. (In long-term retrospect, I now realize that the plan *was* probably too complex and demanding to survive long, even if it had been approved.)

At the time, we regrouped (which we might well not have done had we not become such a strong *we*), decided the rest of the faculty deserved to influence the outcome too, and entered into an exhaustive several months of meetings with every department as we recrafted the proposals from top to bottom. The final 13 proposals were decidedly less radical, though they clearly represented a major change. In an exercise of logistical power intended to increase the likelihood of faculty consent, we also omitted the significant *administrative* changes we had planned to support the aim of cultivating effective action, on the grounds that only *academic* changes required a faculty vote.

Nevertheless, despite all this careful pruning and despite (or because of) the empowerment of all who had opposed the initial plan, the fear was palpable that the entire plan would be jettisoned on the day of the faculty vote. Instead, however, a leading opponent of the whole process made a little speech in favor at the outset of the meeting, and an hour later the faculty present voted unanimously in favor.

There is no doubt in my mind that the critical factor in securing approval was the fact that a highly credible faculty core team that believed in what it was doing interacted continuously with colleagues for the months prior to the vote and that those colleagues had had abundant opportunity to influence the proposals. Also important to the result were many exercises of logistical power, such as the deletion of the administrative issues from the proposals presented to the faculty. Thus the team's blending of different types of power—its exercise of transforming power primarily, of logistical power secondarily, and of diplomatic power (implicit in its members' preexisting credibility) tertiarily—generated the successful outcome.

Obviously, even this might not have sufficed had I, as flag bearer, been totally in-credible and ineffective. That I came close to being so for some people is suggested by a few faculty members' comments on the early research questionnaires about effectiveness. One said, "The dean is a dreamer. He doesn't know what reality is." Another wrote, "I fear that you are so committed and so convinced that you are correct that you may be adjusting reality to fit your model."

As these comments also suggest, however, I was not *so* insulated within my dream/model that I did not invite and hear plenty of disconfirming feedback. Moreover, I would publish such feedback in various memos to the faculty (like the minutes of the core team meeting reproduced above) and discuss it at meetings. Evidently, too, I was responsive enough to ongoing daily and weekly student, faculty, and administrative concerns

not to lose the confidence of most (indeed, my model emphasized for me how important it was that I perform well on the "little" issues if I was to have any credibility on the "big" ones).

An initiator of major organizational transformation will encounter an amazingly diverse array of negative feedback throughout, most of it very easy to dismiss as invalid. But it must not be so dismissed! To dismiss it is:

(1) to enact a process of devaluing feedback;
(2) perhaps to enact defensiveness;
(3) almost certainly to be perceived as defensive; and, hence
(4) to discredit the vision of continual quality improvement.

Instead, one can calculatedly and awaredly ignore some (just as one ignores so much else). But one's principal strategy, if one wishes to encourage a climate of mutuality and *valid* feedback, must be to learn how to test the validity of feedback with others. In testing, one raises any questions one has about the validity of the feedback: (1) Does the originator of the feedback have tangible evidence to support the attribution? (2) Do others concur? (3) Are they open to feedback and change in regard to their own actions? (4) What action alternatives are implied and what are their costs? One makes oneself vulnerable to persuasion, but remains vigilant about whether the data and the argument are in fact persuasive. If the data and argument are not persuasive, the challenge can be reversed: One asks the other to yield his or her preference because it is not well supported.

The validity tests must be many and across varied time horizons: (5) Does one have the confidence of the peers with whom one works most closely? (6) Can one influence an initially skeptical wider audience (e.g., voters, consumers, stakeholders)? (7) Is an atmosphere of institutional inquiry into mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes developing? (8) Does the strategic initiative bear fruit over years? On all these counts, my own and the core team's responses to feedback in this case appear to have "passed the test" successfully. If only I could have learned whatever I contributed to this process in a little less than the previous fifteen years!

Continual Quality Improvement Procedures

Next, we move in this chapter, and we moved in the Carroll School MBA program at BC, from developing and agreeing to a strategy of continual quality improvement to the process of actually operationalizing it. In addition to the various academic changes that were to characterize

the restructured program (for example, a new, required International Management course), the key changes that cultivated both individual and organizational capacities for effective action were the ones we had labeled as administrative. The main features of both the planning process described above and the implementation process described below are generalizable to other contexts, so long as one recognizes that each new group must participate in reinventing, reshaping, and recommitting to them (as I have since confirmed to my own and my clients' satisfaction in my various consulting engagements with business, health care, and government organizations).[9]

The principal "trick" that we have learned—and a high risk trick it is, even once learned—is to treat the *ongoing, top-to-bottom, day-to-day performance* of the organization and its members—not just the ultimate product or the immediate conditions of production—as the focus for continual quality improvement. This requires means of measuring and offering feedback and taking corrective action not just on products, but also managerial actions as they are occurring. Moreover, it requires doing so in ways that recognize that actions reflect interpretations, and that the interpretive scheme of the actor may require challenge and adjustment. In the terms I have used in the two previous chapters, each developmental stage represents a coherent interpretive scheme. Hence, a successful program of continual quality improvement requires procedures that support *managerial* improvement, and such procedures must, in turn, encourage developmental change when warranted. As described in the discussion of transforming power in Chapter 3, procedures that support development must include a significant element of voluntariness for participants and mutuality between subordinates and initiators, while protecting everyone from the unilateral imposition of any particular perspective or evaluation standard. How complex and subtle the construction of such a system must be is illustrated by what we designed for the Boston College MBA program, a process which, with continuing ongoing refinements, has existed for a decade.

In order to create a setting with the strongest possible analogy to a workplace group, while at the same time creating a sense of community, belonging, and home base for entering Boston College MBA students, they are assigned to heterogeneous project groups. Although they cannot choose their teammates, this is consistent with assignment to a group in a work organization. During the first semester, each autonomous work group must complete two semester-long projects of different natures—one more technical and convergent, the other more creative and divergent. To prevent students from displacing responsibility for their experience onto the particular colleagues with whom they are teamed, and in order to increase their sense of voluntariness, they are invited to form their own teams for the second semester when they will consult to

live businesses and agencies. (In general, as students gain skills in team self-management, the teams are given increasing spheres of discretion.)

There is a managerial role for each member of each first-semester project group, which the members allocate among themselves. There is a manager for each project, a meeting manager, an evaluation manager, and one or two process managers (depending upon whether the team consists of five or six members), and there is a workshop relating to each role during the first week of school. During the second semester, the student groups assign leadership roles at their own discretion, though they are encouraged to adopt the multiple leadership model on the grounds that it encourages initiative and mutuality and discourages unilateral control by a single member/leader.

Each group is assigned a second-year MBA student who serves as a consultant and attends one group meeting a week. The role of the consultant is emphatically *not* to take over leadership of the group, but rather to help the members understand and more fully and competently play their own leadership roles. Another way of putting this is that the consultant's role is to model giving constructive feedback to members on their performance, in such a way as to increase their awareness, competence, and sense of empowerment to initiate constructive feedback to one another. Each consultant meets with two project groups, so that the consultant can differentiate his or her influence from the overall fortunes of the group. Usually, for some unknown reason, one group will start out well, another more bumpily, helping the consultant to realize that he or she is not solely responsible for the resulting good or bad performance.

The consultants meet weekly for a two-hour session, in which they present dilemmas they encounter in their groups, in order to get advice on how to intervene (student names are never mentioned at these sessions to assure that the consultants are not perceived as "spies" [an issue that arises occasionally anyway]). In the second semester, groups negotiate with the consultants for their services rather than being assigned a consultant.

Most of the best students in the program apply for the eight consultant positions each year because these positions are perceived as an excellent training opportunity and as a way of contributing to the success of the program (the positions are essentially voluntary, receiving only token remuneration). Although the entire web of procedures being described here is highly interdependent and mutually reinforcing, the consulting role is clearly the most critical, for it models a continual quality improvement commitment on the part of members of the program. As virtual peers, the second-year consultants have the opportunity to transform first-year students' skepticism about the sincerity and viability of this whole approach in a way that no authority figure, such as a dean or faculty member, possibly could. In this way, the consultant team is the quality

champion team for entering students each year, just as the faculty core team had been the quality champion team in introducing the entire innovation to the faculty (I should emphasize, however, that the phrase "quality champion team" has never been used at the school).

The voluntariness of the whole consulting process illustrates the centrality of mutuality in the notion of transforming power and in developmental change. In a striking empirical confirmation of this notion, we have found that over 90% of the consultants measured show a full developmental stage change from the beginning to the end of the program, whereas fewer than 10% of all other students in the program do so.

Specific dates for two sets of within-group evaluations are mandated for the student autonomous work groups. The first feedback session is in part a "practice" session that has no impact on student grades, whereas the second evaluation has a small impact on each student's grade in one course. This degree of unilateral/logistical power (mandating specific dates) is now exercised because our experience over the years has been that precisely those groups that are performing *least* well and having the *most* difficulties dealing with one another also tend to be those that deny they are having problems, that stonewall their consultants' efforts to help, and that delay as long as possible performing a peer evaluation process (usually using a good deal of high-flown rhetoric about everybody having contributed equally, or about how dangerous peer evaluation can be, without any demonstrated willingness to discuss such claims). Also, over the years we have found that the peer evaluation process has the best chance of transforming such a group because it is a vehicle for developing more valid, less deniable information about what each group member thinks, feels, and perceives than the group conversations to date. Thus the effect of using external, unilateral power is to unlock greater mutuality within the group.

There are two other reasons for the specific dates for evaluation as well. First, the notion of two widely spaced evaluations permits group members to respond and improve between the first and second evaluation. Second, we wish students to experience the challenge, difficulties, and potential benefits of constructive feedback for themselves prior to having them participate in a feedback process with their course faculty at midsemester, as will be described below. Each work setting will have its own tactical time considerations, of course. The point here is simply that attention to proper timing can greatly enhance the training value and the sense of shared mission that such ongoing evaluation and feedback is intended to generate.

Before saying a few words about the faculty midsemester feedback process, a closer description of the precise logistics of the student group

evaluation process is in order. After all, the success of continual quality improvement in management depends, in significant part, on the character of the instruments and the sequencing of activities.

The Peer Feedback and Evaluation Process

At the workshops for the different group managers, the evaluation managers are introduced to two group evaluation instruments. The first is a ranking of group members' overall contribution to group effectiveness to date on a 1- to 18-point scale. All groups are required to use this summary instrument, and each member's contribution grade is derived from this measure when it is administered the second time.

This instrument is unique in several respects in the universe of performance evaluations that organizations use: (1) each member receives feedback from it about how he or she rated self and others compared to how others rated self and others, providing material for further reflection and conversation; (2) the 18-point scale gives each member the opportunity to show how positively or negatively he or she views the group as a whole and how great the gaps in performance are among members of the group. In other words, a student who feels there was great variability in members' contributions, with two members mainly responsible for group effectiveness, might rank the six members: 1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 14.

In addition, the form requires that there be no ties. This requirement forces members to differentiate even when they claim no differentiation can be made. This unilateral feature is necessary because members' claims that no differentiation can be made cannot be trusted. The claim often derives from a Diplomat-like fear of open conflict, or a Technician-like distaste for behavioral (as opposed to product-focused) feedback. The feature of compelling differentiation has recently been increasingly recognized in industry as a necessary component of a meaningful evaluation system, but industry systems are typically filled out by single superiors, do not allow for larger or smaller gaps among members, and are not subject to feedback and discussed among peers in the presence of a consultant. A member who truly feels that all members contributed equally can indicate this by allowing no gaps between member rankings.

(If all members truly feel this and rank members as closely as possible and arbitrarily, all members should end up with very close average scores and, hence, the same grade. Typically, however, evaluations show much more differentiation than this, along with considerable consensus about one another's ranks, even after strong initial claims that everyone

contributed equally. This procedure conveys a great deal of information to group members about the relation of their perceptions of self and others to others' perceptions of them and one another.)

In contrast to the mandatory use of the first instrument, the second evaluation instrument is a model of more specific evaluation questions that may be asked and invites more voluntariness and initiative from the evaluation manager and the group. The evaluation manager for each group becomes responsible for developing, in concert with the group and with its consultant, the group's own questionnaire that provides more concrete behavioral feedback to members' about managerial actions that the others find more or less effective. Likewise, the evaluation manager is responsible for analyzing the results (from both questionnaires), planning and leading a feedback session, and later restructuring the second questionnaire and the process as a whole, if the initial cycle seems to warrant improvement. As with the rankings, students are asked to evaluate themselves as well as the others in order to see to what degree their self-perceptions are synchronous or incongruous with others' perceptions.

In practice, Evaluation managers vary radically in their initial understanding of, commitment to, and skill in implementing this role. In the early years of the innovation, when it had achieved less internal and external validation and legitimation, members of some groups would altogether neglect their roles until some unavoidable crisis (such as a poorly conceived and executed group evaluation that other members objected to because they had in fact had no part in its construction) made them begin to accept responsibility for their own actions (and nonactions). In the past several years, as the program's focus on integrating action and analysis has become a more widely agreed upon source of pride and distinctive competence, neglect of the group management roles is rarely so patent.

The entire system just described, however, runs counter to the Diplomat, Technician, and Achiever orientations of most students, so evaluation managers often delete elements of the system initially on grounds that they view as self-evident. For example, they may delete the self-rankings on the (Technician-like) ground that one cannot be expected to rank oneself objectively. In so doing, they fail to recognize (even though this has been discussed at the initial workshop) that the point is to test whether there are in fact discrepancies between self-rankings and others' ranking of one and to explore how such discrepancies can be reduced. In other words, none of the rankings are assumed to be objective to begin with, but rather can be discussed (and if desirable revised after a group discussion) in order to develop increasing personal and group objectivity. But virtually no students (and virtually no managers in general) have ever been through such a peer evaluation and feedback process, followed by the opportunity to set new behavioral goals for oneself, with a still later

round of feedback that can test the degree to which one did change and become more effective. Hence, there are many misapprehensions about the process that can be adequately addressed only by significant initiative on the part of the Evaluation manager from the outset, or else by significant initiative after some painful experience.

Integrative Activities and Faculty Midsemester Feedback

Two other interwoven "administrative" systems of the restructured MBA program are also significant contributors to the mission of cultivating action effectiveness and continual quality improvement. These are the weekly "Integrative Activities" and the midsemester feedback process for faculty teaching in the core courses.

The Integrative Activities are two-hour meetings that require no special preparation by students and are not graded in any way. All Integrative Activities involve the students as active participants in one way or another and all are intended to illustrate the need in real-time action to integrate the analytically distinguishable management disciplines. Some weeks, Visiting Executives—ranging from Jim Manzi, CEO of Lotus, to Mike McCaskey, owner of the Chicago Bears, to Joan Bavaria, co-founder of the social investing firm Franklin Research and Development Corporation (and, recently, leading organizer of the Valdez Principles for corporations)—engage in candid, confidential conversations with students about the actual dilemmas of their practice. Other weeks are devoted to action skills workshops—such as the Management Roles Workshop mentioned earlier, a Public Speaking Workshop, or a Time and Stress Management Workshop. An example of yet another Integrative Activity format is offered in the illustration of the midsemester faculty feedback process that follows.

The midsemester faculty feedback process gives feedback at midsemester to the first-year full-time MBA program as a whole and to each individual course. This feedback is discussed within the faculty team first, then with students, often resulting in minor adjustments. Each semester, as new faculty join the core team and as those who continue gain added experience, the core faculty reexamines the process and recommits itself, with whatever modifications it wishes. The whole process is entirely separate from formal evaluation of faculty teaching for salary and promotional purposes. Nevertheless, this is, arguably, the most delicate yet at the same time the most symbolically and practically significant of all the procedures for institutional self-study and continual quality improvement. It is both delicate and significant:

(1) because it is so public;
(2) because it illustrates whether senior management is willing to "walk the talk" of continual quality improvement;
(3) because it involves feedback from organizational subordinates to superiors; and
(4) because it contains the potential threats of disruption, embarrassment, insurrection, low morale, and developing a bad reputation as a teacher (or program) just because of some single incident that may have been distorted.

None of these nightmares occurred during the first five years of the innovation (partly because of the logistical web of self-study procedures, partly because the core team was composed of such competent, committed teachers, partly because as dean I paid such close attention to each occasion).[10] In fact, all of the faculty who had participated on the core team and had since been considered for tenure had received it, whereas all who had *not* participated on the core team and had since been considered for tenure had not received it. Nonetheless, until the foregoing fact was carefully broadcast through the informal faculty grapevine, "conventional wisdom" had it that teaching on the core team would threaten a faculty member's chance for tenure.

Let us examine the particular Integrative Activity, during the first semester that the newly restructured MBA program was offered in 1980, that included the public discussion of the faculty midsemester feedback. This particular week the Integrative Activity began with a discussion of the Bill Agee-Mary Cunningham embroglio at Bendix. That very morning, the *Boston Globe* had carried the final segment of Gail Sheehy's widely-syndicated five-part news story of the events leading to Cunningham's rapid promotions to Vice-President for Corporate Strategy at Bendix and then to her sudden resignation after an annual employee meeting.

The topic raised many issues of special relevance to this MBA program: Can major institutions change in profound ways or will their everyday "politics"—including inertia, territoriality, and jealousy—inevitably defeat the idealism of people like Agee and Cunningham? Can women advance rapidly into top executive roles and survive? Did Agee and Cunningham in fact act effectively and responsibly in their conduct of their public relationship? Is it really possible to discuss sensitive organizational issues in a constructive manner at large, public meetings? If so, what are the skills of discretion, timing, and honesty involved? In short, is the dream so central to BC's restructured MBA program—the dream of developing managers and institutions significantly more inquiring, more responsible, and more effective than is typical at present—is this dream

just a pipe dream? Or is it realizable? Can the BC MBA program really help to make this dream come true despite the difficulties illustrated by the Bendix case?

A number of students and faculty members offered acute observations about the Bendix case, as well as suggestions about alternative strategies and actions that might have made a difference in the outcome. At the same time, the basic questions raised above received no authoritative, final answer during the intensely engaging hour's discussion.

After a short break, the Integrative Activity continued. I announced that the community was now about to engage in a much more difficult and direct test of whether the BC MBA program could generate an institutional environment significantly more inquiring, more responsible, and more effective than is typical at present. This would also be a direct test of whether it is possible to discuss sensitive organizational issues in a constructive manner at a large, public meeting. Then, with minimal interpretive comments, I shared with the assembly the following results from the midsemester feedback questionnaire:

> Of our 90 full-time first-year students, 68 submitted (anonymous) responses. While most of the questions were open-ended, we were able to compile the following frequency counts:
>
> 1. Eighty-six percent (86%) said the MBA program has been more valuable than their most recent previous full-time educational experience. Seven percent (7%) reported the program was as valuable and 7% said it was less valuable.
>
> 2. Regarding work load, 44% found it too heavy, while 28% characterized it as heavy but manageable.
>
> 3. Comments on the project groups fell into categories of "valuable"(53%), "improving"(18%), "valuable with reservations"(16%) and "reservations only"(9%).
>
> 4. Seventy-five percent (75%) found the Integrative Activities valuable, and many gave suggestions for future activities.
>
> 5. When asked about the schedule, 47% found it satisfactory. Of those, some also included reservations. Another 43% mentioned possible changes only. The concern mentioned most often centered around difficulties with Tuesday/Thursday afternoon classes.
>
> 6. Open-ended comments were invited about each course. Thus, a student might offer a suggestion for changing a course and say nothing directly positive about it, even though he or she had predominantly positive feelings about the course. Within this format, 87% of those responding did offer positive comments on Accounting, Computer Science, and Organizational Studies. Sixty-five percent (65%) of those

responding offered positive comments about Statistics and Perspectives on Management. Comments on Economics leaned more heavily towards suggestions only.

The reader will probably agree that the overall tone of these results was positive and confirming of the early weeks in the implementation of the new program. The data, however, also showed that the Economics course in particular was a serious source of concern to the students. In presenting these data to the assembly, I acknowledged this "trouble area." I let the students know that the Economics professor (who was, of course, present, along with his colleagues) had already had numerous conversations with other faculty about these difficulties and had already read the entire set of questionnaires. I reminded the students of the initiatives and risks that the faculty were taking in creating this opportunity for mutual criticism and improvement of the program (by contrast to the relatively risk-free role of the students to date in filling out anonymous questionnaires). And I closed by inviting a conversation that addressed whatever issues struck those present as most significant.

For the next forty-five minutes the speakers were mostly students, and they all addressed themselves to their experience of the Economics course, stating their difficulties very plainly, yet without antagonism. Often they explicitly said that they were not sure that their perspective was correct. The Economics professor elected not to speak, but the few other faculty comments made it clear that much of what the students found difficult about the professor's style was intentional on his part and based on a coherent philosophy of teaching. Toward the end of the discussion several students began to examine the relative passivity that had characterized assumptions about their role as learners, as well as their actions in the weeks since they had begun to experience difficulties in the Economics course. After the session, the Economics professor made a variety of small changes in the course, and the students seemed exhilarated by a sense of self-discovery, by a sense of real progress on what is usually an intractable problem, but even more by the incontrovertible evidence of the commitment on the part of the faculty and administration to making the MBA program itself not just a rhetorical advocate, but a practicing example of continual quality improvement and of responsible, inquiring management.

A natural question is why the Economics professor was willing to expose himself to the public evaluation involved in the meeting just described. One part of the answer is that he had participated throughout the other institutional self-study activities described earlier in this chapter, becoming increasingly familiar with the process of constructive public discussion of sensitive institutional issues.

Another natural question is what motivates faculty members to plan and attend the weekly Integrative Activities, given the many other pressures on them? The answer is that the core team had invented an administrative arrangement mentioned earlier, which mandates faculty members' attendance at Integrative Activities such as the one described and at the frequent Core Team meetings, in return for teaching one section less per term.

Conclusion

In process, the gait toward the Integrative Activity described above seemed stumbling and slow. Only a brief, retrospective summary such as the one presented in this chapter can convey the impression of a logic swift and sure. Nevertheless, there is a "logic-in-practice" about the restructured Carroll School MBA program at Boston College that integrates the four types of power and time spans of leadership into a process of continual quality improvement in managerial actions that, over a decade, have placed the program at the leading edge of the management education "industry."

Notes

1. My organizational roles have not been at all exalted (quite ordinary in fact) yet enormously challenging for me because my native skill at exercising power is small. I have founded and directed two relatively small organizations, served as chief operating officer for two somewhat larger organizations, served on the Boards of four organizations, and consulted to more than twenty business and educational organizations, large and small. My hope is that because these are roles that many other people play, with all the constraints of budgets and customs and politics that typically afflict managerial roles, what I have learned may be generalizable, not just in theory but more importantly in practice, for those willing to commit to such practice.

2. Kim, D., 1989, *Toward Learning Organizations: Integrating Total Quality Control and Systems Thinking*, Cambridge: MIT Sloan School of Management, System Dynamics Group.

3. Transcribed conversation between Professor Shiba of the University of Tsukuba and Dr. Peter Senge of MIT (Cambridge: MIT Sloan School of Management, System Dynamics Group, D-4048, May 8, 1989). See also Ishikawa, K., 1985, *What Is Total Quality Control?* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; and Juran, J., 1964, *Managerial Breakthrough*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

4. By far the best description I have seen of the industrial process of continual quality improvement, written in novel form, is Goldratt, E., & Cox, J., 1986, *The Goal: A Process of Ongoing Improvement*, Croton-on-Hudson, NY: North River Press.

5. The Commission on Admission to Graduate Management Education, chaired by John Hennessey, interim President of the University of Vermont and former Dean of the

Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth, and by John Rosenblum, Dean of the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia, produced a report in June 1990, titled *Leadership for a Changing World: The Future Role of Graduate Management Education* (Los Angeles: Graduate Management Admission Council). Also, the entire issue of *Selections* (7, 1, 1990). The reference in the commissions report to "reflective practitioners" is to the book by Schön, D., 1983, *The Reflective Practitioner*, New York: Basic Books.

6. This institutional self-study process is described in greater detail in Torbert, W., 1981, "The role of self-study in improving managerial and institutional effectiveness," *Human Systems Management*, I, 2: 72-82); and in still greater detail in Torbert, W., 1981, "Initiating an institutional self-study," working paper, Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College, School of Management.

7. That the Tibetan lama, Chogyam Trungpa, had also written a book entitled *Meditation in Action* (Berkeley, CA: Shambhala, 1970) further reinforced the sense of global relevance of this notion.

8. Arendt, H., 1959, *The Human Condition*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor; Pitkin, H., 1972, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

9. A long-time experiment in self-managed work teams at Northwest Alloys is very impressive, but has suffered from lack of direct top management participation and lack of systematic peer evaluation processes. See Novelli, L., McCombs, T., Schwartz, H., Torbert, W., Sims, H., & Mohrman, S., 1989, *The supervisor's role in self-managed work teams: Four alternative perspectives applied to a case*, symposium at the national meeting of the Academy of Management, Washington, DC.

Prior scholarship has been negligible and confused about the way to develop action and leadership skills in self-managing work teams. For the most detailed work to the present see Manz, C., & Sims, H., 1987, "Leading workers to lead themselves: The external leadership of self-managing work teams," *Administrative Sciences Quarterly*, 32: 106-128; and Manz, C., & Sims, H., 1989, *SuperLeadership: Leading Others to Lead Themselves*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Michael Moch and Jean Bartunek have shown the many ways that multiple perspectives in a workplace undercut quality improvement and quality of work life programs because the differences in perspective are not explicitly recognized and renegotiated (Moch, M., & Bartunek, J., 1990, *Creating Alternative Realities at Work*, New York: Harper & Row).

10. *MCD* (pp. 138-139) describes the most difficult and negative mid-semester faculty feedback experience we have ever had, and there were a number of positive benefits of the process even in that case.

5 Exercising the Power of Balance in Middle Management

Creating Liberating Structures

Middle managers obviously have a more circumscribed arena of discretion, authority, and responsibility than do senior executives. They have less opportunity to influence the entire organization by developing institutional self-study processes and new strategies of the sort described in the previous chapter. Their principal opportunity to exercise influence is in relation to their own subordinates and in regard to the tasks for which they are responsible. Their explicit responsibilities are more likely to have an operational flavor than a strategic flavor.

For decades, organizational research has documented the binds in which middle managers are caught, with senior management holding them highly responsible while frequently yielding little authority and power to them. Indeed, the ultimate bind for middle managers is frequently the innovative program that is intended to cultivate employee involvement and continual quality improvement.

Such programs *require* the middle managers to *empower* their subordinates. Thus the middle managers' power is reduced from both ends: They are told how to manage from above, and the new way to manage is to give away their power to those below. Moreover, they typically find when they try to do so that their subordinates are often neither willing to nor skillful at using this power responsibly, and that they—the middle managers—are still held accountable by senior management when the process sputters and fails.

To make matters still worse, the more successful employee involvement and quality improvement programs are in the early phases, the more issues are raised that imply changes in the boundaries of current organizational domains and top management prerogatives. Frequently,

senior management is less than responsive to such issues, again placing middle management "between a rock and a hard place."

In the context of the developmental theory introduced in earlier chapters, these troubles of middle management can be explained as follows. First, senior managers are rarely at the Strategist stage of development when they begin to appreciate that their own espoused strategies (in this case, empowering others) may be contradicted by the actual pattern of their actions (disempowering the middle managers). Also, senior managers at earlier stages are unlikely to appreciate the developmental nature of a major innovation such as continual quality improvement and are likely to rush it in ways that virtually guarantee failure.

Second, neither the senior managers nor the middle managers are likely to realize that there are fundamentally different kinds of power, as described in earlier chapters, and that empowering others is itself an exercise of power—of transforming power. The real problem, therefore, is to cultivate developmental transformation in both the middle managers and in their subordinates. Middle managers most likely overly rely on logistical power, with small and unsystematic admixtures of diplomatic power and unilateral power when the going gets tough. They need to learn the subtle logistics of creating empowering structures. They also need to learn how to blend logistical, diplomatic, and unilateral power more artistically and effectively. And most of all, but developmentally last of all, they need to cultivate a taste for mutuality-enhancing transforming power. All of these they should rightfully be learning from, or at least learning along with, senior management. But senior management may very well not be playing this game, preferring to alternate between unilateral control and laissez-faire.

The middle managers' subordinates typically experience themselves as having little if any power at the outset of such a process, and tend to be rather cynical about any claims that they will gain some. Their cynicism is due in part to broken management promises in the past; but it is also probably due in part to their own stage of development which leads them to interpret themselves as necessarily powerless if their official role is (relatively) subordinate. For them to feel even so empowered as to exercise logistical power may well require developmental transformation. Hence, for them to become empowered requires not merely that restrictions be lifted and responsibilities offered, but rather that structures be created that lead them toward the experience of such power. Such structures—that cultivate empowerment through development—would properly be called "liberating structures."

The question of how leaders can create structures that cultivate members' development toward later stages while simultaneously generating continual quality improvement has received little practical or theo-

retical attention. Of course, it is one of the basic propositions of this book that the two are mutually necessary to one another in the long run. But most executives and most scholars bifurcate issues of productivity (e.g., quality improvement) from issues of inquiry (e.g., personal development).

Whereas the last chapter described how senior management can blend the four types of power over a long period of time to integrate inquiry and productivity, and to generate transformative change in an entire organization, this chapter focuses on how middle managers can structure their particular sphere of authority within a larger organization to encourage both inquiry and productivity at the same time. This way of organizing devotes continuing attention to three questions that are in fact deeply interrelated, even though they are usually experienced as in tension with one another. These three questions are:

(1) how to develop a sense of shared purpose among subordinates;
(2) how to encourage increasing self-direction among subordinates; and
(3) how to reliably generate quality work among subordinates.

I and my associates have been experimenting with such liberating structures in business, governmental, and educational settings for the past twenty years and have adduced eight essential qualities of liberating structure. The following pages first explicate these eight qualities briefly and then illustrate them by references to a particular organization.

Before offering this rather complex definition of liberating structure, however, I want to offer some simpler heuristics that I use to create such structures and some brief illustrations to give the idea some life. The more complex set of eight essential characteristics derive from after-the-fact analysis of such structures. They are helpful for testing whether an invented social structure is a liberating structure; but I suspect that they are far too ponderous to help in conceiving a liberating structure.

The simplest heuristic for creating a liberating structure is to list all the limiting conditions (e.g., lack of money, employees without the right skills, etc.) that prevent one from accomplishing some desired goal; and then set about inventing a structure that recognizes and even uses these limits to reach the goal. In principle, this is no more than the old saw: "turn problems into opportunities." But this cliché is as rarely enacted as it is regularly espoused, especially in the domain of creating social structures for doing tasks. The reader may recall the description from the previous chapter of the initial meetings of the MBA core team at Boston College. The problem was that faculty groups typically argue themselves into terminal depression and withdrawal rather than agreeing to anything. Rather than attempting any number of complicated and covert means to overcome this limiting condition, we simply recognized it and

made a game of making fast decisions. Once several decisions were made the limiting condition no longer existed, so the elaborate structure temporarily set in place to make fast decisions was no longer necessary either.

A second simple heuristic for creating a liberating structure, which the foregoing illustration also exemplifies, is to create a structure which, if it works, will become unnecessary. The most fundamental reason why liberating structures are necessary in the first place is that few human beings today operate at the late stages of development where they can follow the interweaving of the four territories of experience and can exercise mutuality-enhancing transforming power, such that they take full executive responsibility for the effects of their actions and treat one another as true peers. The most fundamental aim of liberating structures is, therefore, to cultivate the development of subordinates toward the later stages (never forgetting that development cannot be forced). Hence, if liberating structures succeed organizational members will increasingly take executive responsibility, will increasingly treat one another as peers, and will increasingly create their own liberating structures.

A third simple heuristic for creating liberating structures is to ask oneself how to maximize both of two apparently opposite values, such as power and justice, or inquiry and productivity. Usually, we think we have to sacrifice one of these for the other, or else compromise between the two. Totally new solutions to such dilemmas begin to suggest themselves if we disdain our competitive assumptions and seek counterintuitive solutions. Thus, for example, the previous chapter illustrated how project groups in the BC MBA program are required to engage in unusual levels of mutual inquiry and evaluation; yet this inquiry unleashes rather than paralyzes productivity (because of the details of how it is organized).

Another illustration is of a disciplinary procedure gradually developed at a company that had created autonomous production groups. Here one value was the desire to be true to the vision of autonomous groups and have them be responsible for their own discipline problems. The opposing value was to centralize disciplinary decisions for efficiency, effectiveness, objectivity, and fairness (both within and across groups) in the decisions that were actually made. Although it was initially assumed that these work groups would manage their own disciplinary issues, no definite logistics were put in place to do so. Two difficulties arose.

First, work teams often had difficulty exercising discipline within themselves because to do so required confrontation and differentiation among members. This was both uncustomary and seemed intuitively likely to hurt team spirit and working relations. Indeed, some teams began to ask senior management to handle their disciplinary problems.

Meanwhile, a whole class of unanticipated disciplinary problems arose (e.g., a worker, unrelated to his team activity, stealing from the company).

These seemed to require senior management action, but the difference in types of disciplinary activity had not been clarified; so, many workers reacted to such centralized discipline as a violation of the principle of work-group-centered discipline.

Eventually, when facing the need to reduce labor costs by a certain percentage during an economic downturn, the company (in response to workers' concerns) invented the procedure of offering the work teams a 48-hour period to propose their own solutions to meet this need. The work teams in fact offered a fully satisfactory set of proposals, which were implemented. Even more important, the company realized it had invented a generalizable structure for future disciplinary issues—what I would call a liberating structure, because it both constrained and empowered and because it maximized two apparently opposing values. Thereafter, the work team could choose either to deal with a given disciplinary issue within 48 hours, or else let senior management deal with it. Senior management, in turn, could either accept the work team's solution, if one were proposed, or impose its own solution. If a given work team never exercised self-discipline, or if senior management never accepted a given team's recommendations, such patterns would raise further questions. In this way, both parties have well-focused power and responsibility for action.

Because liberating structures can be created for subordinates, they represent a way for middle managers to increase productivity and empower others simultaneously. Hence, they can solve the difficult binds that senior management, often unawaredly, creates for middle managers. Moreover, the effort to create, and then the process of implementing, liberating structures will cultivate the further development of the middle managers themselves. On the other hand, many middle managers will hesitate to experiment with creating liberating structures because they bring to the surface more conflict (as the reader will see more clearly below) than most managers are initially prepared to deal with. Hence, more middle managers are likely to develop the skills necessary to implement liberating structures successfully, if senior managers first generate liberating structures for the middle managers.

Let us now examine in greater detail what these liberating structures are in theory and how they can operate in practice. The next section of this chapter presents the eight essential qualities of liberating structures. The section after that presents an extended illustration of all eight qualities and their interrelations. Because the next section is highly abstract, many readers may prefer to glance briefly at the headline for each of the eight qualities and then go on to the illustrations, before returning to a full reading of the eight qualities.

The Eight Essential Qualities of Liberating Structure[1]

One quality of liberating structure is deliberate irony. The leadership (at whatever level) recognizes that most subordinates will initially interpret the organizational structure and particular events based on a different model of reality (a different stage of development) from the one inspiring the leadership. Moreover, subordinates will not tend to interpret the resulting conflicts as caused by the different developmental frames, nor will they be inclined to examine or test their own frame. The leadership must at one and the same time succeed in "speaking the subordinates' (developmental) language" and introducing them to a "new language" (e.g., the theory and practice of mutuality-enhancing power). The new language will motivate exploration of basic assumptions about reality by constructing tasks wherein members feel the limitations and self-contradictions inherent in their relatively self-restricting view of reality. Organizational structures and leadership actions that meet these demands are deliberately ironic: They both acknowledge and bridge a gap in developmental stages and worldviews.

A second quality of liberating structure is the definition of tasks that are incomprehensible and undoable without reference to accompanying processes and purposes. Ordinarily employees or students treat tasks as meaningful in themselves or as meaningless except in terms of external rewards, masking the operation of their own interpretive scheme (at whatever their stage of development) as the source of meaning. By contrast, liberating tasks are epistemologically transparent: The product and the process congruently embody and reflect the purpose. Members cannot successfully complete liberating tasks unless they challenge their usual ways of doing these tasks without awareness of process and purpose. Consequently, and ironically, liberating tasks will initially seem opaque, strange, and disquieting to many organizational members because they are unaccustomed to such tasks, even though what is strange about them is that they are actually epistemologically transparent and that they encourage awareness of this fact.

A third quality of liberating structure is premeditated and precommunicated structural evolution over time. Such evolution reflects the movement by organizational members as they move toward conscious appropriation of the process and purpose territories of reality and thus toward the possibility of collaboration in the search for shared purpose, self-direction, and quality work. Such pre-communicated structural evolution also counters the tendency to treat a given structure as the ultimate substance of an organization and encourages the search for a continuing thread of meaning—for a shared purpose beyond structure. The premeditated and precommunicated phasing of this evolution helps to persuade members

that some discoverable rhythms underlie even the most fundamental transformations.

A fourth quality of liberating structure is that its tasks are so structured and its leadership so functions as to provide a constant cycle of experiential and empirical research and feedback on participants' different ways of constructing reality, on their changing relations to one another, and on the quality of their work.

A fifth quality of liberating structure is the use of all available forms of power by the leadership to support the first four projects. Instead of attempting either to hoard power or to give it away, the leadership uses the logistical, diplomatic, and unilateral powers granted it by its institutional status and by its members, as well as the transforming power granted by its own experiential authority. It uses all these powers to perform a kind of psycho-social jujitsu whereby the members experience both more discretion and more direction than usual. These conditions can gradually lead the members to question their own assumptions about the nature of power and to begin to experiment with the creative power to constitute a new world. In so doing, the members increasingly join the leadership in a community of inquiry.

The leadership does not use power manipulatively—that is, covertly and in order to maintain unilateral, exploitative structures. Instead, it uses power openly to create increasingly collaborative conditions.

A sixth quality of liberating structure is that the structure at any given time is open, in principle, to inspection and challenge by organization members. The organization requires the vigilance of all its members to determine whether its purposes are hazy and whether its specific structure, implementing behaviors, and products or services are congruent with its purposes. But members' charges of organizational incongruities may well be untrustworthy so long as the members themselves are unaccustomed to searching for incongruities among their own presuppositions, strategies, practices, and effects. Thus, especially initially, charges of organizational incongruity by subordinates may mask an unwillingness to face personal incongruities. The attentive leadership will turn such conflicts into educational opportunities. To state this idea another way, the openness of the leadership is made possible by, and is limited to the service of, a principle of inquiry more fundamental than any particular structure.

A seventh quality of liberating structure is that the leadership becomes vulnerable, in practice, to attack and public failure as soon as it behaves inauthentically when its tasks, processes, and purposes become incongruent and it refuses to acknowledge and correct such incongruities. By promising much, designing unconventional (and therefore often uncomfortable) tasks, and inviting full inspection, a liberating structure sets the stage for members' disillusionment. If the leadership exerts power in manipulative and defensive ways, members will become disillusioned

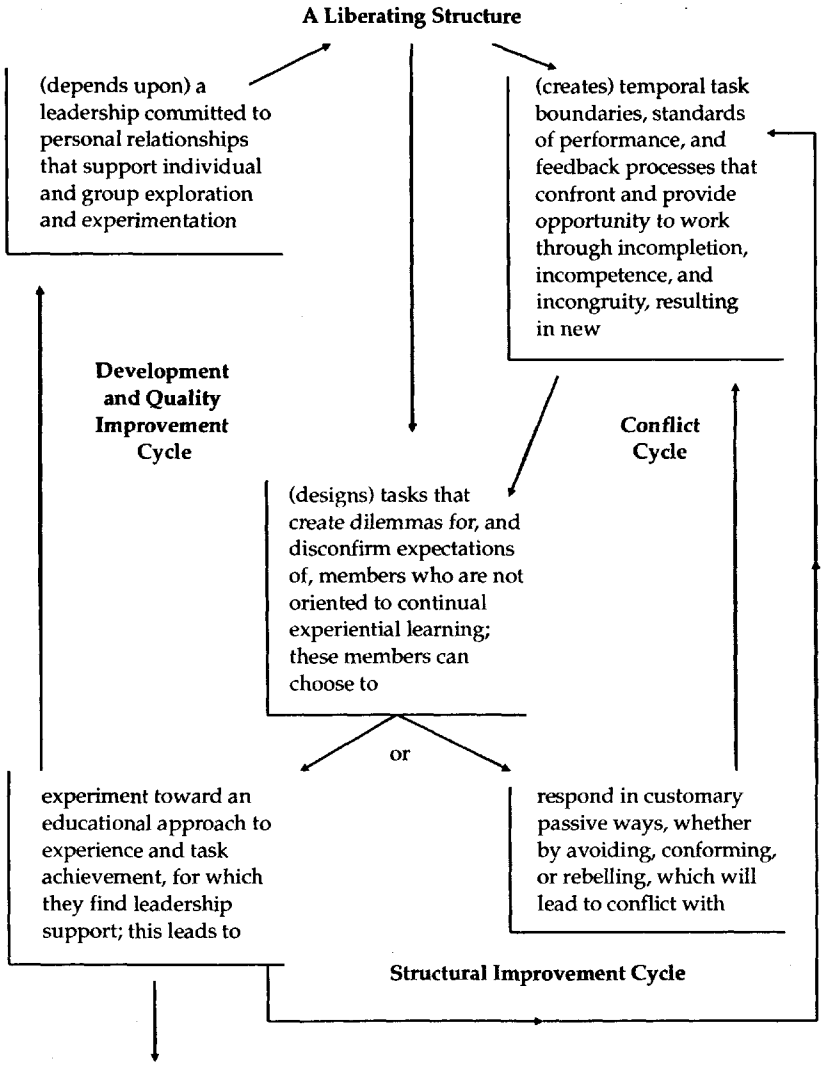
with the leadership. If the leadership shows appropriate strength, vulnerability, and integrity from moment to moment, members will shed various illusions about themselves, about organizing work, and about the nature of reality and will develop toward later stages.

A final quality of liberating structure, implicit throughout the foregoing discussion, is a leadership committed to, and practiced in, seeking, recognizing, and righting personal and organizational incongruities. The leadership leads other organizational members in learning while improving quality and in creating social settings that encourage simultaneous learning and quality work.

Figure 5.1 outlines the dynamic processes and effects of liberating structure. It illustrates the free choice that a well-constructed liberating structure repeatedly offers organizational subordinates between two different cycles of activity—a "Development and Quality Improvement Cycle" and a "Conflict Cycle." Obviously, the Development and Quality Improvement Cycle is the more rewarding pattern for both the subordinates and the organization as a whole. If the liberating structure is in fact well-constructed in its details (fitting both the particular limiting conditions of the industry and the particular limiting conditions of the work force), the vast preponderance of activities will rapidly shift toward this cycle.

There are three reasons, however, why a considerable amount of supervisors' and subordinates' energy early in the career of a liberating structure will enter the other cycle—the Conflict Cycle. One reason is that prior to the creation of the liberating structure, organizational members are very likely to have frequently dealt with dilemmas by avoiding them or passively conforming to an expected but ineffective norm of how to respond. Heretofore, they were not confronted for such responses; on the contrary, they were at least tacitly rewarded. After two or three trips through the Conflict Cycle, many subordinates will catch on to the new system. They will realize at least that they are not going to get away with low quality work; they may also realize that the new approach in fact improves both organizational effectiveness and the quality of their working life through creating a learning environment. Hence, they will more regularly choose the Development and Quality Improvement Cycle by more actively experimenting when they face a dilemma.

A second reason why energy initially enters the Conflict Cycle is not as easy to resolve: when the subordinate's choice of a passive, customary response to a dilemma is driven by his or her stage of development. Faced with unfamiliar requirements, a person at the Diplomat stage is likely to avoid or to conform. A person at the Opportunist or Technician stage is more often likely to rebel. In such cases, the process of moving from the Conflict Cycle to the Development and Quality Improvement Cycle around particular issues may be longer and bumpier and may even be



1. More effective task achievement because system is increasingly self-correcting.
2. More learning and development by members because experiments are supported and differences are confronted.
3. Increasing awareness of, and appropriation of responsibility for, relations among organizational purposes, processes, and tasks because structure is increasingly perceived as empowering and just rather than repressive.

Figure 5.1. Dynamic Model of the Operation of a Liberating Structure

resolved by a mutual or unilateral decision to end the relationship between the individual and the organization. Just how difficult this period is depends in large part on just how artistically the liberating structure has been crafted. The best crafted liberating structures will "speak clearly" in all the developmental "languages," explaining and rewarding choices that enter the Development and Quality Improvement Cycle in terms of logics and outcomes that appeal to persons at each stage and that appeal to their budding next-stage logics as well.

Of course, any given liberating structure will *not* be a perfectly constructed work of political art at the outset. This is the third reason why energy will initially enter the Conflict Cycle: the structure will to some degree not properly reward, or not properly explain the advantages of, active experimenting in response to dilemmas. This difficulty can only be addressed and rectified by experiments that change the liberating structure itself, as indicated in Figure 5.1 by the third cycle—the "Structural Improvement Cycle."

A final reason why energy tends to enter the "Conflict Cycle" at the outset of organizing via a liberating structure is that reality does not present itself to us as neatly as the analytic distinctions and arrows of Figure 5.1. All three of the reasons for conflict outlined above present themselves in intermixed fashion in particular cases; different organizational members will see different elements of each such case; a considerable number of experienced cases may be necessary before a commonly perceived pattern begins to emerge.

Indeed, you, the reader, are very likely feeling at sea amongst all these abstractions and may like some at-least-vicariously-experienced case illustrations, in order to help you imagine more concretely what these liberating structure monsters can look like.

An Extended Illustration

The purposes, plans, implementation, and effects of a business school course for undergraduates can offer multiple, intertwining illustrations of the foregoing theory of liberating structure. The course in question was the fall 1971 version of the only required undergraduate course at the Southern Methodist University School of Business Administration in Dallas, Texas. The course membership consisted at the outset of 360 students, twelve undergraduate teaching assistants who had taken the course before, and four faculty members of whom the author was one. I was an assistant professor, newly hired from graduate school the year before, in many ways a typical, young middle manager (i.e., surer of myself than I deserved to be), in other ways perhaps a bit atypical (i.e., more obsessed about developing a workable theory of managing). All of

Section II of this book is devoted to telling the story of the previous year, because that was when I and my colleagues were bumping through the process of initially inventing and re-inventing an appropriate liberating structure for this situation—the very process through which any manager wishing to develop a liberating structure must pass. The following pages, however, describe "the final product" in the hope of encouraging readers to go through (or to take forewarning and avoid) the trials and tribulations to be described in Section II.

This single, introductory required course had replaced a much larger set of required courses the year before, consistent with the dean's philosophy of preparing students to become self-directed entrepreneurs rather than passive and reactive bureaucrats. On the one hand, the dean and the task force on curriculum, which specifically recommended the course, wished to encourage self-direction within the school itself, for both students and faculty, and therefore advocated the severe reduction in required courses. On the other hand, they realized that students entering the school, given their previous education, expected external direction and thus required an experience that would offer them the opportunity to begin the transition from externally directed learning to self-directed learning.

In order to highlight the *deliberately ironic* quality of the course (references to the eight essential qualities of liberating structure will be emphasized) when describing its purpose to others, I have sometimes paraphrased Rousseau, saying that our task was "to force students to be free." And, indeed, I believe that the theory of liberating structure represents the political "missing link" in Rousseau's theory, reviewed in Chapter 1—the missing link between the Will of All and the General Will. That is, the Development and Quality Improvement Cycle of a liberating structure helps subordinates develop from their early-stage logics, qualities of awareness, and forms of power to later-stage approaches. As more organization members operate at the later stages of development, the power of balance will increasingly be exercised to espy and enact a closer and closer approximation of the General Will.

In fact, of course, students were not "forced to be free." They could drop the course (and not become business majors) if they wished to escape whatever forces we may have wielded before the end of the term. By the end of the term, 20 of the 360 students who started the course *did* drop it.

In preparing for the fall 1971 version of the course, the course staff chose to practice a *deliberate irony* on itself. It chose to change the structure of the course in order to respond to criticisms that it did not regard as valid. The story of these events also illustrates in several different ways how a liberating structure builds *a continual cycle of research and feedback into its ongoing operation* (and this cycle, in turn, corresponds to the Structural Improvement Cycle in Figure 5.1).

Toward the end of both terms the previous year, we had administered a short questionnaire to students, asking them how much they had learned in general and in particular respects in this course, as compared to how much they had learned in an average course that term. The results from both terms showed that a large majority of students perceived themselves as learning *less* theory and facts in this course than in an average course. At the same time, a large majority perceived themselves as learning *more* than in an average course in the areas of self-direction, action competence, awareness of interpersonal process, and awareness of personal learning style. They also judged that they were learning significantly more in general in this course than in an average course. These limited findings indicated that the course was generally succeeding in generating outcomes congruent with its purposes.

Based on more direct experience of the course, both the school's administration and the course staff had evaluated the course as basically successful. Another event that might be interpreted as faintly confirming the success of the course was the selection by students of one of its faculty members as the outstanding professor at the School of Business.

Another research and feedback process had yielded more negative evaluations of the course. The course staff had convened a conversation among the school's faculty about the course at the end of the previous spring. During the conversation five criticisms of the course emerged: (1) it was not hard enough; there were too many A's; (2) it was too frustrating for students; many did not seem to know what was expected of them nor how course activities related to business skills; (3) there was not enough emphasis on facts and theories (the student feedback presented two paragraphs above had already been made available to the faculty); (4) the emphasis on working in groups in the course was generating conformity rather than encouraging individual entrepreneurship; (5) there was too much emphasis on learning issues in the course and too little on business.

The course staff heard these criticisms in the context of knowing that all but one of the critical faculty members had received tenure before the arrival of the current dean and disagreed with much of what he advocated and did. But even though the course staff sometimes disagreed with both the factual basis for and the implicit assumptions of these criticisms (the only one we accepted without reservation was "not enough emphasis on theories"), we decided to try to restructure the course for fall 1971, in such a way as to respond to *all* the criticisms, thus testing their validity. Instead of deciding, as we were initially tempted to do, that to respond to these criticisms would violate the integrity of the course, we decided to respond to the criticisms without so doing.

How we did so will become evident, but will not be explicitly discussed, as the plans and implementation of the course unfold in the following pages. After presenting the plans and implementation and

Table 5.1
Purpose, Process, and Task—Central Issues in Human Enterprise: Their Phasing and Attributes in A.S. 1, Fall 1971

	Primary Emphasis	*Successful Completion Indicated by*	*Basic Question*	*Fundamental Mode of Learning*	*Primary Resource*
Purpose	Early in term	Organizational consensus on model for common effort	What is each student's optimal learning style?	Abstract generalization and active experimentation	Faculty
Process	Middle of term	Honest assessment in groups	How to make conscious, creative group decisions?	Reflective observation and active experimentation	Teaching assistants
Task	End of term	Completion of freely created projects	How to operate with administrative effectiveness?	Concrete experience and active experimentation	Students

showing how they illustrate various qualities of liberating structure, we will return to an explicit consideration of the foregoing criticisms in assessing the effects of the course.

The Plan of the Course

The design of the fall 1971 version of the course consisted of three *premeditated phases of structural evolution over time.* This design was communicated to students the first meeting of the course as in Table 5.1. Overall, the course progressed from a relatively high degree of external direction by the faculty toward increasing self-direction by the students. During the first third of the term, the faculty took primary responsibility for structuring all class time and homework assignments, seeking to introduce students to the scale of, and skills involved in, learning from experience. In the middle of the term, the faculty continued to provide overall designs for each session, but now the teaching assistants took primary responsibility for implementing these designs, seeking to help arbitrarily formed small groups to generate creative, responsible, individuality-enhancing, effective group processes, rather than conformity producing environments. During the final third of the term, students contracted for and carried out self-defined projects, either individually or in groups of their own choosing.

The structural evolution of the course was also reflected in the grading procedures. During the first third of the course, the course staff did all the grading. Each week, students wrote short "learning papers" that the staff graded, and students' performance in some class sessions was also graded. During the second third of the term, students conducted peer- and self-evaluations structured by the faculty. This process occurred in two rounds, the first a practice round during which many of the habits and fears that usually inhibit honest peer and self evaluation were confronted and overcome. During the final third of the term, the contracts for students' self-defined projects included standards and methods for evaluating whether the projects were completed effectively. Thus students moved from working within predetermined criteria of evaluation to taking responsibility for the purposes and processes of evaluation as well as the task to be evaluated. It should be noted, however, that even during the last third of the term, the staff designed the contract itself and reserved the right to confront and negotiate with students if, for example, a proposed method of evaluation seemed unlikely to yield impartial and valid information.

The learning papers themselves deserve further description because they represent so many different facets of the spirit and practice of liberating structures. The first learning paper concerned a specific experience shared by all the students, but thereafter students could choose in each paper to describe any experience they wished from their past or present lives. Moreover, students could choose any theory they wished to try to shed light on that experience. Thus the assignment provided more freedom of choice than students were accustomed to in papers; but the assignment also included more different kinds of constraints than students were accustomed to. The constraints were that a student must describe (at least some of) his or her *behavior* and *feelings* in the experience chosen, must refer to some *theory* in the literature in seeking generalizations about the experience, and must propose a way to experiment with new behavior if a similar situation were to arise again. To receive a grade of Satisfactory, students had only to include two of the four required qualities, no matter how ineptly they did so (later in the term they would have to include all four qualities to receive a Satisfactory). The grade of Honors was reserved for work judged to be of unusually high quality.

In providing both more freedom and more constraint, the task exhibited the first quality of liberating structure: *deliberate irony*. The task also exhibited the second quality of liberating structure: It was *incomprehensible and undoable without reference to the process* it represented namely, the process of actually learning while writing a paper *and to the purpose*—choosing to reflect upon experiences from which one intuited one could learn something significant. If a student chose an experience in order to show competence or avoid struggling with difficult issues, the exercise

not only became meaningless, but the student could rarely identify a future experiment.

Nevertheless, the reader may feel that the task is hardly incomprehensible or undoable as a sheer exercise in conning the teacher. Certainly, the students themselves did not anticipate much difficulty. If, however, the reader considers how rarely students are asked to write about their own behavior and feelings, and how rarely students are asked to integrate personal experience and scientific theory in a paper, it may come as less of a surprise than it did to the students themselves to hear that in their first learning paper, 44% of the students in the course included no more than one of the four qualities asked for. This 44% received a grade of No Credit as well as extensive written feedback and an invitation to discuss the four criteria with a staff member if they wished.

The way grades were used on the learning papers illustrates the fifth quality of liberating structure: *the use of all forms of power*—unilateral, diplomatic, logistical, and transforming—*in a way that encourages collaborative inquiry and the gradual obsolescence of unilateral exercises of power*. At the beginning of the term a grade of no credit motivated further inquiry more often than any amount of feedback. Even so, many students went through several no credits (several experiences of the Conflict Cycle) confident each time that they had discovered the key to the staff's game, before their inquiry came to include attention to the staff's written and verbal feedback. In general, as students struggled to master what seemed like strange, external requirements to pass the course, they began to experience the logic of the steps, the excitement of actually learning as they wrote, and the joy of searching conversations with staff members and other students in response to their writing. Consequently, students very quickly mastered the requirements, and the grades ceased to be a significant aspect of the process. At the end of the term, less than 2% of the class received an overall no credit for their learning papers.

As the term progressed, many students challenged the structure of the learning papers, and the way staff responded to these challenges illustrates the sixth characteristic of liberating structure: *conditional openness to challenge*. A typical complaint early in the term was that it was unfair to "grade people's feelings." Our reply that we did not grade the content of people's feelings, only whether their paper explicitly described *any* feelings might well be met by the charge that, obviously, a student could not expect a good grade by expressing negative feelings about the course. In response to this charge, we could always offer numerous examples of papers that *had* received full credit for expressing negative feelings about the course. We also offered to regrade and rediscuss any paper over which students had doubts. In actuality, the grades almost never required revising because the staff regularly traded papers among themselves, before handing them back to students, in order to test the validity and

reliability of feedback and grades. As this kind of concern subsided, a few students challenged the adequacy of the learning theory on which the learning paper itself was based.[3] The staff invited these students to write papers that explicated, illustrated, and were structured by alternative learning theories. For these students the whole structure of the learning paper assignment became a useful foil against which to clarify how they really learned. Thus the staff did not change the learning paper structure simply because students did not like it initially, but only when some students demonstrated that their challenge was based on a commitment to deeper inquiry.

Finally, the learning papers also exemplified, in two different ways, the fourth quality of liberating structure: *a constant cycle of experiential and empirical research and feedback.* Most obviously, the papers represented experiential research by and feedback to each individual student. Also, as the term progressed, about half of the students' papers concerned events in the course. Consequently, the papers became an unsystematic but extremely potent form of empirical research and feedback for the staff about what was happening to groups and individuals within the course.

Implementation of the Course

The discussion of the design of the learning papers has already moved beyond a description of plans into a description of the implementation of the course. This movement occurs almost unnoticed because the theory of liberating structure is not just a theory about the qualities of liberating organizational designs, but also suggests the qualities of liberating purposes and liberating actions. The theory of liberating structure is not a neutral technique that can be put to the service of any purpose, nor does it prescribe actions in a way that makes them mechanically deducible from a given design. Quite the contrary, the theory of liberating structure provides guidance in creating a special kind of social arena—a kind of social theater in which everyone is both participant and observer—and this arena, in turn, requires of the leadership the most profoundly spontaneous inquiring behavior. Only authentically inquiring behavior (Magician-like, transforming power) in combination with liberating structure (manifesting an Ironist-like power of balance) reliably succeeds in "converting" others to the practice of inquiry.

The events of the very first meeting of the course yielded an example of the eighth quality of liberating structure: *the leadership's moment-to-moment commitment to inquiry.* The staff had organized a multimedia "show" in an initial attempt to convey the special qualities of the course. This show included not only the usual media—such as music, movies,

and slide-tapes—that render the "audience" passive, but also such additional media as conversation and decision making, that render everyone participant. At some point in the sequence—after the laughter at the Frankenstein slides that accompanied an interviewed student's description of the previous term's course as monstrous, after the groaning that greeted the announcement of an exam on the assigned reading next week, and after applause for the Halleluia Chorus accompanying a movie about the raising of a plastic, student-built coffeehouse the previous spring—one of the faculty members, using an overhead projector, introduced a series of statistical tables as part of his explanation that active, experimenting students enjoyed and learned more from the course than passive students.

Perhaps the incongruity between the message and the medium was too great in this case, although I seriously doubt that any of the students consciously analyzed the discrepancy. In any event, the previous balance of tension and excitement quickly began to dissipate into irate confusion, inattention, and side conversations as the faculty member talked. After questioning what was appropriate for what felt like an eon, I interrupted my colleague, causing an immediate, shocked stillness among all 380 persons in the auditorium; but the other faculty member said he would finish briefly and continued, to growing rumbles of discontent.

Now, I interrupted again more forcefully, and this time he actually listened to what was going on and stopped. One of the teaching assistants began to introduce the film of the steel foundry research team of which he had been a member the previous spring. But this time a third member of the faculty interrupted to suggest we discuss the previous incident for a few moments, because he saw it as symbolic of the courage, skill, and mutual trust required to learn in action and to generate managerial quality improvement.

Although the rest of the evening was entertaining and informative, a skeptical person might dismiss it as slick public relations. This incident, by contrast, could alert students to the possibility that they were encountering a rare sort of social system dedicated to something beyond short-term goals, easily definable objectives, and saving face. In their first learning paper two weeks later, more students spontaneously referred to this incident than to any other event in the course.

The second week we gave an examination as promised, but, to the students' surprise, it was an experiential examination. That is, we asked them to enact the ideas about education in the assigned reading, thereby beginning to become more directly aware of the possibility of learning from immediate experience. Whereas the first session of the course had introduced students to a new verbal and visual language while more or less leaving them in their accustomed behavioral positions as audience

Concrete Experiences

1. 2. 3. 4.

Reflective Observations

1. 2. 3. 4.

Abstract Generalizations

1. 2. 3. 4.

Active Experimentation

a. Planned experiment:
b. Actual behavior:
c. Feedback from group:
d. Conclusion:

Figure 5.2. Experiential Examination Sheet

and occasional respondents, the second session initiated students into new attentional and action "languages," asking them to observe themselves as well as what was going on around them as they acted, and to act in an inquiring rather than a dogmatic mode. The tasks of this session asked them to observe and discuss the interplay among their feelings, actions, and effects. We fully expected conflict, discomfort, and unresolved issues worthy of a term's further inquiry. As the following description will show, this experiential examination particularly illustrates the second, third, and fourth qualities of liberating structures: *tasks that are incomprehensible and undoable without reference to accompanying processes and purposes* (as already stated, 44% received no credit on their learning paper about the exam); *structural evolution over time* from great supervisory guidance to little outside guidance; and *a continual cycle of research and feedback on participants' actions*.

The examination was conducted in a large open space. Students were given an examination sheet (Figure 5.2) and were told they would be led through a series of concrete experiences, reflections, generalizations, and experiments that they were to summarize on the examination sheet and on the basis of which they were to write their first learning paper the following week. For their learning papers, they were asked to consider such questions as which of the four types of learning had seemed easiest, or most eye-opening, or most risky to them and which aspects of this learning cycle they wished to concentrate on during the remainder of the semester.

Because students were to explore "how to encourage individual creativity and collective effectiveness in groups" beginning the following

week, the particular theme to be examined during the second session was how feelings and their expression affected interpersonal relations. Students were asked to pair with someone they did not know, to report their initial feelings toward one another, and to enter their first four comments verbatim as their four "concrete experiences."

Definitions of feelings and of opinions were then offered, and each pair was asked to reach agreement about whether to classify each of their four concrete experiences as "feeling" or "opinion" in the section of the examination sheet entitled "reflective observations." (A straw poll determined that only about 20% of the original statements had in fact been expressions of feeling, whereas about 80% had been opinions.)

In the next period of time, the pairs were asked to form groups of six and to discuss what generalizations they thought they could make about the relative interpersonal effects of expressing feelings or opinions. Each individual was then asked to formulate a behavioral experiment that would test the generalization about effective behavior most plausible and interesting to him or her.

The final activity of the session consisted of another conversation within each group of six, sharing feelings about the examination and about one another's performance. Each person was to attempt to carry out his or her planned experiment during the conversation. Afterwards, they were to share what their experiments had been and what effects these experiments had on the other group members.

Throughout the examination the faculty and teaching assistants wandered among groups, offering help when requested, sometimes confronting groups that seemed to be shirking the task. The overall reaction of staff members to the session was highly enthusiastic. They felt that the design, along with their interventions, provided significant leverage in acquainting students with new kinds of learning, with personal responsibility for learning, and with active participation in learning.

The students were understandably more ambivalent but generally agreed, even though they had begun the session anticipating very little learning. At the outset of the evening, on a scale of 1 (no learning) to 7 (extraordinary amount of learning), students had expected 2.86 learning on the average, and only 6% expected a great deal of learning (6 or 7). At the end of the session, students reported 4.14 learning on the average, and 21% reported a great deal of learning. At the same time, 12% of the students reported learning less than they had expected to learn.

During the third through sixth weeks, the students were formed into arbitrary groups, focusing on what kinds of behavior facilitate individual creativity and collective effectiveness. Readings on this topic were put to use analyzing tape recordings of each group's own behavior as it struggled to make various decisions. The kinds of decisions the groups were to make were specified. They were to divide the readings among the

members, choose a time to meet outside class, tape the meeting, discuss the readings, choose one behavior-categorizing procedure they wished to use, and decide how to prepare multiple copies of two pages of transcript for analysis during the following class. At the same time, the content of the decisions was up to the groups.

When the staff reviewed groups' scoring of transcripts after the next class, we discovered that, in general, when a conflict began to develop in the transcribed conversations, two things happened. First, the group would avoid facing the conflict insofar as possible during the remainder of the transcript. If one member advocated facing the conflict, he or she would tend to be derided or ignored. Second, the group would seriously mis-score the part of the transcript during which the conflict threatened to emerge when they analyzed it later. These findings led us to change our plans and create another structured group exercise: facing and resolving group conflict openly. This exercise began with staff members' feedback to each group about its current characteristic process. Here we see an example of the Conflict Cycle occurring.

Meanwhile, students who had received No Credit for their learning paper about the experiential examination moved through their incredulity at failing in such a "rinky-dink" course; and through their denunciations of the teaching assistants; and through their rewriting of the paper and (often) their next No Credit; and their first really serious talk with the staff; and their third rewrite; and their gratification at receiving some positive comments and a Satisfactory for their third try. By this time, some students had been through as many as eight different kinds of experience in and out of class in relation to the learning cycle theory—and, of course, they were writing additional learning papers following the learning cycle each week. This series of experiences with the learning papers also demonstrates the Conflict Cycle an organization member finds himself or herself in if he or she responds to a liberating structure in a customary, passive, or defensive way.

During the final third of the term, students contracted for projects of their own creation, working either as individuals or as self-constituted groups. Whereas during the first two thirds of the course the staff generally had to take primary responsibility for confronting individuals or groups operating in ways that inhibited learning or effective performance, students themselves initiated such confrontations as they internalized values and skills consistent with self-directed learning and collaborative responsibility. For example, in one group, five of the twelve members ended up doing most of the work on the preliminary three-week project done in the arbitrary groupings. Despite confrontation, other members seemed content to remain passive and do the minimal amount of work. Nevertheless, the group as a whole enjoyed the preliminary

project and judged it successful, as did the teaching assistant who monitored that group and one other.

When it came time to plan the six-week project, everyone in that group agreed that they wished to continue working as a group rather than to break up. But, as the planning session continued, the same division between the five active and the seven passive members became evident. At that point, the five active members agreed openly that they didn't trust the commitment of the others. The five decided to form their own group and decided to create a market for arts and crafts on the campus. The group struggled with all aspects of a business enterprise, including efficiency and profit, and finally broke even financially (despite losing the cash box at one point!).

Meanwhile, the remaining seven found themselves stranded, with no one but themselves to rely on for further transportation. Because they had no positive sense of identity as a group, they each went their own way, some to significant learning experiences, which they would probably have avoided if the active members had been "kind enough" to carry them through the project.

Research and Feedback Throughout the Course

The constant cycle of experiential and empirical research and feedback characteristic of liberating structures has already received several illustrations in the foregoing episodes. What is perhaps not yet clear is how the staff itself used empirical and experiential research to analyze and improve its own performance as the term progressed. Twice during the term, in the middle and at the end, students were asked how much they were learning in the course as compared to their other courses. In the middle of the term, when conflict was high, all of the students, taken together, reported learning about as much as in an average course (3.9 on the 1-7 scale). Within this overall finding, however, groups associated with different staff members reported significantly different amounts of learning. Before presenting specific results of the research to the staff, I asked them whether they saw any common characteristics among the three with whom (I alone knew) students perceived themselves as learning most and among the three with whom students reported learning least. The staff characterized the three members with whom students perceived themselves learning most as warm, personal, and encouraging of identification. On the other hand, the staff characterized the three members with whom students perceived themselves learning least as relatively distant, task-oriented, and encouraging of internalization. The staff did not evaluate the first three as more competent and the second three as less

competent. In fact, ultimately we preferred to encourage students to develop an internalized value system, rather than to encourage them to identify with us as models. But these findings seemed to confirm Harrison's theory[4] that students come to expect to *comply* with external directives in learning and must go through a stage of *identifying* with an alternative model of behavior before they can *internalize* their own individual learning values. As a result of discussing results in this way, both the apparently more successful and the apparently less successful staff members found directions for further experimentation in their teaching styles.

Staff members also administered semantic differentials about their leadership style to their groups. Before analyzing the results, each staff member made his or her own judgments about *ideal* leadership style and attempted to predict what student perceptions of his or her *actual* leadership style would be. In this way, existing discrepancies were highlighted as areas for further reflection and experimentation.

Beyond formal empirical measures of performance, staff members invited other staff members to observe and criticize their performance. Indeed, in one case where communication between staff member and group seemed to have seriously broken down, two staff members switched groups.

It should be obvious that persons can invite and learn from formal empirical research only in a fundamentally friendly and caring atmosphere, the informal aspects of which are also dedicated to learning about how one organizes one's attention. To put this another way, the leadership of a liberating structure must experience itself as a community of inquiry if its members are to become increasingly objective, impartial, and mutually trusting, rather than increasingly defensive, through the conflicts and failures they will encounter. It will suffice to offer here the barest outline of the different ways staff members engaged one another in continuing experiential research and feedback. Staff members would meet for a beer at a nearby pub after each week's session to begin the process of assimilating our experiences. Then, the next afternoon we would meet more formally and compare our experiences to stories about other personal and collective adventures of inquiry.[5] Often someone would give a party over the weekend. Then early the following week teaching assistants would meet individually with faculty members to calibrate final plans for particular groups.

Outcomes

At the end of the term, 20 of the initial 360 students had dropped the course, as stated earlier, and another 52 received No Credit; 36 students

received Honors, the rest Satisfactory. By contrast, slightly over half the course had received A's the previous year. Although the grading system as a whole had changed, it seems clear that the grading was harder, as had been requested by the critical faculty the previous spring. Two weeks before the end of the term a higher percentage and absolute number of students (300 of 340) than ever before responded to the questionnaire on learning and judged the course to be generating significantly more learning in general than their average course (5.4 on the 1-7 scale) and significantly more than the same course earlier in the term or during either term the year before.

In response to the criticism that the course had been too group-oriented, too frustrating, and too weakly related to business, the six-week project at the end of the course had provided an arena for more overtly business-like enterprises than had tended to occur the first year and had encouraged both individual and group entrepreneurship. Of the 300 students answering the questionnaire, 71% reported predominantly enjoyable experiences in the course, and 76% reported that the course was as appropriate or more appropriate for the business school than their average business course.

The questionnaire results also seemed to indicate significant improvement in regard to communicating facts and theories, another area criticized by some faculty. Whereas at the end of the previous spring only 9% of our students regarded themselves as learning more facts than in an average course and only 20% reported more than average learning about theories, at the end of the term described here 33% reported more than average factual learning and 67% reported more than average theoretical learning.

The staff was pleased, of course, with these quantitative findings and even more pleased with our own qualitative impressions of having introduced many students to radically new approaches to their work, their relationships, and their life aims. We also felt pleased that this introduction was not merely to a verbal language, but to attentional and behavioral languages as well, and that the introduction did not merely paint a rosy picture, but actually confronted and worked through many conflicts. Nevertheless, we did not believe that our students had so deeply internalized the theory and events of the course that they could now describe or enact liberating structures for others. There was no evidence, for example, that more than a few students picked up the language or logic about the interrelations among purpose, process, and task. Indeed, we decided to drop this language from our design for the following term's version of the course even though the logic continued to play an important role in the staff's planning.

That the course itself did not "move" students to the point of enacting liberating structures is not at all surprising in the context of the develop-

mental theory presented in the earlier chapters of this book. Most of our students were almost certainly lodged at the Diplomat and Technician stages of development at the outset, four or five developmental transformations away from the Ironist stage. I myself required seven years of very intense and diverse existential learning experiences with remarkable teachers and colleagues, as well as the previous two terms experimenting with the particular conditions of the SMU business school, before I could take a role in enacting the well-defined liberating structure reported here.

If the theories and examples provided in these first five chapters interest the reader enough to wonder how one actually struggles along the developmental path of inventing liberating structures in particular organizations, while simultaneously undergoing self-transforming experiences at unexpected intervals, then the more novelistic, more subjective, "thicker" description provided in Section II should help.[6]

Notes

1. An earlier version of the remainder of this chapter appeared in the *Journal of Higher Education*, 49, 2. Reprinted by arrangement with *JHE*.

2. For details on these, and related, findings, see Dunbar, R., & Dutton, J., 1972, "Student learning in a restructured environment," *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 6: 26-37.

3. The learning sequence of these papers was based on the learning cycle theory presented in Kolb, D., Rubin, I., & McIntyre, J., 1971, *Organizational Psychology: An Experiential Approach*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

4. See Runkel, P., Harrison, R., & Runkel, M., 1969, *The Changing College Classroom*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

5. Our common staff readings for that semester included Campbell, J., 1949, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Cleveland, OH: Meridian; Hinton, W., 1966, *Fanshen: Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*, New York: Vintage; and Runkel, P., Harrison, R., & Runkel, M., 1969, *The Changing College Classroom*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

6. Hopefully, these two sections, although different in genre, blend rather than blur. See Geertz, C., 1983, "Blurred genres: The refiguration of social thought," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books.

SECTION II

Heart and Practice

6 Set, Setting, Dramatis Personae

In the spring of 1970, three doctoral students from Yale accepted positions for the fall in Dallas, Texas, as faculty members at the Southern Methodist University School of Business. These three were David Goodman, who joined the Management Science (or operations research) Department, and Pat Canavan and myself, who joined the Organizational Behavior Department. All three of us were mutually friendly, though Pat and I were closer than David and were brought still closer by our subsequent experiences. Meanwhile David drifted away from us, from his wife (they divorced), and from the daily life of the school, becoming something of an elusive character.

Set

David plays no further role in this story after this introduction. Pat, on the other hand, plays a major role. Nevertheless, I will tell David's story briefly here because all three of us started with similar questions, so our diverging paths throw different kinds of light on the risks and consequences of taking these questions seriously. All three of us were interested in our own further spiritual development; and all three of us were also interested in achieving business effectiveness.

David is the only one of us who remained at SMU for a long time. Three years after this, David would teach some of the courses that I created specifically to cultivate an integration of personal development and greater effectiveness in our SMU students (I heard, however, that David's focus was on personal development, not effectiveness). Initially a very productive researcher who won the school's research excellence award in 1974, David turned in the late 1970s more and more toward a teaching

called Conscious Development invented by a Dallas woman named Terri Hoffman.[1] In the early 1980s, he devised a computer-based formula for picking stocks that was so successful that it led to widespread publicity in the *Wall Street Journal*, to a 1985 book entitled *Hyperprofits*, and then to his own stock newsletter called the *Goodman Report*. He charged $12,000 for personal client consultations.

Obviously, he had pursued both the spiritual development path and the business effectiveness path. But in his way of following them they were parallel, or, perhaps, orthogonal to one another; certainly, they were not integrated.

Just before the fall of 1987, he suddenly resigned from SMU. Now, with his fourth wife, Glenda, he devoted virtually his entire time, and much of his financial wealth, to the work of the small Conscious Development group around Terri Hoffman. Hoffman had developed a cosmology that involved the members of her group in symbolic battles with evil forces in the universe, called the Black Lords. She also encouraged members to detach themselves from all former associates who would breed "negative" energies; David cut off all contact with his parents and his children. Several members of the group committed suicide or died in peculiar circumstances, leaving money to Terri.

In their journal in the autumn of 1989, David and Glenda wrote that the way was now clear "to get high energies . . . in a marriage between (their) physical self and (their) spirit. All is in readiness. The date is set for Oct 20." It was only five weeks after that date that David and Glenda were discovered in their home with a pistol next to each, each dead of a gunshot wound in the skull, each five weeks decomposed.

This passage has been difficult to write, as it will no doubt be shocking to read. It frames the entire subsequent story in black. Failing to inquire deeply—simply by complying with the press of events and expectations in our lives—can lead us to participate in personal, organizational, or societal events that are moderately or grotesquely unjust, unfulfilling, and/or unproductive. But asking serious questions by no means guarantees movement toward the power of balance and just action. It did not for David.

David did not integrate his spiritual, intellectual, and material questions. Nor did he explore social and behavioral questions about what kind of community and what kind of action invites inquiry into its own assumptions, practices, and outcomes. To ask such questions is to become aware of and take responsibility for the very medium in which we live—like fish asking about water. Few ask such questions. David did not. He asked specialized questions.

It may be safe to put all one's attention on specializing in one's professional work (though I do not believe so). I am certain that it is *not* safe to specialize in one's life. We need a flexible attention and a process

of testing the efficacy of our actions in a larger world where everyone does not share our assumptions—not addictive and reclusive cultishness—to glimpse all of ourselves, our surroundings, and our interrelations. Such an attention and such a process of testing is what Pat and I were seeking, though our seeking did not guarantee finding.

Dramatis Personae

Both Pat and I have lost our balance too, more than once. Indeed, Pat was soon to experience a whole set of unbalancing events that will be retold in the following pages—a set of events so unbalancing that he eventually left academia altogether—but in his case the unbalancing events became exercises toward a greater power of balance. He entered the business world, working very successfully as Digital Equipment Corporation's worldwide manager for organizational development, and was based in Switzerland throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s. Then he joined Motorola and was rapidly promoted to the corporate executive office. He is the person described first in Chapter 2 as playing the "Clown" role on Motorola's executive team and then again in Chapter 3 in terms of his occasional method of conducting business meetings. The Clown or Court Jester role is the very archetype of flexible attention, attuned to the truth of each situation, taking nothing (least of all itself) too seriously, remaining balanced even while cavorting and stumbling.

After my years at SMU, I joined the faculty at Harvard for four years, then spent two years starting up my own organization called The Theatre of Inquiry, then became the graduate dean at the Wallace E. Carroll School of Management (as described in Chapter 4) at Boston College, where I still teach.

The story to be told here is of a time early in our careers, when Pat and I were attempting to learn how to balance self-transformation with organizational-transformation. No matter how clear and helpful the theory of Section I may seem to (hopefully many of the) readers of this book, you yourselves will have to engage (or are already engaging) in something like our learning process if you wish to marry vision and practice in any area of your life, and if you wish to play a role in enacting continual quality improvement in any organization for which you have some responsibility. You will invent liberating structures uniquely adapted in most, if not all, of their particulars to your setting. What you will have most in common with Pat and me, if you proceed very far along this path, are the fits and the starts, the stumbles and the stops, the sore attentional muscles and the heartaches described in this section.

What was our recent background as we came to SMU? In addition to our formal graduate studies over the previous four years, both Pat and I

had experience as leaders and consultants in groups, organizations, and communities undergoing major change. Pat had consulted to the Middletown, Connecticut, community change program for several years and was a member of an unlikely band that created community interventions and celebrations and called itself Cosmic Laboratories. I had consulted to several schools and had founded and directed, in the midst of New Haven's race riots, the Yale Upward Bound Program for the War on Poverty, managing to get myself nearly killed at one point in the process.[2] So, I had already experienced a few of the fits and starts, stumbles and stops that characterize this peculiar kind of work.

Both Pat and I were interested in studying change in settings where we were active participants. That meant studying ourselves as well as the setting, and that meant studying ourselves in action, not just afterwards. And all this meant, in turn, that the study might well influence the setting, and us, and the actions taken.

This kind of study violated conventional social scientific assumptions about the need for a scientist to remain detached in order to be objective about what he or she was discovering. But we could not see how any other kind of study could possibly be of use to ordinary people and to professionals of all kinds, such as managers, who are trying to learn about and influence settings where they are active participants.

We were fortunate enough to have studied at Yale with Chris Argyris, one of the few social scientists who believed that this kind of integration of inquiry and action, science and politics, was possible and desirable—and who was pioneering just this kind of work.[3] We were also young enough not to comprehend fully—though we knew this intellectually—how strange and how threatening people and institutions with power might find this approach. We were also young enough not to comprehend fully—though we knew this too intellectually—how many layers of illusion remained between our enthusiastic vision of an ideal (of a society committed not just to democracy in principle, but to truth and efficacy in practice) and clear, continuing vision of ourselves in action.

Although we were close friends and members of the same profession, Pat and I were very different stylistically. Pat wore long, electric red hair and faded overalls, the conventional countercultural costume of the time. I wore my hair shorter and dressed in a casual, collegiate fashion. Pat made an immediate impression on people by his energy, his warmth, and his joyous, abstract monologues. Whatever impression I made was less immediate: People sometimes noted my honesty in awkward situations, my accuracy of perception, and my goal-orientedness. Pat was charismatic and likeable. I was solid and perhaps impenetrable.

Both of us chose to begin our faculty careers at the SMU Business School because we regarded it as showing a strong institutional commitment to a confrontative, experiential learning process among faculty and stu-

dents. These qualities seemed to us necessary to promote development to the point where persons become truly committed to and skillful at testing whether their practices are really consistent with their principles and whether they are contributing to some common good, not just to their own good.

The evidence of SMU's commitment was its choice of Jack Grayson as dean two years before. Jack was energetic, visionary, and practical. He had already articulated a new and exciting philosophy for the school and had obtained expanded financial resources. The new philosophy emphasized the need for a new kind of education to prepare students to become *initiating entrepreneurs* rather than *passive bureaucrats*—to become capable of operating effectively in unknown, unstructured, or rapidly changing situations such as were likely to become increasingly prevalent in the future, rather than assuming that existing procedures, structures, and resources defined what was possible.

This new philosophy epitomized Grayson's ability to integrate the visionary and the practical. It represented a severe critique of traditional forms of education, which place the student in a relatively passive, dependent role in a teacher-dominated course, and welcomed the creation of learning environments that encourage students to become responsibly self-directing. This critique and prospect attracted Pat and me, all the more so because we could already see concrete faculty commitment to this rhetoric in a faculty vote to eliminate all previous course requirements at the school (i.e., accounting, finance, marketing) and to substitute just a single required course to help students make the transition from passive, reactive learning styles to active initiating styles. (Of course, the point was not that students should not take accounting, finance, and marketing, but rather that those courses should be exposed to market feedback of their efficacy and that students should know why they were choosing them.)

The practical side of Grayson's new philosophy was that its emphasis on entrepreneurship and action-oriented learning appealed to the conservative, free enterprise values of the Dallas business community. The Dean's persuasiveness in public speaking and his ability to organize attractive mixed-media presentations to market the school was already generating new financial and political support.

Setting

We realized that we were not entering a utopia devoid of conflict. Southern Methodist University was a relatively conservative institution with a relatively conservative student body in a relatively conservative city. In many respects, it seemed as though the turbulent sixties had

passed this part of the country by. This university had not been the scene of significant ferment in regard to race, in regard to the war in Vietnam, or in regard to women's liberation. Fraternities and sororities still dominated its active social life.

Indeed, the changes at the Business School, which so far had affected the faculty more than the students, were so out of character that a number of faculty members had vehemently resisted the Dean's initiatives, at one point going over his head to the President of the University to seek his dismissal (unsuccessfully). This resistance may well have been exacerbated by Grayson's tendency during his first months on the job to neglect the faculty he inherited in favor of focusing on future plans for the school and recruiting new faculty.[4]

In any event, we knew that we were joining a faculty in conflict, as part of a perceived "new guard" at odds with the "old guard." Nevertheless, it appeared to us the most promising site in the whole country for significant change in education within existing university structures.

Indeed, one reason we chose to join the SMU faculty was because of the way they were dealing with the conflict generated by the ongoing changes. They did not try to hide it. Unlike most universities, where I interviewed for jobs by going through a succession of one-on-one interviews and then giving a presentation, at SMU I was invited one evening to help design a course and some research to test its effectiveness. Then the next morning I sat in on a tense faculty meeting of the Organization Behavior area I was to join and was thanked for bringing a conflict I observed into the open. These experiences gave me confidence that persons were really struggling to work together differently, not merely packaging the same old individualistic, competitive activities and manners in new language.

I arrived at SMU in late August 1970, a few weeks after Pat had arrived, with a very clear idea of the social role I wanted to take during the next phase of my life. After two years of reflection about my previous leadership effort at Yale Upward Bound, I was ready to try again, but with a very different sense of how to try. What I was aiming for remained the same: the creation of a sense of community in which performance excellence, personal learning, and mutual commitment reinforced one another, and in which work directly served the deeper human aspirations of both the worker and the recipient of the work.

My sense of how to go about achieving this aim had changed in two respects: I now saw both myself and the social world differently. Whereas before I had acted as though society represented a contract among free and rational persons—its injustices representing aberrations, however severe—I now viewed society as distinctly prerational and persons as distinctly unfree and unaware of their lack of freedom.[5] Often, indeed, persons seemed to have internalized within themselves the very social

structures and procedures they professed to despise. Still, though the camel seemed larger and the eye of the needle smaller, I believed in the possibility of a community dedicated to mutual education toward active freedom, excellence of performance, and justice. I also believed that the political/educational means to achieve this sense of community must be consonant with the end vision itself.

My new sense of society as predominantly prerational dictated a tripartite political strategy aimed at three different classes of persons that I named "superiors," "peers," and "subordinates." The educational process of generating valid information (about what actions to take, what actions were occurring, and what previous actions had accomplished) was to be the primary instrument of political power in relation to all three classes of persons. Moreover, the ultimate aim was the same in all cases: to change superiors and subordinates into peers—to generate peer relationships—but the manner of developing the educational process would vary radically depending upon the class persons initially appeared to belong to.

Superiors are persons in positions of power in the broader social institutions within which one's own particular organization (and mentality) is lodged. They are the parents. They believe they are appropriately in charge, and they are not expecting to be educated. To violate their expectations is to risk losing one's own position. (These assumptions about superiors are *not* true if the superiors are at the Magician and Ironist stages of development and practice educational, mutuality-enhancing power. But as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, no managers in our general samples are found at those stages. The assumptions *may* not always be true if the superiors are at the Achiever and Strategist stages, but only a minority of managers seem to be at those stages. In any event, the following strategy tests the assumptions, so, if they are incorrect, the person following this strategy should discover so.)

According to my new version of political strategy, one guards against, tests, and educates superiors by taking the initiative to develop and publicize valid information showing that one's own area of responsibility is achieving accepted social goals satisfactorily and at the same time helping the wider organization to improve its performance. Only as one achieves credibility with superiors through one's documented performance and political alertness, can one reasonably hope successfully to raise issues that may warrant a transformation, or reframing, of superiors' perspectives and priorities. If, after repeated careful testing, superiors show themselves to be hostile to developing increasingly just systems that integrate inquiry and productivity, one must choose among three alternatives (and not all may be viable in a given case). Either one can operate at sufficient distance (psychologically, functionally, or geographically) from them to be minimally threatening; or one can leave the organization;

or one can fight. If one chooses the last alternative, one can fight consistently with the overall strategy by publicizing valid information to the superiors' superiors (including media, the government, shareholders, consumers, etc.). Obviously, this latter is a dangerous, high stakes game.

Peers are persons who share the vision of, and commitment to, creating a more playful, more just, more mutually educative community. They are also persons who take initiative to act in this direction no matter what their position in an organizational hierarchy. Peers are attracted to one another whether or not they are members of the same family, organization, network, or faith. They love, support, learn from, and confront one another in the most direct ways possible, in order to develop a tested trust that permits efficient, effective, developmentally fruitful work together, as well as meaningful, ecstatic, revivifying celebration.

Obviously, such a peer "culture" is not a conforming, teenage peer group of the type Rawls describes when he speaks of the morality of association (Chapter 1). Rather, it is a mutually challenging, profoundly adult group with a taste for transforming personal development. Only persons transforming beyond the Achiever stage and at the later stages are likely to have much of a taste for the demands and rewards of this culture.

Subordinates are persons who conventionally regard themselves as such in relating to themselves.[6] Persons between the ages of 15 and 30 who are at the Diplomat stage of development are the most likely to belong to this culture. Persons of this age range at the Opportunist and Technician stages are also likely to belong.

Subordinates are to be provided with ironic, liberating structures that meet their expectations that motivation, definition, and direction will be externally dictated to them, but that at the same time educate them to transcend such structures and to become increasingly responsible for their own lives and relationships—to become peers. Liberating structures dissolve in the face of appropriate confrontation, confrontation that shows them to be unnecessary for excellent work and personal development, confrontation that demonstrates that the subordinate is becoming a peer.

At SMU the superior, peer, and subordinate cultures seemed quite sharply delineated. The Board of Trustees and the Business School Foundation, dominated by Dallas businesspeople such as Bill Clements (who would much later become Governor of Texas) and Ed Cox (who would much later have the Business School named for him), represented one face of the superior culture—the rather demanding and arbitrary "father" stereotype. The norms of the central administration and staff represented another face of the superior culture—more like the "mother" stereotype. The administration maintained a gracious, traditional southern family

atmosphere in which warmth, politeness, and avoidance of open conflict were the primary virtues-in-practice, whereas competence, scholarship, and honesty were generally honored at a safe rhetorical distance.

The leadership of the Business School was operating much differently, however, from either of these two faces. In fact, it was operating remarkably like what I am referring to as a peer culture, as I have already suggested by the example of how I was treated when I initially interviewed at the school. Instead of being treated formally and assessed at a distance, I was invited to go to work with persons there, to exhibit my creativity, and to participate in their conflicts (thereby making them mine as well). Like a good peer, I too played a role in arranging the occasion this way, having specifically asked to participate in a departmental meeting.

Meanwhile, the student body at SMU generally exemplified what I refer to as a subordinate culture. Coming from protected upper middle-class backgrounds for the most part, these students viewed college as part of a socially expected routine preceding marriage or a preplanned job. Courses, classes, and knowledge were the castor-oil of pre-adulthood. At best, many of them felt, one might find a few teachers who were good enough showpeople to make classtime entertaining.

Role and Task

Because of my interest in creating environments that encouraged increasing responsible self-direction on the part of college students,[7] I had been asked to become faculty coordinator for the new required course for undergraduates that was to commence in the fall of 1970. It was to be a huge course—during my two years at SMU we had semester enrollments of 240, 412, 360, and 340.

To team-teach this monstrosity, Craig Lundberg, the chairman of our subject area who had recruited Pat and me, had the previous spring also recruited three other members of the faculty, as well as five students to serve as teaching assistants. Other than myself, Pat was the only member of the incipient staff with any deliberately developed skill in helping people in groups to become collaboratively self-directing.

So the task was triply huge:

(1) we were being asked to undertake a delicate and little understood human process;

(2) we were being asked to do so on so large a scale that the faculty could not hope to have significant contact with, impact on, or control of individual students; and

(3) the "we" that was being asked to do this job was a largely unskilled team that met one another for the first time only two weeks before the first session of the course.

I liked the scale of the task. It seems to me that if many persons were ever to reach the untapped levels of human potential that theorists like Maslow and Argyris had been writing about since the middle 1950s, we had to learn not only how to facilitate intensive small groups that people joined briefly and voluntarily, but also how to restructure larger organizations—whether their focus be business, education, health care, or government. And, to be realistic, we had to accept that there would always be a scarcity of leaders with developmental skills; as well as a surfeit of persons for whom responsible self-direction, although a possibility, was distinctly alien and threatening to their present mode of functioning.[8] Hence, the task that faced us seemed to me to be precisely what society and organizations in general needed to learn how to do.

As much as Western civilization has learned in the realms of science and technology in the past five hundred years, it is difficult to discern any progress whatsoever in the past two millenia in terms of moral and political development. The missing link, it seemed to me, is a mode of organizing that helps persons span the great distance between top-down pyramidal forms of organizing prevalent in families, schools, corporations, public bureaucracies, armies, and so forth, and utopian visions of "participatory democracy." In the terms I've begun to use in this chapter, we need to invent a mode of organizing that spans the gap between organizing dominated by superior-subordinate relations and organizing permeated by peer relations. We need a mode of organizing that serves as a vehicle to carry us *from* organizing that involves manipulating and conforming to externalized power while remaining unaware of our inner, spiritual, erotic, transforming power—*to* organizing that involves mutual goal-setting along with supportive and confrontative feedback. Or, as stated in Section I of this book, we need a mode of organizing that cultivates the multiple developmental transformations that college students and most adults of any age still require, if they wish truly to function as peers.

Without yet being able fully to define what it was, I was beginning to call such a transitional, transforming process of organizing "liberating structure." As a first approximation, it seemed to me that the jujitsu whereby liberating structures transform external empowerment to internal empowerment was accomplished by dictating skeletal outlines of how to act rather than the concrete details of what was to be done. At the outset, however, "liberating structure" was primarily a label I used to refer to an unknown but necessary way of proceeding.

Leadership Style

I felt I had learned many things in the two years since my last major leadership effort that would enable me to be more effective this time around. Before, I thought that to encourage collaboration one should not exercise power. I also thought it a primary virtue to yield one's own position in favor of experimenting with another's preferences. My painful, digested leadership experience at Yale Upward Bound showed me that to *suppress my* power was not an effective way to model and encourage others to *exercise their* power. It also showed me that neither principle nor digested experience founded most persons' preferences. Therefore, part of my leadership responsibility was to defend and implement liberating structures, even in the face of attack, until they received adequate testing through our common experiences and through explicit research on that experience.

I also felt I had learned a good deal about the importance of humor and informal leadership in building a sense of trust and community within a staff group as it became a peer culture. Before, I had tended to plunge grimly and willfully forward in the face of obstacles, becoming disappointed when I felt little support from my staff. I was unwilling to pay much attention to staff problems because, I thought, the staff should require no special attention because it was being paid to do a job. Of course, the effect of these partially subconscious patterns of mine was to increase the armoring of the obstacles by pounding away at them, to make the staff eventually part of the obstacle rather than the resource for dissolving the obstacle, and to make myself isolated and unapproachable. Allowing so little room for serendipity, mutual creativity, or refocusing and reframing on my own part, I had made leadership a harder and lonelier job than it need have been.

During the previous summer, however, I had participated in a program where a master humorist had been one of the leaders. He had not only demonstrated for me the kind of atmospheric jujitsu that appropriate humor could provide, but had also poked at my seriousness until I experimented with a lighter approach and found that my "heaviest" points were either unnecessary (how mortifying!) or else better heard when presented ironically. As a result of these experiences, my two highest priorities as the coordinator of the new required course at SMU were:

(1) to take a half-hour "vacation" during working hours each day; and
(2) to create a regular occasion when the staff could gather informally and drink beer together.

With this background and in this mood, I approached the first meeting of our "team."

Notes

1. The further material on David and the Conscious Development group is largely derived from Elkind, P., 1990, "The curse of the black lords," *Texas Monthly*, 18, 15, May.

2. This experience is retold in my 1976 book *Creating a Community of Inquiry: Conflict, Collaboration, Transformation* (London: John Wiley).

3. Argyris had already produced two examples of this kind of study before 1970: Argyris, C., 1962, *Interpersonal Competence and Organizational Effectiveness*, Homewood, IL: Irwin-Dorsey; and Argyris, C., 1965, *Organization and Innovation*, Homewood, IL: Irwin-Dorsey. He was teaching the material that later appeared in Argyris, C., 1971, *Intervention Theory and Method*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. His most recent exposition of this approach to social science is Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & Smith, D., 1985, *Action Science*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

4. A year after Pat and I joined the SMU faculty, two of our colleagues, Roger Dunbar and John Dutton, also appointed by Grayson, decided to investigate the institutional origins of the continuing conflict within the faculty. To their surprise, they soon found the first draft of their article on this matter itself in severe dispute. Without permission, a secretary showed the draft of the article to several old guard faculty before the authors could take the initiative to do so (as they had intended to do), and the authors found themselves threatened with a law suit. (As the reader will see, this is only one of numerous instances when the effort to describe ongoing events generated more heat than light initially—an effect that is central to the issue of how inquiry and action best relate.) Subsequently, the authors revised the paper several times, offering each new draft to the initially offended faculty. Because a later draft proved acceptable to all participant-readers, its account of events prior to Pat's and my arrival may be regarded as relatively valid. The published version is: Dunbar, R., Dutton, J., & Torbert, W., 1982, "Crossing mother: Ideological constraints on organizational improvements," *Journal of Management Studies*, 19, 1: 91-108.

5. As discussed in Section I, developmental theory helps to establish a meaningful definition of the type of rationality and awareness necessary to create and sustain a just social order, and of the ways that persons and organizations tend to fall short of this type of rationality and awareness. Persons and organizations at each stage of development exhibit one specific type of rationality or another, including the sort of technical or instrumental rationality assumed in economic models (see Chapter 2). But only at empirically rare late stages of development (see Chapter 3) do persons and organizations exhibit constitutive rationality—a type of rationality that can recognize and mediate among different systems of rationality, different values—while simultaneously encouraging others' development toward the capacity for exercising such rationality. Only this type of constitutive rationality is socially rational (see Torbert, W., 1974, "Doing Rawls justice," *Harvard Educational Review*, 44, 4: 459-470.

6. As this sentence comes closest to making explicit in the brief characterization of the three classes, these classes are not unitary, objective phenomena so much as they are phenomenological classes, classes created by each actor/observer. Someone whom I experience as a superior could experience him- or herself as a subordinate to someone else (or, even, conceivably, to me). At the other extreme, wide social agreement about the classification of a person or position may make these phenomenological classes virtually objective. Few people in our society are likely to view a Justice of the Supreme Court as a subordinate, nor is it likely that the Supreme Court Justices view themselves as subordinate to many, if any, others.

7. Richard Hackman and I had already published a chapter titled "Taking the Fun Out of Outfoxing the System" in Runkel, P., Harrison, R., & Runkel, M., 1969, *The Changing College Classroom*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

8. I explore why there is commonly a wide gap between habitual functioning and responsible self-direction in my 1973 book, *Learning from Experience: Toward Consciousness*, (New York: Columbia University Press).

7 Doing Four Things at Once

The Politics of Creating a Peer Culture

The first test of my supposed new style of leadership came much more quickly, and from an entirely different direction, than I would ever have expected—not on the very first day of meeting with our new staff for the required course, but bright and early on the second day.

The first day's meeting of our ten person staff went very well. We spent most of our time introducing ourselves and explaining why we had decided to take part in this effort. A sense of warmth and of shared mission began to develop. At the same time, however, the meeting made me nervous because it revealed just how distant most of the members were from anything like the skills and understandings I had. I began to reexperience the kind of anxiety and sense of burden that was familiar to me from my previous leadership role. That night I was already berating myself for having accepted a formal leadership role at all, because my original intention had been to practice "informal" leadership this time around from a formal role of "followership."

This nervousness and anxiety was quickly accelerated into active alarm the second morning, when I suddenly found myself hearing my one sure friend and ally, Pat, arguing against any structure whatsoever in the course. He believed we should simply form the students into groups and ask them to choose what they wanted to do, consulting to them as they met problems along the way. I was sure that most students would feel utterly at sea under these conditions and that most of these in turn would react by resentment and withdrawal rather than by active inquiry.

I felt betrayed that Pat, the one person I counted on as an ally, should be proposing such a course of action. At the same time, I was very scared of confronting him and fighting seriously for fear I would lose his friendship, undermine the future of the course, and end up utterly alone.

These very fears reminded me that I had learned repeatedly in recent years (in that way many of us have of not fully learning the truly important things) that fighting can express commitment to a person and a principle, not just rancor, and that avoiding a fight can itself generate distance and discord.

So, after an eternal minute or two of intensifying internal agony, I finally summoned the courage to challenge Pat severely. Our argument flared into loud voices. We attacked each other as well as each other's ideas, trying to illuminate how each ideology reflected the person's total style and presumed blindness. After a few ineffective efforts to stop us, the rest of the staff sat back, somewhat aghast at the level of conflict occuring in this normally saccharine culture.

After 45 minutes of back and forth, our fight ended in a manner so surprising to me that I could not have imagined it: Pat yielded. He suddenly looked across at me with just a moment's pause and then announced in his same buoyant and confident tone that I was right and he was wrong—that he had not been thinking very clearly about the characteristics of the students we were to deal with or about the size of the course. I was astonished and confused, but he thanked me warmly, and it was immediately evident that our friendship had not merely survived but deepened, a paradoxical development that I had known was possible before this, but that I had never before experienced so clearly.

Nor were these the only positive outcomes. I found that I had somehow communicated my ideas and convictions much more clearly and convincingly to others in the course of the argument than I had been able to do the day before during our introductions. As a result, what had already threatened to become a familiar split between the pro-structurers and the non-structurers transformed itself into a common commitment to the still vaguely defined notion of liberating structure. (Not that this interaction utterly dissolved the dichotomy; rather, it established a bond across these apparent opposites and a sense of mutual experimentation as the semester went on.)

Another positive outcome—the most important from the point of view of my own personal welfare and development—was that the fight and its outcome totally eradicated the nervousness and anxiety I had felt after the first day. Instead, I felt at once powerful and at the same time supported and understood by the staff. I had finally experienced my power in balance with the environment—my power establishing an increasingly mutual relationship with another, rather than dominating or being withheld.

I remember the first time that, dancing, I escaped the confines of an awkward self-consciousness and felt my relaxed, spontaneous, and pleasure-able self instead. I remember the first time that, swimming, I realized I need not fight the water (I hadn't known I had been fighting it), but could

find a dynamic, supported feeling of the body as a whole in relation to the water. I remember the first time that, having plotted a hundred or more parabolic equations on graph paper, I began to feel the relationship between calculation and visualization, equation and curve.

In none of these cases did I recognize the full significance of the event when it occurred (and, of course, I still may not). In some cases, like dancing, I unreflectively continued the new practice, glorying each time the transformation occurred, but never considering that I could seek to open myself to analogous transformations in other arenas of activity. In other cases, like swimming, I treated the first experience as a unique epiphany, not recognizing until years later, when I decided I would no longer swim, but just play in the water, that the earlier feeling was generalizable, that swimming is supposed to feel like *t'ai chi* performed in the water. In still other cases—and this new experience of transforming power was one such—I was able to rediscover the source and the taste of this action repeatedly so long as I operated in that particular environment, but went for long periods in other environments unable to sound the right notes (as though each social situation were a different musical instrument, and skill in playing one did not so easily translate into skill in playing another).

In any event, the kind of nervousness and anxiety I felt after the first day's meeting (and that I had felt so often in my previous leadership role) never again returned at work during my two years at SMU. Even twinges of such anxiety simply sent me the message that conflict was brewing and that I needed to confront it rather than suppress it and let it eat at me. As we will see, this new clarity and conviction was soon to be called upon in my personal life.

Still another positive outcome of my struggle with Pat, as we could later see in retrospect, was the creation of a group norm that permitted open, strong disagreement. More than that, because the argument had been so surprising to everyone and so positive in its outcome, it created a norm of welcoming surprising new directions.

Testing and Transforming Relationships

Our planning sessions continued each morning for the next week. The fight seemed to have relaxed us and given us confidence that we could reach decisions together. Twice during those days we fundamentally altered the overall organization of the course.

Rather than niggling over details, we concentrated on defining major goals and processes for the course and on developing a sense of one

another's managerial styles, setting aside time for feedback of our impressions of one another. Through this medium I found it possible to confront Ed, one of the student assistants, for whom I felt an almost instinctual dislike. Ordinarily, I would have distrusted my own feeling, would have awaited more data to confirm it while working hard not to show my feeling, and probably would have become increasingly resentful about Ed. By describing my feeling so early, I could do it with real tentativeness about whether it would turn out to be more "telling" about him or about me, and hence with a genuine sense of inquiry addressed to him and to other members of the group. As a result, we were able to work well together thereafter. Indeed, when each assistant affiliated with one faculty member and one section of the course (as will be described below), Ed and I chose to work together.

Our exchange revealed that Ed stage-managed his life to minimize the painful awareness that many people reacted negatively to him. The irony was that I was responding negatively, as were others in the group, to precisely this sense that he was stage-managing his self-presentation. It turned out that Ed needed no urging to change his approach: He was deeply dissatisfied with his nonsolution and craved an alternative; but he had no model of experimentation and feedback, and no experience of support, that could help him take appropriate risks. The staff group came to serve this function for him (and very soon, with the astonishing serendipity that the charisma of personal development seems to generate, a lovely, calm, serious woman entered his life as well). He, in turn, offered us an extraordinary dedication, initiative, and inventiveness.

A sense of trust in one another's initiative and commitment began to develop, as well as a sense of shared purpose and a respect for our differences. I was particularly concerned that we develop a *real* sense of shared purpose that explicitly acknowledged and used our differences in philosophy and managerial style, testing these differences to assure they were conscious, chosen, and effective. The point was not at all to banter about a shared *rhetoric*, using it defensively to mask our differences until events led them to fester and infect us with distrust. The conversations first with Pat and then with Ed were significant steps in the right direction in this regard, but my concern soon focused particularly on Aaron Sartain.

Aaron was the dignified yet amicable former dean of the school, an objective and kind father figure, whose willingness to work in his retirement year in this undefined new course with nine other persons, none of whom was anywhere near half his age, was itself a remarkable gesture. His presence offered our staff a potential sensor of, and reconciler with, old guard concerns about the course itself and the new directions of the school in general. I very quickly conceived a liking and respect for Aaron,

but at the same time distrusted my tendency to respect older persons of authority without test. At our staff meetings, he seemed content to take a relatively passive role, though he always commented willingly when questioned. I wondered to what extent Aaron really understood and shared our growing commitment to challenging students to practice the skills of self-direction. Would his teaching in fact forward this aim? Or would it at best merely exhort students toward self-direction in lectures that in fact permitted them to remain passive?

With heart in mouth, I brought myself to say something like the above at one of our meetings and was rewarded by a wonderfully open response from Aaron. He said that he supported the aim of the course, but did not know how to achieve it. He was somewhat skeptical of the emphasis some of us placed on learning from feedback within groups, but he confessed he had never tried such an approach and was at once scared and eager to work directly with groups. He knew for sure only that he had worked before in large introductory courses at the school and that they had invariably failed to stimulate students. (Indeed, in the early days of the course old guard members often ribbed us in the halls or over coffee about our likely future regrets that we had taken on what they had learned from painful experience was an impossible task.)

Aaron's openness immediately humanized him for us, making him a peer rather than a superior, making him more approachable than olympian. Even though we had no immediate solution for these problems, and even though what had previously been private fears about vague possibilities were now established as public facts, the ironic effect was to calm us and raise our spirits.

Indeed, the conversation with Aaron had established not only that he did not know how to help individuals and groups become more responsibly self-directing, but also that most other staff members were in the same boat. In light of these acknowledgments, someone suggested the next day that we, the staff, should perhaps write learning papers each week following a format we had just designed for the students. In these brief, one page papers (already described in Chapter 5), the author was to describe some aspect of his or her behavior in relation to the course during the previous week, then the feelings associated with the incident, then some theoretical generalization, drawn from course readings, about the relative effectiveness of the action, and finally a prescription for some future experiment he or she could try in order to become more effective. We agreed that Pat and I would read over the staff papers and serve as consultants in cases where staff members were experiencing group leadership problems. Thereafter, I found myself in the curious and moving position of reading weekly papers that documented significant learning on the part of a man nearly forty years my senior.

First Passes at Designing Liberating Structures

Our decision to do learning papers ourselves inaugurated a most invigorating tradition of trying out our pedagogical ideas on ourselves first. This practice had four simultaneous benefits:

(1) It permitted revision of the ideas and increased confidence on the part of the inventor;
(2) It broadened every member's range of familiar pedagogical techniques;
(3) It made administrative meetings varied, interesting, and educational; and
(4) It usually provided a framework for discussing more creatively an agenda item we would have had to deal with anyway.

Next, we adapted this principle of "doing four things at once" within our own meetings to the structure of the course itself. Rather than regarding ideas for structuring the course as competitive with one another and wrangling about them, we would commit ourselves to implementing them all. Thus we ended up with five areas of concentration—one fashioned by each of the faculty members:

(1) "Business Policy and Ethics"—Aaron Sartain
(2) "Mini-Industries" (students actually created temporary businesses)—Roger Dunbar
(3) "Processes of Learning"—Pat Canavan
(4) "World of Work" (Harvard business cases and role plays)—Jim Pelkey
(5) "Action Research and Consulting"—Bill Torbert

After two introductory weeks, students would choose one of the five areas for the next eight weeks. At that point, a week of evaluation and new choices would be followed by four weeks in a second of the five areas. The last week would focus on future educational and career interests in light of the course.

The five options available to students varied widely along the dimensions of familiar to unfamiliar, and practical to conceptual, while simultaneously allowing each faculty member to work primarily in an area of strength and zone of comfort. At the same time, there was a distinct identity to the course as a whole in its emphasis on choice, in its emphasis on learning from experience within project groups, in the weekly learning papers required of everyone, in a peer- and self-evaluation process that would constitute a major part of each student's final grade, and in the

opportunity for students to observe and influence the staff at its weekly open meetings after each course session.

Now all we had to do was to get 240 students as excited about the course as we were! Just to make the challenge a little more dramatic than it already was, we learned that, although the course was eventually intended for freshmen entering the school, it was to be offered first to juniors, then in the second semester to sophomores. The following year it would be offered to the new sophomores first, then finally to freshmen in the second semester. This may sound like a meaningless bureaucratic detail at first, but its significance increases when one realizes that the juniors we were to teach in our first semester had assumed they had *completed* their requirements at the end of sophomore year. Now they had *another* requirement. So, we could expect not just subordinates, but surly subordinates at that! Just what you want when you are starting out to do something you don't know how to do anyway. . . .

8 A Course to "Force Students to be Free"

The Politics of Relating to the Subordinate Culture

In describing the first offering of the new and huge required business course at SMU in the fall of 1970, this chapter shows my earliest steps in learning how to create a liberating structure in working to empower subordinates. A liberating structure helps subordinates, who expect structure and guidance, to break from their passive mode of learning and acting, and to take an active part in determining what effective organizing in this time and place requires, what they themselves want, how to seek out and act on relevant information, and how to reflect upon and learn from their own experience so as to act with increasing effectiveness.

As mentioned at the close of the previous chapter, the course staff had just learned that in addition to the general irony we faced of *requiring* a course that was to teach students how to be more *entrepreneurial*, we faced the additional irony this first semester of requiring the course of students who believed they had already completed all their requirements. Clearly, we needed to choreograph some events so unique that they would speak to this unique quandary and transform this potentially deadly irony into an enlivening, informing, empowering, and liberating irony.

We were already stuck with the prosaic and totally misleading bureaucratic name of the course—Administrative Seminar 1 (always spoken of as A.S. 1). But we *could* influence where the first meeting of the course would be held: We scheduled it for the university's ballroom in the Student Center—one small signal that something new and different was afoot.

Next, we evolved a unique schedule of events for the first two weeks of the course, leading up to students' choices of areas of concentration during the following eight weeks. The very first of these events was a

stronger signal that however prosaic the course name, the experience itself would *not* be prosaic.

Pat Canavan started the first class session by asking students how they felt about taking another required course. Laughter and muttering were followed by a few brave shouts of "Angry!" Pat openly agreed that he would feel that way too. Then he invited everyone to surface this anger in a mass roar, in order to make its energy available for work in or against the course. As is the way of such things, there was initial trepidation, and the initial "roar" amounted to little more than a few disparate squeaks. But Pat expertly and jokingly challenged and jollied us along, and all together we gradually transformed those squeaks into a series of increasingly enthusiastic and impressive group roars. Pat concluded that rarely if ever in the history of organizations had a 250 person organization so quickly developed fully coordinated production that simultaneously managed to advertise itself as well!

Generating Shared Purpose and Self-Direction Simultaneously

Our intention was to introduce students to (1) a new learning atmosphere characterized by attention to and analysis of personal feelings and behavior as well as fact and theory, (2) a course in which the patterns of interaction between individual and outside world would be explored, (3) a situation in which all participants would be making active choices with consequences, and (4) a course in which the participants' personal learning goals would be a major source of direction and structure for their subsequent experiences. Obviously, Pat's initial exercise was already enacting several of these goals.

Next, I took the microphone and proposed that the course was going to teach them to learn from their own experience. It was virtually certain, I said, that they did not know how, intentionally, to learn from their own experience. In all probability, I continued, no previous academic experience in their lives had had either this mission or this effect. Immediately, I asked students and staff to close their eyes and mill among one another without speaking, seeking to learn from their experience what their usual strategies for interacting with others under unknown conditions were. Were they timid or aggressive? Exploratory or defensive? Were they embarrassed, fearful, or relaxed in direct contact with others?

This period was characterized by tense outbursts of laughter, wisecracks, and persons who kept their eyes open. Shortly, Pat asked everyone to lie down on the floor and imagine themselves inside the cocoon of their past lives. To help them, he asked everyone to remember the circum-

stances of their eighth year, to relive inwardly the feelings and details of the first particular incident that came to mind, and to exchange stories with the person they found themselves nearest. Then, he asked everyone to return again into their own cocoons.

By now there was a sense of quiet, concentration, sharing, and willing cooperation throughout the dimly lit ballroom. Pat asked everyone to scan their past lives for the most striking and meaningful learning experience, whether bitter or sweet, they had ever had. After a few moments of silence, he asked all those for whom that learning experience had occurred in a classroom to raise their hands. No hands rose.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to various forms of verbal sharing, identifying the social norms that had been guiding their lives at SMU, determining to what degree these seemed agreeable or disagreeable upon inspection, and comparing them to the social norms necessary for them to learn from their own experience with others in this course. The staff and the five areas of concentration were introduced, a reading assignment given, and the meeting ended with an invitation to students to discuss the course informally with staff members and to join our staff meeting immediately thereafter if they wished. About twenty students did stay for our staff meeting, joined in the discussion, and thereby experienced themselves more as co-creators of the course and as peers.

At the second week's meeting, again in the ballroom, students were asked to move right away to areas of the room corresponding to their initial choice of area of concentration. The initial breakdown was highly uneven, students generally appearing to prefer familiar kinds of learning. The faculty member responsible for each area presented a short exercise to provide an additional taste of that area, and, on the basis of this additional information, students were asked to move to new choices of areas if they wished. Some realignment toward unfamiliar areas occurred.

Next students were asked to develop a list of personal learning goals, with two more experiential exercises to help them do so. Impromptu groups of three compared goals, as a further means of discovering additional goals for oneself, and discussed together which areas of concentration might be most likely to provide opportunities for achieving their goals. Not everyone was seriously engaged in this exercise: We later found that three groups of fraternity brothers simply agreed from the outset to stick together; all three groups chose Roger Dunbar's "A.S. 1 Industries" because they believed it would be easiest (more about this anon). Nevertheless, when again asked to move to new areas of concentration if they so wished, students again realigned themselves toward unfamiliar areas. For example, the "Action Research and Consulting" area, which both began and ended as the smallest of the five, drew only 3 of the 240 students at first, then grew to 13, and ended up at 23. At this

point, the five areas of concentration each retired to its own classroom, and the next phase of the course began.

Feedback on the First Two Meetings: Skepticism of Faculty and Students

Before the course began, we had sent out the description of its overall structure and invited other faculty to join us on the first night. About five had done so, and they had later raised many questions with us about whether "those touchy-feely exercises really accomplished anything." At the same time, most of the faculty were involved in a three-day introductory goal-setting-and-sensitivity workshop for the newly restructured master's program. So not only the students, but also the faculty were being exposed to new-to-them learning processes.

A lot of faculty members were extremely skeptical of experiential learning, not as they conceived of it, but as we practiced it. To them, as to so many people, "learning from experience" means getting out of the classroom, stopping all the theorizing, and doing something. Or it means learning by trial and error, sticking with the effort until it works.

Our practice of experiential learning looked and felt very different because we did not dichotomize theory from practice and we were interested in a kind of learning from experience that increased the learner's self-directedness. We wanted students not just to get something done, but to take initiative in doing it, to know why it worked when it worked, and to know how to do it again. Moreover, with regard to theorizing, the main issue seemed to us to get students to become aware, test the validity of, and when necessary reform *their own everyday theories* about how the world works—for everyone already has, and acts on, implicit theories of how the world works. Theories learned at school rarely influence the world of action because they are learned only as *espoused* theories, and persons continue unawaredly to practice the same *theories-in-use* they did before.[1]

To learn from experience in this way, we believed it was necessary to include a critical third ingredient in the learning recipe beyond theory and practice—a study by the students of their own feelings, values, and quality of attention. We believed that students could learn from their experience either inside *or* outside of a classroom, but in either case they could learn from their experience *only if* they took responsibility for, and paid *attention* to, what they were doing.

In short, learning from experience requires initiative, action-event, theorizing, and a special attention. It is much more complicated and inclusive than the ordinary notion of learning from experience allows for.

Consequently, it requires an environment much different from the ordinary practice of both education and work. Such an environment that integrates inquiry and productivity, I have called a "liberating structure."

We believed that the faculty's skepticism was based on their unfamiliarity with this kind of structure and this kind of learning, but this explanation for the skepticism in no way "explained it away." We might not be right, so we needed to test our belief; and even if we were right, we needed to develop an ongoing dialogue with the rest of the faculty so that they too could learn from our experience, for they would inherit our students.

We decided to research the course carefully and write periodic feedback reports. These would be shared with both the students and the faculty.

In order to know how students responded to the first two classes and to help them to reflect upon their experience, students were asked to write their first learning paper between the second and third sessions. Although all the later learning papers would give students complete freedom in discussing whatever course experiences they wished to examine, we asked them in the first paper to list their learning goals for the course. The staff analyzed these papers (finding, for example, 50 distinctive learning goals among the 240 papers) and included the results of our analysis in one of the three feedback reports we shared with the rest of the Business School faculty that fall. Not surprisingly, the written feedback reports did not convince anyone who was initially skeptical to change his or her mind; but, surprisingly, they did generate good conversations and they did serve as both clarification and inspiration for faculty who started out as vaguely sympathetic but not well informed about our efforts.

The following excerpt from that first feedback report conveys simultaneously what students were saying to us about the first two sessions and what the faculty were hearing from us about the course. It also shows that A.S. 1 was already beginning to create an environment in which students could move from a passive, reactive learning style to becoming self-directed learners:

> The first datum of interest (from the learning goal papers) is that one third of the students commented about the impact of the course on them already, even though such comment was not directly part of the assignment. This result in itself indicated that the course has already had a definite impact. About half the comments were straightforwardly and strongly positive, such as:
>
> *For some reason, it (the first session) just struck me right. I even looked forward to the next session! I'm proud that our business school would undertake such a venture.*

It will probably be the most beneficial course I will ever take as to my getting along successfully in the business world.

This course is so designed that if a person really wants to absorb some knowledge, he will have to be willing to cooperate and contribute to the class. . . . This type of situation will be a real test to those students that have become so accustomed to having everything spoon-fed into their minds.

The course has already shown us how man reacts in a new environment, how man uses his defense mechanisms to cover up his embarrassment. We have also seen how man doesn't participate in things because his associates will think him queer. . . .

I'm really enthused about A.S. 1. For me it's challenging and stimulating.

The other half of the comments indicated that the course varied sharply from students' previous experience, sometimes creating conflict within them. These students commented on the initially unusual, unexpected, confusing, or negative impact of the first two sessions on them:

The course is different from the traditional learning experience.

To be honest, I'm not sure what the course is really about.

I will admit I didn't care for these "sense experiments."

Several observations are possible about these comments, especially those indicating confusion or negativity. First, it can be taken as a tribute to the course that students feel they can be so candid in their reactions. Second, it is precisely in relation to such reactions that the course hopes to accomplish much of its education. Third, all but two students who report initially negative reactions also report that experiences in the course have already led them to self-questioning and changed attitudes:

I did not particularly want to take the course and was even more sure of the fact after the first meeting. Then, on closer look at what had taken place that evening and when we broke into smaller groups, my attitude toward the course . . . changed.

My first impression was that the course was a farce and wouldn't work. I was turned off. At this point of writing, I've swung around and am anticipating a fantastic experience, especially around the topic of communications.

At first I was quite negative, but later realized that that was probably because I was self-conscious and embarrassed. My second impression is a mixture of optimism and curiosity.

I came into the course apprehensive. Now, having been through some free-wheeling group sessions, I feel better about it because the direction I see developing feels like mine.

The underlying tone of students' learning in the foregoing comments might be called a dawning sense of existential inquiry. That is, students seem to begin to regard learning as personally meaningful, personally

revealing, personally threatening, or personally enhancing. Other comments traced this tone more directly:

I'm glad that I have the opportunity to experience this—yet I'm afraid of what I will find in myself and other people.

(This course is) a chance for me to take part in finding my real interests and future in connection with those of my own generation.

I really felt I was beginning to know myself (during the first two meetings). The sensitivity sessions led to a lot of soul-searching.

A.S. 1 is an opportunity to work within groups and assess one's impact on others. This is important because a large part of business is working with others.

Of course, the unambiguously positive comments about the course at the outset of the foregoing report represented only 16% of its students (one half of the one third who commented directly about the impact of the course). Nevertheless, these comments and the ones that showed some students' already reevaluating their first impressions made the staff feel elated. Why so? In part, no doubt, because of a natural tendency among teachers to count each piece of positive feedback as at least six times as valid and valuable as any piece of negative feedback. In part, because we thought it safe to assume that some proportion (probably not larger than one half) of the class that did not comment directly on the course felt the same way. If this was in fact the case, then somewhere between 16% and 50% of the total class of 240 already experienced it as valuable. But even more satisfying to us was the evidence that a number of students were already reevaluating their initial negative impressions. This meant to us that the course was a powerful enough intervention to change persons' minds.

This early, relatively positive feedback about the course was especially significant to the staff for two additional reasons. First, as mentioned before, 8 of 10 staff members had never before attempted anything like this and were naturally anxious about the outcome.

Even an "old veteran" like myself (I was 26 years old at the time!) remembers to this day the anxiety dreams the night before the first class meeting in the ballroom. In the dreams, I could not remember quite when the event was to start, nor how to get there, and in my ineffectual rush forgot my notes and materials. When I finally arrived at the ballroom, people were already dispersing. I could not get their attention. Someone challenged me for not wearing a tie. And when I reached the podium, I realized I could not remember what the plan for the event was. So . . . perhaps it is more accurate to say that at least 9 of the 10 of us were naturally anxious about the outcome. Learning from the experiences of everyone present as clearly and concretely as these papers helped us to do gave us the confidence to continue strongly. (As the next chapter will

show, our experiment was being challenged from outside the school at just this time, so valid data was especially comforting.)

Second, this was a time when educators in all subject areas around the United States were attempting experiments to increase students' participation, involvement, sense of personal meaning, and decision making in their studies. Many, if not most, of these experiments were failing because students did not respond as enthusiastically as professors naively assumed they would. Almost weekly, we would see newspaper and magazine articles describing teachers' disillusionment with their own experiments and their return to traditional teaching methods. We had hoped that the creation of liberating structures and the creation of a peer learning culture within the staff itself would help both the students and us learn from our experience together, rather than becoming disillusioned when initial expectations were not met. These early data indicated that this dynamic was beginning to occur.

The Eight-Week Concentrations

In general, the eight-week concentrations, with their common features, such as weekly learning papers, turned out to be significantly successful as well. In response to a course evaluation the week following the concentrations, students rated themselves as learning a good deal more than in an average course—4.8 on a 7-point scale (1 meant "insignificant learning compared to an average course"; 4 meant "same as in an average course"; 7 meant "extraordinary learning compared to an average course"). More specifically,

90% felt they were learning more about interpersonal process than in an average course;
84% rated themselves as learning more about their own personal learning style;
77% felt they became more self-directed than in an average course; and
74% learning more about how to act effectively.

At the other extreme, 82% reported learning fewer facts than in an average course. In terms of theory, career insights, and business skills, students were evenly divided between those who learned more and those who learned less than in an average course.[2]

On the overall question about amount of learning, students' responses varied systematically depending on their choice of concentration. The highest average learning rating for a concentration was 5.8 and the lowest was 4.2. The rank order of concentrations in terms of average amount of

learning reported was: (1) Action Research; (2) Processes of Learning; (3) World of Work; (4) A.S. 1 Industries; and (5) Conceptual Foundations.

These quantitative results about responses to the course after ten weeks were again pleasing to the staff, as the earlier results had been. But we paid much less attention to them this time because we were now so enmeshed in the course—so involved in reframing it as we progressed from week to week and so involved in responding to the particular dilemmas of individuals and groups. Also, the learning papers, along with our after-class staff meetings and our after-meeting beer drinking, was keeping us apprised of developments virtually as they occurred. Thus we were not at all surprised by the rank ordering of amount of learning in each area. At the one extreme, I had the most experience with integrative cognitive and experiential learning and the smallest group of students to manage. At the other extreme, Aaron's Conceptual Foundations concentration focused least on experiential learning, and he had acknowledged his lack of special skills in working with groups from the outset.

That Roger Dunbar's industry groups should rank their learning relatively low did not surprise us either, because he had been embroiled for weeks in severe confrontations with several of his groups about the quality of their work together and the quality of their learning papers. These were the groups composed largely of fraternity brothers. They had had no intention of taking the course seriously, but had not reckoned on the confrontativeness and the bulldog tenacity of the dimunitive New Zealander (Roger) with the machine-gun, incomprehensible speech. Roger would not accept their two-sentence learning papers; he arranged intergroup meetings with groups from other concentrations; he encouraged three-person action research teams from my area to study his groups; and, with the rest of the staff, he determined that we would hold trial peer evaluations within the groups after four weeks, partly to debug our proposed evaluation form and partly to challenge in a new way those groups that had not yet developed a learning culture (and such groups were not confined to Roger's area).

The action research teams worked with eight different groups, two in each of the four other concentrations, and they and the staff judged that in four of those eight cases they had a significant, positive impact in terms of making the group more aware of itself and more self-directed. The trial peer evaluations were judged by the staff to have generated breakthroughs for eight or nine different groups. These trial peer evaluations represented a moment of hard truth for members of some groups, because each member of a given group was asked to rank order every other member of the group in terms of own learning, contribution to others' learning, and group leadership, and because the staff members determined

the grade range for the group as a whole (Roger's grade ranges included no A's whatsoever and in one case no B's either). In each of these cases, we, as a staff, were learning that it was possible to invent new structural solutions on a week-to-week basis to dilemmas as they surfaced.

The Action Research Concentration

A brief account of the sequence of events in the Action Research concentration, along with excerpts from the learning papers of the most passive and negative student in that concentration, can illustrate the interweaving of cognitive and personal learning that repeated confrontation by liberating structures tended to engender.

Having divided the 23 students in Action Research into two arbitrary groups at the outset of our first meeting, I asked them to choose a task leader, a process leader, and a historian. Then I offered them a model that distinguishes among various ways to make decisions (e.g., unilateral decree, two-person "handshake," majority vote, explicit consensus) and asked them to review the decisions they had just made about leadership in light of these categories.

Over the next three weeks, the Action Research class alternated between short lectures and discussions of these and readings, on the one hand, and experiential exercises that applied different research methodologies to their own experiences in class. The class was introduced to meditation and then to meditation while doing other outward tasks as means of researching oneself while in action. The class was also introduced to the skill of observing a group and describing what one sees (not what one infers or attributes or evaluates), and then to the discipline of scoring tape recordings of these very conversations in a reliable fashion (i.e., understanding with sufficient clarity and precision how theoretical categories apply to particular comments that two or more scorers working separately agree a very high percentage of the time). The class was also introduced to the process of creating, conducting, and interpreting interviews and questionnaires by doing so within the class itself.

This sequence of events did unfold as here presented, but I was unable to participate fully because I suddenly found myself in the hospital having a back operation to scrape out two exploded discs that were pinching the sciatic nerve down my left leg. Afterward, I could not initially walk. Luckily, though, I only missed one week of class, holding the next two sessions at my own home. In the meantime, my teaching assistant, Ed, had the unenviable task of conducting an entire class before the students had any grasp of what was going on. Despite his and my best efforts to prepare him, he could not deal with the many tangential questions they raised.

Two excerpts from the learning papers of the student whom I earlier characterized as the most passive and negative in the class convey his impression of how the class began:

> *Sept. 15:* My first experience as a member of the Action Research area produced results which I had expected. I did not participate in the group discussion and felt very uncomfortable. . . . I admit that I am not looking forward . . . to the rest of the course.
>
> *Sept.22:* My second week in the Action Research class introduced me to a new learning experience—how to turn a classroom or a learning session into a complete and utterly unbelievable failure. All that was needed to create this situation was an inexperienced teacher's assistant and a bunch of uninterested students. [This was the week when I was in the hospital for my back operation and my teaching assistant had to handle the group by himself.]

Upon the return of the legitimate authority (myself), things took a turn for the better, from this student's point of view, although his basically passive orientation is only further emphasized:

> *Oct. 6:* Last week I think was a very helpful meeting since it cleared up a great deal of confusion and answered questions on the purpose of the course. I can see now why it was necessary to get into the course without trying to explain it first. Now . . . I feel a little easier about the work involved. I find it an inconvenience to take time out and attend class, but am willing to do any work that is required of me. This is the usual practice I employ in all my courses.

The reader may find as astonishing as I initially did that a student would blithely claim that we had not tried to explain the course after two class sessions and a seven-page write-up. Even more astonishing initially were deadpan descriptions of nonparticipation, dislike, and even obstruction. In fact, however, we found again and again that students were so passive in their relation to learning that they chose minimal compliance with assignments (we had asked them to tell us what their behavior and feelings were) over socially acceptable responses.

In the fifth and sixth sessions of the Action Research concentration, the students first gave one another feedback from the interviews and questionnaires, then began to observe and prepare feedback for groups in other concentrations, as described earlier. These sessions illustrated how difficult it is to give others feedback about their own actions—how difficult it is to describe others' behavior without evaluating it (so that they are given the choice of how to evaluate it and what to do about it); how difficult it is to prevent either the researcher or the client from "massaging" findings to fit existing biases; and how difficult it is to

maintain a productive and undefensive atmosphere when persons are receiving unexpected information about themselves.

During these sessions, our "passive" friend, who until now had found it such "an inconvenience to take time out and attend class" shows signs of the mildest of conversions:

> *Oct. 27:* In preparing [to feed back data to a researched group] I helped devise a questionnaire for our group and we combined this with the data we ready had [a tape recording of the other group's meeting]. We worked hard putting all the information together and had disagreements in the way we should present it. We had problems in picking out the bits of information to use to back up our themes and key points . . . I found myself deeply involved in the project and got some satisfaction out of working toward a successful presentation. . . . My feelings about this course have changed. . . . From discussing the behavior of individuals with others, I was able to draw more conclusions about my own behavior.

Another student, in the Processes of Learning concentration, apparently enacted much the same behavior pattern as this student initially, and then apparently awakened to a new sense of its significance at about the same time as the student above. As the following excerpt from the second student's paper shows, however, the second student responds much more dramatically and self-evaluatively to the new insight:

> I have learned that I do not adjust to new groups immediately. I have the tendency to sit back, keep my mouth shut, and watch. I try to figure everyone else out and then I place myself in the role that I figure is appropriate for me.
>
> After eight weeks of A.S. 1, especially the last two, I have been made to realize that what I have been doing is a negative approach. I should not wait to express my feelings and emotions, for after waiting as long as I do, I have forgotten them and modified them.
>
> I came to the crushing realization that I am not the self-made person I have always imagined. I have been a being influenced by others' opinions of me; I have listened, digested and modified them until I found them palatable to me. Then I became that role.
>
> All these monumental insights have made me disappointed, disgusted, bitter, and encouraged and determined to keep on searching for "me."

The Challenge of Learning from One's Own Experience

As we can see from these two contrasting interpretations of a similar prior behavior pattern, it is difficult to know just what represents a valid

conclusion—a valid learning—once one begins to see, to take seriously, to critique, and to experiment with one's own behavior. One has discovered a new territory that one can approach scientifically and artistically, but one does not yet have a detailed map of that territory. The first of the students does not even tell us what conclusions he drew about his own behavior. The second student has decided not to wait before expressing feelings, a generalization that may represent a good platform for next experiments, but that may also deserve further refinement.

Actually, however, the staff's predominant concern after the eight-week concentrations was not how such generalizations could be refined, but rather that relatively few students had yet picked up the discipline of writing descriptively about their own behavior. Hence, they were not likely to make any generalizations about how effective their behavior was and how it might become more effective. Note, for example, that the first student quoted above mentions his own behavior only at the most global level in his September 15 entry ("I did not participate . . . ") does not mention his own behavior at all in his September 22 and October 6 entries, and again mentions his own behavior only at the most global level in his October 27 entry ("I helped devise a questionnaire . . . "). This pattern makes it less surprising that he tells us nothing specific about his conclusions about his own behavior. (The second student, although generalizing across many sessions, is behaviorally more specific: "I have a tendency to sit back, keep my mouth shut, and watch".)

The staff's sense in reviewing literally thousands of such papers was that one's ability to describe behavior seemed directly linked to appropriating responsibility for one's own behavior, and this appropriation of responsibility seemed directly linked in turn to experimenting with potentially more effective behavior. Yet, despite the fact that each learning paper that did not contain such a description of one's own behavior was docked one full letter grade, we could never count more than 50 descriptions of behavior each week among our 240 weekly learning papers up through the last week of the concentrations.

In the week after the concentrations ended, when the entire course met together in the ballroom again, the staff focused on this point, presented several behavioral exercises, and told students bluntly that their next learning paper would not be accepted at all until it contained at least one specific description of their own behavior. We counted over 500 mentions of students' own behavior in the following week's papers.

Even if we could force students on a one time basis to learn from their own experience, the still more challenging question was how to encourage them to value paying attention to their own behavior as a normal part of their work and life, and to value assuming authority for their own actions—to value self-directedness—rather than submitting to, resisting, and blaming external authorities for their actions. For most students, responsible self-direction within a peer culture was clearly an alien and

not particularly attractive paradigm. However much more they might be saying they were learning about self-direction in our course than in others, it didn't look to the staff as though many of them were learning much, when we compared what they were learning with the distance to be traveled from the subordinate culture toward fully responsible self-direction in a peer culture.

So, the staff vibrated back and forth between the pole of elation and the pole of dissatisfaction. On the one hand, we felt elated that we were by and large connecting with students, inventing new structures week by week that encouraged educational confrontations and awakenings, and developing an increasingly trusting, energizing, and productive environment among ourselves. On the other hand, we felt dissatisfaction and doubt about whether the course was really transforming very many students from the subordinate culture to the peer culture.

Now, looking back across 20 years, and looking back across Section I of this book, with its descriptions of the multiple developmental transformations necessary to move from the Diplomat stage (most characteristic of subordinate culture) to the Magician stage of continual experiential research (most characteristic of peer culture), it hardly seems astonishing that a single course in a single college semester should fail to accomplish the full transformation from subordination to peerdom.

At the outset of A.S. 1, students on the whole seemed capable of conceiving the world outside as a source of data for learning, but incapable of conceiving the three other territories of experience—one's own behavior, one's own pattern of thought and feeling, and one's own pattern of intuition and attention—as sources of data for learning. Their previous educational experiences seemed to lead them to conceive of learning as reflective and as opposite to active experience; to conceive of their own perceptual-behavioral patterns as utterly trivial and unworthy of attention; to conceive of emotions as irrational and private rather than as patterned (i.e., rational) and relational; and *not* to conceive of their attention *at all!*

At the end of the course, we could be sure that we had challenged these assumptions for all of our students and that we had introduced many of our students to new "tastes" of experience in the three territories of own behavior, feelings, and attention. We could be equally sure that we had conducted *none* of our students along the entire path toward self-direction.

A Final Act

Indeed, some of us on the staff—myself in particular, if I must be so pointed about it—discovered that we did not fully trust the capacity of

our developing staff peer culture to generate full self-directed efficacy. When the eight-week concentrations had started, one member of the staff had pointed out that we should really try to do something ourselves as a group. If we were asking students in the A.S. 1 Industries concentration to create real enterprises, this person argued, shouldn't we ourselves test whether we could complete a specific task with tangible benefits?

I myself thought that running this unique course was more than enough of a task, as intangible as its benefits might be. But the staff's ebullience was uncontrollable, and while I was in the hospital the staff project was defined: to take the drab, fixed-seat auditorium at the center of the Business School—an auditorium that currently remained dark and empty except for occasional university lectures—and convert it into a colorful, carpeted arena with flexible, removable seats and movable partitions, so that it could serve numerous functions and become a home for A.S. 1. Deadline for completion: the first A.S. 1 session of the next semester.

I was temporarily in despair when I heard this decision. None of us knew the first thing about architecture or interior design. None of us had any access to financial support, nor the close connections to the university infrastructure (i.e., the Department of Buildings and Grounds) necessary to get the job done. And anyone who had ever had anything to do with a university ought to have known that nothing could be accomplished in four short months. The group's response was to suggest I not participate because I was so uptight about the whole thing.

So I didn't.

And they did.

Hence, the first session of the second semester did indeed occur in the Business School auditorium, transformed in just the manner envisioned the previous October.

So . . . *something* transformational was happening!

Notes

1. Extended investigations of the process of learning from experience that match this brief definition are found in Argyris, C., & Schön, D., 1974, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; and in Torbert, W., 1973, *Learning From Experience: Toward Consciousness*, New York: Columbia University Press.

2. The reader may question the validity of these data. Certainly, these percentages all refer to students' own *perceptions* of learning. There is considerable evidence, however, that their perceptions are *not* necessarily or always weighted toward the positive side of the spectrum. First, the questions themselves ask them to compare to an average course, so the questions invite a low response as much as a high response. Second, student responses are strongly weighted toward the positive side on only half

of the questions about learning. Third, on the question of learning facts, where we might have predicted the lowest ratings for the course, it did in fact receive the lowest ratings, and these showed that students were perfectly willing to give ratings on the bottom half of the scale. Furthermore, as already reported in Chapter 5, students' specific ratings did change from semester to semester. Finally, and most persuasively, the same type of questionnaire was used in other courses at the school over the following year, and numerous courses did receive below average ratings overall from students.

9 A Crisis Between Business and the Business School

The Politics of Relating to the Superior Culture

We could not have nearly so strong and direct an educational impact on the superior culture as we could on the subordinate culture, or within our own developing peer culture. The superior culture—whether we think of old guard senior professors at the school, the university central administration and Board, or the media—saw our efforts from the outside (if at all) and, therefore, mainly in terms of the trappings and results.

By contrast, as the previous chapter suggests, even though the educational experience we generated was initially alien to students we had the institutional leverage to influence them to enter the experience fully and work at digesting and redigesting it. To our students, we were initially representatives of the superior culture, though unexpected representatives to be sure; and we made every effort to use the leverage provided by this perception to educate them and to introduce them to the possibility of responsible self-direction within a peer culture. We used our elite status to diminish elitism.

We were unable to discern the educational intentions of the superior culture that responded to us. The first and most traumatic of these responses began before the first day of classes and played itself out during the first half of the fall semester. It is a testament to the power of the unfolding internal logic of the A.S. 1 course that the previous chapter could be written without reference to this event; yet in fact the story about to be retold intertwined dramatically with the experience of the course for staff members and for many of the students, especially those in Pat Canavan's "Processes of Learning" concentration.

At the outset, all there was to it was Pat's inimitable and energetic way of living. Pat came to SMU from six months during which most of his

energies had been devoted to a group named Cosmic Laboratories. Aided by musical instruments, various media, and plastic structures, Cosmic Labs created large scale spontaneous happenings for organizations and communities, with the objectives of reconnecting persons to shared visions and to one another.

A pinched, crew-cut mathematician only four years before, Pat was now an expansive, long-electric-red-haired organizer, accustomed to a nomadic, aesthetic, open, collaborative, uncertain way of life. Upon his arrival in Dallas, he quickly transformed his diminutive, box-like, gray, windowless office at the Business School into a fascinating den. A colorful parachute decked the interior. A string of ties replaced the door. A stereo tape deck provided additional atmosphere. Well before there were supposed to be any students on campus, one could often find eight to ten people spilling out of his office door, engaged in excited conversation. (I know, because I had to climb through them to reach my own diminutive office just beyond his at the end of the narrow corridor.)

Having learned how to live in his Volkswagen, Pat decided not to rent an apartment or house. Instead, he commuted between the homes of faculty families, sometimes cooking and baby-sitting for them, inspiring impromptu parties two or three times a week, organizing a touch football game on Sunday mornings among some dozen of the preteen children, generally reconnecting people to one another and to the dream of a joyous learning community to a startling degree.

To celebrate the beginning of this new culture we were joining in creating, Pat conceived of a series of "Disorientation Activities" to complement the more formal orientation and registration activities during the week before classes started. With the support of the Business School administration, he lassoed members of Cosmic Laboratories from New England and members of Southcoast, an architectural commune based in Houston, to organize (if that is the right word) the event. For three days the Business School was besieged by long-haired paratroopers with rainbow bandanas who: Transformed the student lounge to the discomfiture of the janitors; built an enormous plastic structure on the lawn in front of the school to the discomfiture of the local fire marshal; led hundreds of students in chanting at night to the discomfiture of the campus police; cracked raw eggs on one another's heads to the discomfiture of some observing faculty; achieved favorable local television publicity; and generally succeeded in disorienting a large number of persons to the great enjoyment of most.

Even before this event, Pat had succeeded in disorienting someone enough to have the central administration investigate his background for possible connections to S.D.S. (Students for a Democratic Society). Of course, the spirit of Pat's work was completely contrary to the dour

self-seriousness of S.D.S. No such connections were discovered (and he had none). But the central administration discovered that he had filled in his background information form in an unorthodox way, listing his religious belief as Zoroastrianism. The Provost, a professor of ancient religions, invited Pat in for a conversation. Pat happily complied, transforming what may have been intended as a low-key grilling and warning into a highbrow discussion of his beliefs, which were indeed well described by Zoroaster's doctrine of the relatively independent deities of good and evil—Ahura Mazdah and Ahriman—and of the human role in managing their interplay. As their conversation flourished, the Provost introduced Pat to other administrators, and Pat thereafter counted him as a friend, although I once thought I detected a wee bit of discomfort on the part of the Provost as I saw him walking across the campus with Pat's arm draped around his shoulder.

As these vignettes indicate, Pat was becoming a well-known campus personality even before he taught his first class, so the campus newspaper interviewed him and ran an article about him and the changes at the Business School over the masthead of its first issue. In the article, Pat told why he was excited about joining the Business School faculty, and what it was trying to do. The photo showed him in his office, bare feet on desk, hair flowing, parachute in background. At one point in the article he was quoted as opining that "traditional education is shitty."

Some combination of the foregoing events—in particular, some combination of the aspects of the article just described—upset a lot of people, or at least seemed a likely focus for organizing dissent to Dean Grayson's innovative program. We heard the next day that the article was being photocopied and handed around at executive meetings of downtown businesses. Then we heard that some members of the faculty were soliciting negative letters to the Dean from businesspeople at breakfast meetings. The day after that, Ed Cox, the head of the Business School foundation, backed by Bill Clements, the head of the SMU Board who had just been appointed Nixon's Deputy Secretary of Defense, told Jack Grayson something to the effect of, "I'm not going to tell you what to do—just what the consequences of your choices will be. If you keep Canavan, the school loses all financial support. If he stays and changes his image and behavior, the result will probably be the same. If he leaves, we'll see what we can do downtown."

Our Response to Their Response

I heard this news at a more or less continuous informal open meeting occurring in the dean's office on the morning that I was to enter the

hospital for the back operation mentioned in the previous chapter. The atmosphere of the meeting when I entered was utterly gloomy, except for Pat who maintained his good spirits throughout the event. Everyone seemed convinced that there were no alternatives—that if we fought for Pat the whole experiment would be destroyed by lack of financial support. Initial comments (and later nonaction) by the President and Provost indicated that they would not defend Pat or the principle of academic freedom in this case. (The President later expressed the view that Pat was a very nice, open, and honest, but still immature, kid who just didn't fit well at SMU.)

I viewed the situation very differently. It seemed to me that the backroom, power-play atmosphere directly violated the university's primary mission of generating valid, public information; that it also directly violated the principle of academic freedom; that it also directly violated the ethical and institutional responsibility of the head of the Board; and, finally, that it directly violated the way of "doing business" that our school wished to stand for. Moreover, firing Pat seemed to me a ridiculously unjust outcome of the particular circumstances of this case. As I said something like this at the informal meeting in the dean's office, the atmosphere in the room changed.

But although others began to speak more hopefully, I noticed that they had little sense of what kinds of initiatives to take. My view was that, first, the Dean ought to confront the tactics of the foundation head as totally unacceptable and contrary to a university's practice (the tone could potentially vary widely, even verging on an apologetic "I'm sorry, Ed, that's just not possible"). Second, the Dean ought, with our help, to arrange a series of small educational meetings between Pat, himself, and businesspeople, acknowledging the gap between cultures and seeking to reach across it. Third, these meetings could be videotaped and edited to become the basis for a positive publicity effort. And, fourth, the Dean ought to make it clear, if necessary, that if any parties tried to resolve the conflict by unilateral power rather than by mutual education, he would escalate the stakes by making the power play public.

This strategy evidently sounded unfamiliar, delicate, and risky to the Dean and the six or seven others present. For the first time, I saw a limitation in Jack Grayson's style. Brilliant, imaginative, sensitive, persuasive, and incredibly hardworking as he was, he seemed afraid of openly confronting the superior culture and its unilateral power. He, like most people, apparently thought of power as the unilateral capacity to get someone else to do as one wished. Because he clearly did not have as much of this kind of power as Cox, Clements, and the university President and Provost, he evidently felt he did not have the power to confront them. He did not seem to have experience with, or a visceral appreciation of, the possibility of reframing situations and dramatically transforming the power equation by the very act of public confrontation.[1]

Interlude

In most persons' implicit and even sometimes explicit understanding of power, political power and personal truth have opposite effects. Political power is viewed as giving one the leverage to manipulate the external world. Personal truth is viewed as making one vulnerable to others' manipulation. What persons who inhabit the subordinate and superior cultures rarely suspect, much less appreciate, is the power of speaking truly in public—the power of vulnerability. As we saw in Chapter 3, Gandhi called this kind of power Satyagraha or "truth force."

A truth spoken—made public—has a nonmanipulative power that others can choose to interpret as attractive or inscrutable or repelling. This is especially true the truer the statement is about its own modest claim to truth, limiting itself to expressing the speaker's own particular experience and perceptions in this particular situation at this particular time. The effort toward speaking truly is an effort to penetrate behind one's unthinking interpretations, evaluations, and attributions to one's first principles, actual feelings, "pure" perceptions, and questions. (Such an effort requires an enormous, continuing discipline, the dimensions of which have first been suggested in Section I, are being illustrated in this Section, and will become still clearer in Section III.)

Such a modest, spoken truth may attract others to attend to their experience more closely, to seek to formulate and speak that experience, and thus to join in a dialogue toward a common vision and action. Or, alternatively, such a modest, spoken truth may repel others because they are invested in a static definition of their interests that is threatened by attending to the actual flux of their experiencing and by searching for an initially unknown, shared vision or action.

I may walk into a room (you may walk into a room) angry at someone in it. But if I remain attentive to the situation as I enter I may feel something more important than my anger in the atmosphere and sit down quietly instead of speaking. Or, expressing my anger, I may find that the other is truly listening and responsive, not defending against my anger; so I may begin very quickly to feel a gentleness and a concern for how the other is integrating this experience—feelings that I could hardly imagine ever feeling again for this person only moments before. In hearing the other's experience, I may come to realize that my anger was based on assumptions about why he (or she) acted as he did that simply aren't true. I may even feel some embarrassment at having spoken angrily. But, when I own up to this, he may say he is grateful I spoke because he knew something was wrong and had felt guilty about not speaking. So, we relax, reconciled—considerably more reconciled than had I

not spoken my anger, considerably more reconciled, also, than had I not spoken my embarrassment.

The foregoing scenario could have developed in an infinite number of different ways at each point. In fact, the more one is willing to trust one's current experiencing and attend to the actual situation in all its fullness—the more one is willing to sacrifice one's preconceptions—the more surprising, dynamic, mysterious, and unpredictable reality becomes.

Treating the status quo with appropriate respect generates fundamental change. The conservative and radical tendencies, usually viewed as opposites, are here joined in one political strategy.

Facing a group of persons in Dean Grayson's office to whom I already felt very much tied but who didn't seem to share my style of political practice, and knowing that in two hours I had to enter the hospital for a week, I decided to return to my office to write a draft letter for the Dean's use, addressed to the heads of the Business School foundation and the university Board, spelling out my assumptions and strategy.

Pat liked the letter but could not very well take the lead in coordinating his own case in my absence. Jack Grayson evidently found the letter uncomfortable or unwise, for he used neither it nor the strategies it spelled out. Instead, he tried to reason with the two businessmen, but without first insisting on reasonable dialogue as the only acceptable strategy. Because they viewed themselves as holding the power, and because they had no initial interest in dialogue, they cut him off.

At the same time, Jack wanted to keep the whole problem as quiet as possible for fear that publicity would utterly alienate these two powerful men and other potential supporters of the Business School. Consequently, in my view, "our side" gave up its power before the encounter began. The group of six or seven kept talking day and night while I was in the hospital, and some contacts were made with other businesspeople; but even when they were somewhat sympathetic, they saw all the power on the "other side" and concluded that even if we were basically right the atmosphere was so poisoned that keeping Pat would disastrously reduce the school's financial support.

Meanwhile, at the hospital, having returned to consciousness but not yet able to walk (the muscles had been cut away from the spinal column, so my legs dangled like a puppet's), I called Bill Coffin, Yale chaplain and political activist (since then he has served as the minister of Riverside Church in New York city and is now president of SANE/Freeze). Bill was a close friend of mine and, along with Chris Argyris, one of the three significant mentors in my life. I had known him throughout my nine years at Yale, serving as one of his deacons during my undergraduate years.

As usual, Bill had a bagful of humorous, insightful, and polarizing stories and epigrams, which reaffirmed my sense of the situation. "Don't ever draw your gun on a Texan," he said. "It makes him mad. But you'd better be sure to have it lying on the table as you talk." And, "Look, you've got the ethical initiative. As long as you've got it and take it, you don't have to worry. You're in the driver's seat." He went on to talk about his previous visits to SMU and his confrontation at a decorous, lily-white sorority dinner, served by black help, where he raised the issue of integration at the table, including the servers in the conversation, to the immense embarrassment of his hostesses. Coffin was not afraid to fight when basic customs were attacked: Some of the young women accused him of acting in extremely bad taste, to which he replied—speaking truth perhaps, but certainly not the most modest of truths—"That seems to be a basic difference between us: You choose taste over truth when you see a conflict between the two; I believe the truth is always in good taste."

As colleagues visited me in the hospital, relaying the latest news, I relayed back Coffin's stories because they made my points so much more provocatively than I could. Then we would plan various initiatives that persons could take. They would enter the hospital room dispiritedly and leave energetically. But a few days later it would turn out that they had talked together a lot more and had taken none of the initiatives we had discussed.

This pattern convinced me that we weren't sufficiently prepared as a group—not sufficiently educated ourselves in the politics of truth speaking—to meet this challenge. Some members later blamed our failure on Jack Grayson's weakness, or on the central administration's moral paralysis; but I view the responsibility as much more widely shared. I'm glad I was in the hospital, frankly, because I don't think I could have organized our side successfully and I might well have aggravated our failure by taking initiatives on which we might not have fully followed through.

Ritual Sacrifice

Pat made it clear from the start that he would be willing to resign if that was the best solution for the school. He and I agreed, just before I left the hospital and about a week before Jack allowed himself to ask for Pat's resignation, that that would be the conclusion of the affair. So, Pat, unbelievably, rather enjoyed the whole process.

In that last week, the word spread very widely that trouble was afoot. The Dallas newspapers and television stations ran stories very favorable to Pat and quite vague about what the trouble was because Jack refused to specify who was applying pressure to get rid of Pat. Students who had flocked to Pat's classes were outraged but didn't know what to do.

Unaccustomed to political organizing of any kind, it didn't occur to anyone that because many of their fathers were themselves Dallas businessmen, the students had unusually direct access to sources of influence. Another indication of our potential influence occurred when Pat walked in on a huge dinner meeting of SMU alumni and present students and staff. Immediately recognized and applauded, he fell into conversation with several fabled Dallas millionaires, including Stanley Marcus, who came out liking him and wondering what all the fuss was about. This was the sort of result I had expected from the small, mutually educational meetings I had proposed. It also showed that the much-vaunted business opposition to Pat was neither hard nor fast nor unanimous.

Because of his own joyful equilibrium throughout these events, and because of the favorable publicity he and the school received, Pat's ritual sacrifice to the superior culture had a sort of *jujitsu* effect of weakening its legitimacy and therefore lessening its capacity or motivation to attack our experiment again. At least that is how it seemed at the time. We did not know then that Cox and Clements had simply shifted their action a little further offstage.

Within weeks of this time, without any forewarning or personal initiative on his part whatsoever, Grayson received a personal telephone request from the President of the United States that he take on the newly created role of Phase II Price Commissioner. Reluctant to accept this offer because he was so deeply committed to the transformation of the business school, Grayson sought the advice of Cox. Cox told Grayson that one could not refuse to serve one's country. So, off went Grayson to Washington.

What Grayson did not know was that Bill Clements and Ed Cox had decided they no longer wished to work with Grayson. Through Clements' connections to the Nixon White House, they arranged the offer that Grayson could not refuse. Cox and Clements were confident that Grayson would encounter other opportunities in Washington and would never return to Dallas.[2] Grayson was, in fact, very well received by Congress, the press, and associates in Washington, but remained committed to the program at SMU and returned. He never did receive the pledged support and eventually resigned and founded the American Productivity Center in Houston.

Not that Cox and Clements were entirely quiescent as they awaited proper hegemony over the SMU Business School. In 1974, Undersecretary of Defense Bill Clements and Chairman of SMU's Board Ed Cox encountered considerable controversy at the university and local levels when it became known that they had manipulated the resignation of the university's president, Dr. Paul Hardin. Cox had sent the trustees an announcement of Hardin's resignation asking them to accept it (though surprised, they did); simultaneously, Cox told Hardin that the trustees had voted in favor of his resignation and asked him to accept this decision

(though surprised, he did). The double deception was eventually uncovered and aired in the newspapers,[3] but efforts on the part of some other members of the Board to change the decision were unsuccessful.

In 1980, the Southern Methodist University Business School renamed itself the Edwin Cox School of Business in response to a $10 million gift from Dallas businessman Ed Cox. This fact in itself represents nothing more than business as usual among business schools over the past decade. Many have received their proper names on just this basis. The fact that Cox had originally pledged the $10 million a decade earlier was little known and less remembered. The additional fact that the business school's dean's office at SMU sported a plaque on the wall at just this time that read: "The Golden Rule: He Who Has the Gold Rules" may be interpretable as no more than an unremarkable example of Texas humor.

The joke was even less obvious in 1987, when Governor Bill Clements of Texas encountered considerable controversy at the state and national levels as NCAA officials and the public became aware that two years earlier, in his role as a trustee for Southern Methodist University, Clements had authorized improper payments to SMU football players. These improper payments led to the suspension of the SMU football team from NCAA play.

SMU is not the only university in Texas whose governing elite from time to time displays flamboyantly illegitimate exercises of power.[4] Nor, as we have seen here, is Clements' impropriety his only such in recent SMU history.

The moral I have learned from this part of the story is to take care not to perturb the superior culture until you are ready to exercise the politics of truth speaking under battle conditions; for once you have perturbed the superior culture it is not likely to compromise the matter and settle for winning just a battle—receiving just a ritual sacrifice. It will strive to win the war and to eradicate all sources of threat.

Conclusion

Back at home but still unable to walk, I held a birthday party for Pat to which some 40 people came. Because he had given us so much energy, we decreed that he should lie passively and receive from us. So, he was hugged and kissed and passed from group to group, carried about the house and yard, and finally buried in the middle of the den. Then we raised a funeral lamentation, which moved some to tears and others to embarrassment, and we expressed anew to one another our dream for our still embryonic community.

Commuting from Vermont to Dallas to California, Pat would thereafter reappear every few months to spend a few weeks with me and visit with

our friends. Never again would the "new guard" families retrieve quite the total sense of community that his presence had evoked.

A number of the senior participants in our experiment emerged from this debacle feeling dispirited. Jack Grayson, still trying to recover from a serious illness the previous spring, looked drawn and weary. One full professor negotiated a move to another university. Another full professor who had intended to join the faculty withdrew from candidacy when he heard the story.

I just felt all the more determined. This was due in large part, no doubt, because I could feel how A.S. 1 was succeeding as a framework for building a peer culture among the staff and for transforming the subordinate culture of our students. I could also feel how much more there was still to learn about how to do that. And learning how to build a thoroughgoing peer culture seemed to me a precondition for successfully engaging in a politics of truth speaking with the superior culture.

At the same time, my motivation to research and publicize our errors and our effectiveness increased still higher. I now believed even more strongly than before that this was the appropriate preemptive defense against attack from the superior culture.

I also increased my customary caution against behaving in public in a flashy manner.

Notes

1. Jack Grayson saw the situation quite differently. Responding to an earlier draft of this chapter in 1975, after he had returned to SMU from his stint as Price Commissioner in Washington D.C., Jack wrote: "Though I heard your arguments when you were here surrounding the 'Canavan Affair,' I certainly read carefully what you said here. I *still* think that the course that I followed was probably the best in the long run for the school. You don't have all the data. Also, I don't think you've had enough experience in dealing with very large scale and small power blocks beyond the university campus. Washington certainly taught me a lot about it! You may be right—who knows? But I don't think so." In conversation, Jack cited the example of Congressional committee chairmen whose decision not to attend to some issue is virtually unconfrontable unless one is willing to run risks and devote energies disproportionate to the issue at stake.

2. I discovered this information years later from a source with a nationally respected public record of integrity who heard this version from Cox at the time of the events recounted here.

3. Kliewer, 1974, "SMU faculty senate seeks trustee meeting," *Dallas Morning News*, July 18.

4. The flamboyant history of the University of Texas in Austin is retold in Dugger., R., 1974, *Our Invaded Universities: Form, Reform, and New Starts*, New York: Norton.

10 Shocks and Reversals

The Leader as Peer and as Learner

Because the previous chapter is certainly about a shock and a reversal, the reader may wonder why *this* chapter is so titled. Pat's resignation resulted from an external shock to our incipient social system—a shock from a superior culture that was unsympathetic to the kind of empowerment and organizational learning we were seeking to foster.

This chapter is about the shocks and reversals that peers generate for themselves—educational shocks and reversals—shocks and reversals associated with increasing dis-illusionment and awakening. Such shocks and reversals must be an aspect of a true peer culture, for its members are not, by their wish to participate, suddenly born again fully capable of responsible self-direction. Instead, they face the slipperiest uphill educational process of all, the process of repeatedly and unexpectedly discovering that their vision, their action, and their emotional digestion are all limited and distorted by assumptions, assumptions of which they have (by the very nature of assumptions) been unaware until the shock and reversal of the present moment.

In the context of Section I of this book, we can say that educational shocks and reversals are a necessary element of a true peer culture because it must be capable of fostering developmental transformations in its members. Each such developmental transformation comes as a surprise and a shock because the roots of our current way of organizing reach so much more deeply into the center of our being than we are aware or can even imagine. Developmental transformation requires both relaxing and exercising metaphysical muscles we don't even know we have at the outset of the experience.

A shock or reversal by itself, however, does not generate learning. The external shock from the superior culture documented in the previous

chapter did not teach us how to deal with such shocks. Only through my ongoing research for years after the event was I able to fill in more of the background pattern, and even all this research results only in speculations about how to manage the relations between a culture of peer learning and a hostile superior culture.

A true peer culture generates shocks and reversals that are more likely to be educational because of the qualities of attention that peer culture also fosters. Its members seek the kinds of awareness, timing, and mutuality associated with transforming power, as described in Chapter 3. Hence, the timing of the shocks are more likely to be appropriate to growth and empowerment than those of the previous chapter. Also, a true peer culture properly cultivates an overall climate and a regimen of personal exercise conducive to an ongoing background awareness that registers one's initial direction, the shock, and the reversal of direction or meaning.

Chapter 7 in this section provided a first impression of how the members of our developing peer culture began to challenge and support one another. In that case, I was the primary challenger. This chapter looks more deeply at a full-blown transformational challenge, and it turns the focus on me.

When asked the purpose of life, Freud answered simply and eloquently: "Arbeiten und Lieben"—working and loving. To me, the condition for good, creative work—for continual quality improvement in one's work with others—depends on a kind of inquiry in the midst of action that is being described throughout this book. And the condition for true love (and true faith), not blind love (or blind faith), is also a kind of action inquiry that creates a peer culture. So, I would answer, less simply and eloquently than Freud, that the purpose of life is working and loving and inquiring. This chapter addresses how work, love, and inquiry were blending and clashing in my life at this time and how these events transformed my sense of what social scientific knowledge properly is.

Daily Vacations

My daily "vacations" while at work were my most visible attempts to provide myself with a background awareness somewhat detached from whatever person or task I might be focusing on. I often walked briskly out of the Business School without knowing where I was headed, crossed the large lawn in front of it and the long mall that serves as a central axis for the campus, slowing down gradually to observe my mixed feelings about the panorama of neatly discreet, antiseptic, Georgian brick buildings, somewhat mellowed by the trees and grass.

I might wander in to the new School of Fine Arts; sneak into the darkened lecture hall where a particularly zany art historian was bringing her slides alive to her introductory class; pause next near a potter at his wheel; then find myself marveling at the kaleidoscope of impressions generated by a single model on an entire painting class. Or, traversing the externally arid campus at a different angle, I might stumble on another of its many nooks and crannies of creativity, the "Nature of Man" office. The Nature of Man course was an interdisciplinary introduction to the social sciences required of all 1,500 freshmen and taught by some 50 faculty from different departments (including me). The Nature of Man office was a bustling place, manned by the mild and bespectacled media magician Travis Jordan, who was forever offering delectable previews of short movies and slide shows available for class use; and womanned by Marjorie Adams, the incredibly efficient administrative mind of the course who nonetheless somehow conveyed that she primarily represented its heart.

Sometimes I simply walked outside the Business School onto the large lawn and lay down for a little meditational nap. Feeling some heaviness or drivenness, I would try to relax my mind and, from the inside out, simply observe my body lying there, relaxing each part as I became aware of its sensation and letting it "go to sleep," until all that was left awake was a bare point of consciousness registering my breathing and heartbeat, whatever thoughts and feelings flew through, and the sounds outside, without following or becoming preoccupied by any of them.

Sometimes a particular concern would reannounce itself repeatedly, gradually reshaping itself as I repeatedly let it go rather than doggedly concentrating on it. Sometimes I would fall asleep for a few minutes. Sometimes the point of consciousness would itself diffuse and permeate my body and thoughts, and even the ground and the air. No matter which of these paths my wander took, I would arise within minutes thoroughly refreshed and in an entirely different state of mind from before.

Home as a Symbol of Receptive Background Awareness

The mild weather throughout the academic year and the wide Texas sky encouraged outside vacations like those just described, or in the hammock in my backyard, or on the 12-minute bike ride between the hammock and the Business School lawn. The weather and the sky always gave me a sense of roominess that relaxed my body even among Dallas's endlessly symmetrical suburbs and huge concrete shopping malls. Each evening I would try to be outside for the spectacular transformations each

sunset provided, usually jogging at the varying paces suggested by my moods and back pain that day, gradually tasting delicious transformations in myself as well, as I dug and sifted through the archeological layers of feeling and sensation, beginning to sweat and finding a new center and cycle for my breathing.

My home was a single story ranch house like most others on the block. My neighbors were very pleasant people who never complained about the occasional loud music at our gatherings, or about the number of persons who came and went at all times of day or night, or about the meandering chanting that was my voice's equivalent to my legs' variable jogging.

It became easy for persons to drop by at any time. I might return to find a dinner being prepared in my kitchen, or three people on the hammock. Ken Carbajal, originally a friend of Pat's and now Jack Grayson's architectural consultant for designing a new Business School building, lived with me much of the time, with his own room to retreat to if he wished to be alone, with no need to entertain whoever came by, or even to tolerate them. This attitude encouraged the informal flow through the house, because friends knew they could not impose on us.

Another peculiarity that made people feel at home was the vast change that the furnishings and decor underwent every few weeks. Ken would wake up some days and just feel like redesigning the whole environment for a couple of hours. I would return that evening to find Indian cloths and banners dividing the living room into areas covered by pillows, with all of the paintings rehung at waist level. Three weeks later, Ken would have bought lumber and constructed a series of platforms, creating different levels within each room and transforming the functions of the different rooms.

These changes gradually heightened my awareness of the environment. As I stopped taking my physical environment for granted, I too began to adjust the furnishings to suit my changing purposes and moods. In this way, I gradually developed a deeper sense of ownership of and responsibility for my own home. At the same time, visitors, too, came to feel free to move furniture, and I suppose that this enhanced their sense of at-homeness as well.

Evening gatherings occurred so often and so spontaneously that I only intermittently provided refreshments. Instead, it became the custom for everyone to bring his or her own, and this included records, Frisbees, clay, paints and paper, cards, and so forth.

I do remember decreeing a very definite structure on one occasion. Hearing myself complain that the host is always condemned to an hour or so alone because everybody comes late, I announced that the next party would begin promptly at 8:53, with severe penalties for latecomers. This strategy had the desired effect, and I must have overcome my concern for starting on time as well because I more or less slept through the first two

hours of the next gathering wrapped in a blanket near the front door. So . . . liberating structures were not merely a phenomenon associated with my work life.

Indeed, these gatherings developed an atmosphere that seemed particularly conducive to fundamental insights about oneself. Because it was so clear that there were no ordinary rules, norms, or expectations, each person's own expectations, structure of perceptions, patterns of behavior, and moods were highlighted. Small things led to self-questioning. Such as, could one stand to be left alone on the hammock when the other two suddenly dashed off to run around the block? Or, could one seek the attention of a person one was attracted to, rather than passively hoping to be noticed? Or, could one abandon one's learned way of dancing and respond more directly to music or partner or group?

And, in between these questions and the various activities one could join in different areas, conversations would sprout in which persons would define themselves anew by saying things that had always been true of them but never before quite known. At least, so I am told by others. I was not usually very talkative on these occasions, preferring instead to dance and fool around.

Indeed, the interplay among cultivating (1) self-directed initiatives based on personal preferences, (2) heightened background awareness, and (3) educational shocks and reversals must, in principle, be subtle, shifting, and ambiguous, as well as different from person to person. Recently, for example, I read an earlier version of this chapter to a blind couple, and they commented that Ken's constant shifting of furniture would represent no liberating structure for them, but, quite simply, hell. So, this version of the interplay among initiative, background awareness, and educational reversal can be negative for some, and other versions can be positive. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous has developed an entire system of peer counseling by which persons are helped to reverse their subordination to alcohol and to a false sense of their own independence, a system that has now sustained itself for two generations and survived the deaths of its charismatic founders.[1] Hence, the entire setting of rather temporary environments and haphazard exercises that I have described above should not be taken as the single model, or even as an authoritative version, of how to cultivate background awareness. It is simply one version, attuned to one situation, and may be totally inappropriate for other people and other situations.

The Teacher Learns Through Shock and Reversal

In a true peer culture, there is no fixed distinction between teachers and learners. Learners teach and teachers learn. As Heidegger said, the teacher

is ahead of the learner only in this—that he or she knows more clearly how much there is to learn and is more open to learning.[2] This intermingling of teaching and learning was well-represented at the gatherings I have been describing. Whereas the faculty and student teaching assistants of the A.S. 1 course made up the core group of most of these gatherings, the gatherings also included other faculty and deans from the Business School, faculty from many other departments, and whatever students were invited or invited themselves. Pat himself frequently participated, for he continued to come through Dallas for longish visits for the next two years, and Ken was often there, drawing improbable comic strip creatures in his own taciturn but dramatic manner.

But Heidegger's point about the intermingling of teaching and learning is, of course, primarily that they properly intermingle within each person. Even more particularly, his point is that they properly intermingle within the teacher or leader. The true peer culture will challenge and help to transform even the leadership. There were several different leaders and different sorts of leaders in our developing peer culture—myself among others such as Jack Grayson, the dean; Craig Lundberg, my department chairman; Roger Dunbar, my New Zealand faculty colleague who certainly experienced a major transformation himself during the two years that this story spans; our teaching assistants, many of whom certainly experienced developmental transformations, as I documented in an earlier version of this book (and like those among their successors at the Boston College Carroll School MBA program that I document in Chapter 4).

Because I was the one with "the theory" at the time and am now the teller of this story, it is my leadership that is most illustrated here, and it is my action that might appear least vulnerable to transformation, if that impression is not corrected. This story of developing a peer culture would be warped and incomplete if educational shocks and reversals had not occurred to me during this time, or if I omitted them from this telling.

I *did* experience educational shocks and reversals, *and* they are hard to retell. They are hard to retell because they are embarrassing—not in a trivial sense but in the deep-rooted sense that they highlight the question of whether I am capable of generating and sustaining true peer relationships. They are also hard to retell because it is confusing for me to determine which facts are necessary to include so that the reader can follow the story, and which facts are merely confessional, self-justifying, and irrelevant.[3] They are also hard to retell because I know from earlier public readings and discussions of this chapter that it is difficult for readers to appreciate that questions of similar magnitude will be highlighted in their lives if they truly seek to participate in a politics of inquiry, mutual empowerment, and liberating structures.

For all these reasons, the next section of this chapter has gone through more, and more fundamental, revisions than any other part of this much-

revised book. By highlighting these difficulties here at the outset of telling these stories, I hope to encourage a special background awareness in the reader that heightens and questions each first impression—each emotional reaction and intellectual interpretation—he or she has upon encountering the following stories.

First, I will outline the "plot" of these stories in order to diminish any mystery or excitement about the particular events. The stories concern the unexpected process by which I decided to seek a divorce from my wife of two and a half years, with whom I had arrived in Dallas. A weekend executive seminar held at the Business School during that first fall played a surprising role in helping me to make this decision. The details of our relationship are unimportant because the point is that the process by which I made this decision challenged my entire paradigm of thinking and feeling, playing a significant role in (what I, in retrospect, take to have been) an ongoing developmental transformation beyond the Strategist stage.[4]

The second part of the story concerns my next engagement in a loving relationship the following summer, when I also tried to write about the type of questioning and knowing and acting we embark upon if we take seriously the dual possibilities of ongoing personal development and of mutual, peer relationships. Again, the details of the relationship matter little, because the overall point is simply that inquiry, productivity, and love—usually treated as such separate and even hostile aspects of human reality—meet in the direction toward which the theory and practice presented in this book point.

The third part of the story concerns a meeting of the A.S. 1 staff group during the second fall of the course. It describes how other members of the group took over leadership when my own efforts to lead the meeting foundered. My leadership that day was ineffective largely because of feelings I was experiencing about the ending of the love relationship I had so recently been celebrating. The focus here is not on the end of the love relationship, but rather on the way the staff worked with this awkward issue (obviously, though, the mere fact of the end of this second significant "love" relationship in a year raises a serious question about what I know about peer, love relationships).

The first part of this story had started long before. I had known my wife since she was in fourth grade and I in seventh, living in homes that were back-door to one another. Our courtship, which started nearly ten years later, had been long, bumpy, and discontinuous. Then, the first two years of our marriage were filled with conversation about our difficulties. My tendency was to assume we would be married for life and that all these difficulties would be worked out because we would keep working at it. Yes, it was hard work, but this was what marriage was all about once one penetrated beyond the romantic illusion of effortless love.

Over the summer before we went to Dallas, my wife went through some personal growth experiences, one effect of which was to make her more explicitly angry with me, including regularly speaking of divorcing me. Even though we discussed separation a great deal, I always believed that it would not happen and certainly that I would not be the initiator.

Just prior to our drive down to Dallas, however, I had allowed myself really to consider the possibility of separating, discussing the matter with my parents. Once I allowed myself to imagine taking the initiative to separate, my emotions reversed. Suddenly, I found it difficult to look at my wife or touch her.

In Dallas, we would go for a week or two with me becoming more and more distant from her, even though I could see that she was now acting more positively than before. Then we would have a real meeting. Painfully, I would tell her how I was feeling and she would tell me how she was feeling. We would have a reconciliation and be able to be together lovingly for a short time, but by the next day I would again begin to feel estranged, and the cycle would repeat itself. After the third of these cycles, she again began to talk about leaving.

Now, I hoped secretly that she *would* leave. For although I had thought of separating, and the emotional side of me now wished to separate, it seemed to me like a complete betrayal of the vows of marriage and to be basically unconscionable. To separate would be an admission of weakness of resolve and would in any case be unjustifiable: The commitment had been for life, had been eternal. So, even though I was thinking and feeling separation, I was not proud of myself for doing so and was not ready to act; nor was I proud of the thought that it would be easier if she took the initiative to leave.

The *I Ching:* The Book that Changed My Life

At this point, we attended a weekend executive workshop together at the Business School. The workshop, for Business School faculty and students, was testing a new executive development methodology called "Blocks to Creativity." Through some initial paper and pencil tests, each person identified where he or she stood in relation to fourteen different "Blocks to Creativity." Each of these blocks could, properly, be a *building* block to creativity, but might be functioning in one's own life as a block *obstructing* creativity. Once one identified several blocks that one wished to change from blockages to building blocks, one approached the corresponding large cardboard box (block) that contained various exercises relating to that block. These exercises illustrated one's condition and

provided opportunities for experimenting with new actions. So, after a short introduction, my wife and I and the 23 other participants were each wandering about the large space, occasionally consulting with one of the facilitators or inviting several of the other participants to join in some exercise that required more than one person.

I chose to work with a block called "Reluctance to Let Go." Here the notion was that some people just keep worrying about a problem, attacking it mulishly again and again from the same perspective, unable to detach themselves from it or from their particular version of rationality. Such persons cannot gain the distance to see what is really going on, nor the relaxation to act in a balanced fashion. Often they can't let go of a task enough to delegate authority; or they may repel others with whom they would like to be intimate by holding them too tightly and possessively. When I chose this block, I was thinking of my difficulties in truly delegating rather than doing it all myself. I was not at that moment thinking of my marriage; nor did it occur to me that my wife could be seen as sharing this same block (nor did it occur to me that "reluctance to let go" may characterize the attitude of many persons on the verge of developmental transformation, a large part of oneself not wanting to let go of one's existing way of seeing the world).

The exercise that I came to in this block involved choosing some pressing problem in one's life and throwing some coins that would determine where to look for an answer in a Chinese book called the *I Ching*.[5] I knew vaguely of this book, that it contained commentaries on 64 different hexagrams with names like "Difficulty at the Beginning," "Breakthrough," and "The Wanderer." I knew it was somehow a highly respected book, yet the procedure seemed to me pure chance, utterly arbitrary, and superstitious.

The description of the exercise acknowledged that this might well be one's initial reaction and that certainly the procedure was not rational in the Western scientific sense. The directions emphasized that the point of doing the exercise was not necessarily to accept and act on the "answer" one received, but rather to experience the difficulties one had in letting go enough even to do the exercise—even to try a fundamentally different approach—even to consider accepting help from a completely unanticipated direction, completely outside one's own control.

I could not recognize my extreme skepticism about the value of this whole procedure as itself a symptom of my reluctance to let go. But (again reluctant to let go) I was determined to be a good Boy Scout and follow through on the exercise. So I asked myself, "What's the most serious problem I have now?"

The answering question sounded back loud and clear: "Should I remain married, or should I separate?"

I threw the coins, went through the process of finding out which hexagram they indicated, and found myself facing the word "Endurance." "Endurance" seemed a most ambiguous answer. It could mean, since all my predilections for the past months had been to separate, that I should endure in this intention and actually do it. On the other hand, it could also clearly mean to endure in the marriage.

I read through the entire commentary (two to three pages). It was full of provocative imagery, as the following excerpts indicate. And, to me, it continued to be full of ambiguity. An immediately striking coincidence was that the main image of the hexagram was that of marriage:

> In the sphere of social relationships, the hexagram represents the institution of marriage as the enduring union of the sexes . . .

This passage, I thought, made it clear that endurance, in this context, meant that the marriage should endure. But as I read on, I saw:

> Thunder rolls, and the wind blows; both are examples of extreme mobility and so are seemingly the very opposite of endurance, but the laws governing their appearance and subsidence, their coming and going, endure. In the same way the independence of the superior man is not based on rigidity and immobility of character. He always keeps abreast of the time and changes with it. What endures is the unswerving directive, the inner law of his being, which determines all his actions. (pp. 126-127)

"Keeps abreast of the time and changes with it" implied, it seemed to me, that change was okay. Not the external marriage, but the "inner law" of my being was supposed to determine my actions.

The words and phrases did have a certain grandeur and dignity about them, but I was irritated by the ambiguity and by the nagging feeling that this arbitrarily selected text couldn't possibly mean anything or be the basis for action. At the time, I did not notice that my entire interpretive set was empirical and scientific. I was attempting to locate an answer empirically, in the world outside myself, in the text. And I expected this answer to be internally consistent in terms of Aristotelian logic. I had not expected to believe the answer I got, but I had at least expected a clear answer.

I then asked another nearby participant in the workshop who appeared to be between tasks if she would help me. Without knowing what she was getting into, she said yes. It was really grossly unfair of me to ask an undergraduate woman to help, but none of this registered on me at the time. I told her I needed help interpreting this text because I'd asked it a question, and now I didn't know what the response meant. She said,

"Fine, what's the question?" I told her what the question was, and she said "Ohhh . . . ". But other than holding the "Ohhh . . . " an extra beat, she continued without hesitation, "I tell you what, I will read it to you, and you see if that makes any difference." I could not see how that would help at all—I had wanted a 'more objective' opinion from her—but I now realized that my original request was inappropriate. So I lay down on a couch, closed my eyes, and listened as she read. And lo and behold, as she read, it became very, very clear to me that what it was saying was that I ought to get out of the marriage.

Even as this powerful message—nonetheless shocking for coming so gently and definitely—was beginning to circulate within me, like a second wave overlapping the first, I also began to see that this "answer" was what *I* wanted, was *my* answer. By responding to my question in a different language and metaphorical framework than I had been using, the text was helping me go beyond my "objective" weighing of pros and cons, beyond my own ambivalent layers, to accept some deeper feeling or intuition that could be a truer guide—not because it was more *objective*, but rather because it was more truly *subjective*.

The wider framework of the Blocks to Creativity exercise was helpful, too, because it suggested that I needed to let go of my rationalistic-empirical, left-brained approach. The point was not that objectivity was wrong and condemnable, but rather that it needed balancing with subjectivity. Put differently, I could be objective about neither objectivity nor subjectivity if I could not let go of—detach myself from—each. In my effort to achieve a generally justifiable answer, I had been blocking myself from seeing, experiencing, and accepting the main fact, close at hand. This fact was that—generalizable or not, justifiable or not—*I* wanted to end *this* marriage.

From Decision to Action

Again though, as soon as I began to imagine taking the initiative to separate, I became scared. Now, however, in addition to feeling the fear, I could also see that this fear had been preventing me from realizing what I really wanted. The fear was using pretty phrases like "eternal commitment" to legitimize itself. Eternal commitment was certainly a worthy aspiration, but my eternal commitment was more nearly to discovering and establishing true peer relationships than to preserving a relationship with my wife, no matter what its character. For me in this case, "eternal commitment" was a pretense, a front for fear.

My fear no longer seemed legitimate, but it did not seem embarrassed by its nakedness. I simply felt it all the more directly. Such were my

thoughts and feelings during the final hours of that day's workshop session.

We went home for the evening. I was so scared and upset that I couldn't speak. I was choking on the words. We almost spent the entire evening watching television, but that scenario seemed too demeaning even for someone as craven as I then felt. Moreover, I rather quickly realized that my emotionality was partly yet another symptom of my reluctance to let go.

For I was not "merely" letting go of my marriage. During the second reading of the hexagram, I had already come to terms with that. I had already accepted that I wanted to let go of my marriage. In what sense, then, was I still reluctant to let go? The responses came quickly now that I was genuinely questioning and genuinely listening for new answers.

One response was that I was reluctant to let go of my usual way of getting answers to my questions. With someone like my wife, whom I wished to treat as a peer, I wished to reach a consensual decision about an important issue that concerned us both, based on facts and principles that we could both agree on. I could never have envisioned making the decision unilaterally with the guidance of such a peculiar nonempirical, nonrational book as the *I Ching*.

A second response was that I was reluctant to let go of my self-image as a good boy who succeeded at all the important things in life, including the hard work of figuring out what the important things really are. For divorce is not rationalizable; one has genuinely, unalterably "fucked up."

As these responses came, they simultaneously legitimized themselves. I had undeniably learned something important from the *I Ching* exercise, so the guidance of the book *was* clearly of value, at least in this instance, and I might as well accept that. Also, I had admitted to myself now, without equivocating, that I wanted a divorce, so clearly I *had* messed up in a serious, adult way and I might as well accept that, too. But these realizations did not end the internal conversation.

Did separation and probable divorce also represent leaping into a metaphysical void? If I could break the most solemn and binding promise that two human beings in this culture can make to one another, was I sowing the seeds of an ultimate futility and hopelessness for myself? Was I embarking upon an ultimately cramped and debilitating relativism that permits only temporary and selfish "marriages of convenience"?

God knows how many conversations I had with myself during that early evening hour:

> Yes, Bill, you did make a mistake, you made a tragic mistake, you are completely responsible.
>
> But you are not necessarily going to resolve it by maintaining the marriage. This relationship is so old and has so many superior/sub-

> ordinate layers that it is most unlikely ever to become a true peer relationship, especially when both members are highly reluctant to let go. . . .
>
> Besides, face it, all of your training in "interpersonal competence" leaves you still largely blind about yourself, about her, and about how to work out truly deep relational problems.

Finally, painfully, I said out loud that I wanted to have a conversation. We turned off the TV, and I told her what had happened to me during the day and that I now wanted to take the initiative in separating. My wife's whole orientation immediately reversed from being on the verge of leaving to seeking to save the relationship.

She read the hexagram from a copy of the *I Ching* that she had in the house, unbeknownst to me. She interpreted it differently from me, hearing its message as a clear statement that we should endure in the marriage. By now I was comfortable with the notion that there was no single "right interpretation," so I tried to explain to her why her interpretation did not influence me.

Next, she wanted to talk about this decision at length with other friends and counselors. I agreed to one long conversation with another older married couple, both of whom had previously been divorced. I was now so sure I wanted to separate, however, that I refused to continue such conversations because for me they represented evasions.

Ken played a small but remarkable role in this process as well. Each morning as I came into the kitchen for breakfast, he asked me the same question in the same words, "Are you going to separate, Bill?" I would answer "Yes." Without any elaboration, he would conclude, "Then, separate."

I stayed because she was going to leave to visit her brother. But there kept being reasons why the visit was postponed. So, a week after the workshop I left our home for a small room in a boarding house. My wife stayed in Dallas for another month, then returned north for Christmas. A year later we were divorced. She went on to blossom in many ways, achieving a doctorate, becoming a professional, exploring other relationships, remarrying, having children. After some years of careful distance, we more gently reexplored our caring for one another.

I have never experienced one moment's doubt that my decision was right for me. For many years, I believed I would not remarry, preferring informal communal arrangements like the ones described earlier in this chapter, or, later, a more deliberate commune as ways of seeking true peer relationships. But life continues to evolve in unanticipated directions, so, still later, I found myself more than a decade into my second marriage, with three sons and two mortgages. Nevertheless, I began then, and have

continued, to explore how intimacy among threesomes and foursomes can be more conducive to transforming learning among true peers than couple relationships that so easily polarize into fixed positions.

Through this experience, the *I Ching* gained the status of a sacred book for me, a reliable liberating structure. I consult it sparingly, with a deep and quiet pleasure. It always leaves me with a clear taste for how narrow is my ordinary access to myself and how incomplete is the rational-empirical scientific method for gaining access to the world of personal, social, and spiritual experience and action.

The rational-empirical scientific method operates within a given paradigm, within a given set of assumptions. Liberating structures like the *I Ching* are somehow transparadigmatic. They can help us to see beyond our previous limits, can help us reframe the dilemmas we experience. Socrates's conversations, Christian prayer, Freudian dream analysis, Sufi whirling, Hassidic stories, Buddhist meditation, the Hindu yogas, and *t'ai chi* are all intended to function as liberating structures. Because different persons begin with different kinds of indigestion, anxiety, and incomprehension, some of these approaches will transform their experiencing more effectively than others.

The validity of a liberating structure for oneself is determined by its continuing role in revolutionizing one's experiencing—one's sense of search, one's sense of oneself, one's sense of the wider world—and increasing one's power of balance. The danger is that a person will become addicted to one particular discipline, shrinking it to a taken-for-granted paradigm, rather than continuing to expand to meet the unique revelation of each new moment.

Threesomes and Foursomes

My next ongoing, devoted relationship to a woman occurred over the following year. Perverse being that I am, the explicit understanding from the start that we were not seeking a sexually exclusive, couple relationship with one another seemed to cause my sense of devotion to blossom all the more fully. More of the credit, however, is probably due simply to the quiet, undemanding, sensual, vulnerable, responsive, artistic intelligence of this woman.

Certainly, neither of us was in the market for casual sex, though I early realized that any statement about seeking nonexclusive intimacy is almost invariably interpreted as code for casual sex. Indeed, I could see that virtually everyone I knew of all ages was deeply confused around the issue of sexual intimacy. Most persons seemed to avoid recognizing their confusion by accepting the doctrine of sexual exclusivity and then

alternately enjoying and suffering occasional exceptions in their own or their partner's conduct. A minority, equally unenlightenedly, it seemed to me, made an ideology of casual relationships and casual sex and then wondered why their lives seemed empty despite their apparently enviable flings.

It should not really be surprising that sexual intimacy is confusing—that "love is blind"—for sexual desire is so strong and palpable: Precisely the most difficult desire to feel strongly and simultaneously to feel detached from—to let go of, to see. How to get beyond blind love (or blind faith) to seeing love (or seeing faith)? How to integrate objectivity and subjectivity? How to integrate inquiry and love?

This, it seemed to me, was the aim of relationships among true peers. Each intimate relationship—indeed, each intimate occasion—would uniquely craft itself through the cultivation of self-directed initiatives, through the heightening of background awareness, and through educational shocks and reversals (through the exercise of the awareness, mutuality, empowerment, and timing of the power of balance, though I did not think in these terms at the time). Rather than "falling in" love, one would properly "rise to" love. Love, then, would never fit a predetermined pattern, but rather challenge one's very being to creative action.

In this new relationship, I had many occasions to study what detaching oneself from sexual desire required, meant, and brought. I remember, for example, when we were traveling together during the summer after that first year at SMU, as I completed the final prepublication revisions on two books and the first essays toward a third. We visited for a week with a couple at Princeton who had come to be among my closest friends over the previous four years. I had known the wife first, having hired her to teach in the Upward Bound program I had run at Yale. Next, I met her husband, who was then a mathematics doctoral student at Yale, and his mathematical theories of higher dimensions helped to inspire the final chapter of this book. Then, the three of us jointly participated in a spiritual work to which I introduced them. And later, they asked me to serve as godfather for their first daughter.

Over the course of our week together in Princeton, it became clear that the foursome, in all its permutations, shared an unforced ease, warmth, and delight. I had known that the couple did not hold an ideology of sexual exclusivity and I had enjoyed the wife's openly provocative comments toward me, but no occasion of full sexual intimacy among the three of us had heretofore evolved. Now, it felt to me as though an occasion of sexual intimacy among the four of us was evolving.

On the final morning of our stay, the wife and I found ourselves talking in just this way, happily talking ourselves into just such an initiative, with the added pleasure of knowing just what we were doing. Suddenly, it

occurred to both of us that we had no idea what her husband and my woman friend were doing just then. With playful horror at the possibility that we might be merely discussing what they might be enacting, we snuck upstairs and found them—in the shower together. This was too propitious a signal to be misinterpreted, so we immediately doffed our clothes and joined them, amidst great hilarity and affection. Eventually, the four of us dried one another and draped ourselves atop the large bed in the adjoining room. There seemed to be no question but that we were all unhurriedly intending a languorous, love-making leave-taking.

Nevertheless, I knew my woman friend to be perhaps a bit more agreeable at times than she really felt, as well as a bit slow to speak her reservations; so I asked her how she felt as the newest acquaintance in this group. Her response did not break the pleasurable mood and could easily have been interpreted as assent to whatever was to come next, an interpretation that certainly fit my sense of inertia and of desired acceleration. But her response was, at the same time, to my ear, a little passive. Even though it seemed somewhat redundant to me to do so, I pursued my initial question more explicitly. Would she be comfortable with—did she wish—love-making among us?

The brief pause that followed was the dis-illusioning answer, though she reluctantly also spoke a little to say that, really, no. With sighs and glances and touches of regret, but without recrimination, all four of us reversed our inertia, and we gradually dressed and packed and took our leave.

In the car on the way to Philadelphia, I explored with her what her reservations had been. She told me that her mother and stepfather had gone through a tumultuous period of group sexual experiences that ended with their divorce—a period during which she experienced the adults as treating one another cruelly and selfishly—and that that taste and fear had flooded her as we lay atop the bed.

Interlude

I was so grateful then that the scenario our foursome had ultimately enacted together was one of mutual caring in resisting sexual desire—one of seeing love—rather than of mutual blindness in submitting to sexual desire. From this and similar experiences came a short commentary that I wrote to accompany a set of small silver trinkets fashioned by this woman friend of mine. I gave one of the trinkets and a copy of the commentary to each member of the A.S. 1 staff toward the end of the following fall. The trinkets were shaped like three inverted cones, sharing a common base at the top, intertwined in the middle, and with the three separate points below. The points of the cones represented our separate bodies. The intertwined middle layers represented

our thoughts and feelings that are in part shared (for example, various ones of us share a language, sing the same songs, would like to be valued members of the same groups, etc.). The common base (at the top of the cones) represented the rarely experienced source of both our subjectivity and objectivity: consciousness. (Is consciousness what we rise to when we rise together to love?) The commentary read:

Three qualities of experience
humans can be—
in body distinct,
in thought and feeling interrelated,
in consciousness one.
Ordinarily, we fail even to notice
that none of these qualities
is directly available to us,
as we dream our ways through our days.

May this gift remind you
that each trinity of bodies
calls us back to ourselves.

* * *

Attended to, the third member
of every pair becomes the source
of spiritual growth.

For only in consciousness
can three be reconciled.

May this gift remind you
of the scale of suffering required,
then calm and strengthen you.

Making Love as a Lifetime Act

As that summer continued, we came to the Spirit Ranch in the mountains of eastern Washington state to visit my department chairman, Craig Lundberg. There, I found myself in a week-long love-making relationship to my writing, and to the scenery and weather as I sat outside under a tree with my pad, and to the swimming hole, and to the cow-milking, and to the meditating, and to this woman, as I attempted to describe what I

then called "inquiry-in-action"—the kind of social science I envisioned a peer culture practicing.

I entitled the essay "Making Love as a Lifetime Act," intending it for my earlier book *Creating a Community of Inquiry,* but later editing it out when I realized that it described a kind of knowledge with which I had had no practical acquaintance at the time of the events retold in that study. Here are several, very short excerpts that convey the flavor of the writing:

Inquiry-in-action dissolves the chrysalis of habit
  and informs the possibility of ecstasy,
realizing communal consciousness
  through witnessed joy and suffering.

I am speaking of making love as a lifetime act,
  transferring to each fragment
    full knowledge of the whole,
thereby transmuting each fragment
    into a valid expression of the whole.

* * *

The process of disciplined opening
  in fully erotic love-making,
    of asking and responding, intruding and yielding,
    giving and accepting, arousing and pausing,
    within and between persons,
    sequentially and simultaneously,
  following a thread of development
  and giving surprise free rein—
this process visibly manifests inquiry-in-action
    at one time.

. . . Where is the sensual current of excitement
    that would course through our days,
    estranging us from boredom,
    were our life as a whole indeed participating
    in an act of making love?
It is not ordinarily evident to us.

What awe-ful feelings can we identify in ourselves
  that reflect this process?
They are not ordinarily evident to us.

How can our thought impregnate
each trivial act and decision with significance,
just as in making love
each touch and sound becomes suffused
with the aura of the act as a whole?
It is not ordinarily evident to us.

. . . The ultimate moment of inquiry-in-action
defines its aspiration—
the moment of timely action
that sharpens the unique question
posed by this unique situation
to these unique persons
(of whom the inquirer is one)—
the moment when action embodies and integrates
science and passion.
This moment epitomizes the difference between
reflective social science and action inquiry:
the former results in
dispassionate knowledge detached from action,
the latter strives toward
passionate knowledge embodied in action.

Early during the fall, my woman friend began to move into my home and, almost simultaneously, befriended another man. He was deeply attracted to her, she to him. The three of us had dinner together at my home and liked one another; the three of us participated in some parties.

Would I object to her spending the night with him? I could certainly feel a tug of fear, to which I admitted, but how could I object?

Soon, I found myself asked to "consult" to her about their relationship. This quickly seemed inappropriate—simply too painful for me. He straightforwardly said that the three-way relationship was not what he wanted; he wanted her. Meanwhile, my woman friend was feeling increasingly paralyzed by her attraction to each of us, and her sense of having to choose between us. She was also feeling unequal in status to me, more equal to him.

Then, one evening that she and I had planned to spend together, she decided to spend with him because, she felt, I could manage her absence better than he. In fact, I did not manage this decision and this absence well at all.

I realized that despite my wishes, neither of the other two were really interested in threesomes. My relationship with her may, as she felt, have opened her to others in general and to this man in particular, but it was

likely that, were she living apart from me, she would now choose a couple relationship with him rather than me.

Perhaps I was wrong. Or, even if I was right, perhaps their relationship would be brief. Or, perhaps . . . or, perhaps. . . . To find out, I felt I had to act, because she seemed incapable of acting, hurting both him and me in her wish to hurt neither. So, telling her my thoughts and feelings, I urged her to move out. She did, moving into an apartment with a woman friend. She and the other man developed a couple relationship that endured throughout my remaining time at SMU. Even though I could not realistically imagine a better outcome, I felt bereft.

Self-Criticism in the Staff Group

One day a few weeks later, I was trying to prepare for a session with the teaching assistants, at which we were to discuss William Hinton's *Fanshen: Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village.* I had chosen this, along with several other books, for them to read because the stages of rising to consciousness and empowerment that the Chinese villagers went through when they took control of the land from the feudal landowners were so analogous to experiences among our students. Likewise, the dilemmas that faced the work team sent to the village by the Communist government were similar to the dilemmas that faced our staff. This work team went through a searing exercise of mutual self-criticism, an interesting model for our staff, I had thought—but the teaching assistants had just undergone a significant self-examination process, based on the midterm feedback we had received from students (the process described toward the end of Chapter 5). Hence, much in the way that the leader of the work team in the book confesses his shortcomings to the rest of his team at one point, I decided to write down a series of self-accusations stemming from these thoughts and arrived at the meeting feeling very emotional.

It had occurred to me that despite my energy and attention to the A.S. 1 staff members, I did not love them with anything like the intensity I felt for this woman, nor yearn for their love as I did for hers. As natural and explainable as this now sounds to me, and probably to the reader, I wondered at the time whether my lack of deepest feeling for the staff didn't invalidate my whole theory of what we were up to together. Wasn't I asking of them a kind of commitment that I wasn't in the end ready to make myself?

The prospect of talking about this was very frightening because I hated to admit my lack of feeling. I hated the notion that my central beliefs were wrong or hypocritical. And I hated to put my relationship to all these

people in jeopardy just when I needed what warmth there was between us to buffer the pain of my recent separation. (Nor did I notice the irony that I was full of passion about my purported lack of feeling.)

I endured the administrative issues in dazed apprehension and then tried to explain in my usual logical way how I wanted to "do" the book. This approach immediately stuck in my throat as inauthentically neutral and didactic for what I was feeling. So I stopped in midsentence and stumbled instead to my grief about my separation. But this direction, too, immediately felt wrong. The point was not to sob melodramatically on the group's collective shoulder about a non-task-related issue, but rather to face up to the hard reality of my lack of feeling for this group.

So I checked myself again and tried to begin on my relationship to the group. My chest was by now tied in knots by my efforts, and the words were sticking in my throat. One of the teaching assistants interrupted with, "Aw, Bill, you can stop trying now. You really are *so* lovable when you lose your cool. Bill Torbert unable to speak: Ain't it something?" The group melted into soft laughter and went altogether out of focus for me as I began to weep. People moved into subgroups, some to attend to other tasks we had, five or six with me helping me to become more aware and balanced about all that I was in fact feeling. Another eventually brought out a guitar and played me a special song. Still later, we came together for a brief birthday party. Then my colleagues Mick and Roger hugged me as they left, and then I was on my bike pedaling home alone. Wholly, embodiedly, acceptingly alone. And also partially, invisibly, inexplicitly connected.

It is to this group that I later gave the trinkets. And it was a member of this group who, months later, had a dream for me, of a future transformation, given as a preview to strengthen me to become more myself, as Native American youths fasting in the wilderness find, sometimes in a dream, a symbol of their identity that emboldens them to become that.

For my learning continues, of course—the learning about how to create peer relationships and peer culture—the learning about how to bring inquiry into each moment of work and love—the learning about how to let others learn. Is this chapter, for example, a good illustration of action inquiry? Does it merely discuss and describe action inquiry, or does it enact action inquiry in such a way that you, the reader, also feel your questions about your aims and your conduct more clearly?

Let me repeat, in closing, an introductory comment at the beginning of this chapter. When asked the purpose of life, Freud answered simply and eloquently: "Arbeiten und Lieben"—working and loving. To me the condition for good, creative work, for continual quality improvement in one's work with others; and the condition for true love and true faith, not blind love and blind faith, is a kind of action inquiry—a kind of social

science—that only a few have practiced through the ages. So, I would answer, less simply and eloquently than Freud, that the purpose of life is blending work, love, and inquiry.

Notes

1. Anonymous, 1984, *"Pass It On": The story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. Message Reached the World*, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

2. Heidegger, M., 1968, *What Is Called Thinking?* New York: Harper & Row. "Teaching (writes Heidegger) is even more difficult than learning . . . because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn. The real teacher, in fact, lets nothing else be learned than—learning. His conduct, therefore, often produces the impression that we properly learn nothing from him, if by 'learning' we now suddenly understand merely the procurement of useful information. The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they—he has to learn to let them learn. The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices. The teacher is far less assured of his ground than those who learn are of theirs" (p. 15).

3. Even to equate the confessional with the irrelevant is peculiar when the two most influential books about personal development in Western culture—Augustine's and Rousseau's—are both entitled *Confessions*.

4. This judgment is retrospective and clinical, not based on any measurement of my developmental stage at the time. About a decade after that time, I was scored at the 5/6 transition on the Loevinger Sentence Completion Test, and two years later was categorized at stage 5 on the basis of a Kegan "subject-object" interview that was later published in Lahey, L., Kegan, R., & Souvaine, E., 1990, "Life after formal operations," in Alexander, C. & Langer, E. (Eds.), *Higher Stages of Human Development: Perspectives on Adult Growth*, New York: Oxford University Press.

The Loevinger 5/6 transition (as reconceived by Cook-Greuter, S., 1990, *Rare Forms of Self-Description in Mature Adults*, paper presented at the fifth annual Adult Development Symposium, Cambridge, MA, July) is the score I equate with the Magician stage. Kegan's stage 5 corresponds either to the Magician or the Ironist stage (there is not enough data to make even a definite hypothesis about this).

If the results of either of these two developmental measures showed me at an earlier stage of development, the result would contradict the hypothesis I have offered (for according to this theory regression does not occur). Instead, they are consistent with the hypothesis I offer. However, these results in no way prove the hypothesis, since transformation beyond the Strategist stage could have occurred *after* the events described here.

5. Wilhelm, R., & Baynes, C. (translators), 1967, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, Princeton, NJ: The Bollingen Series of the Princeton University Press.

11 Beauty and Ugliness

Self-Correcting and Self-Destructing Systems

In this chapter, we return from the worlds of the superior culture and the peer culture, highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5, to the world of the subordinate culture. This chapter recounts how the A.S. 1 course developed during the semester following its first offering and following the Canavan affair and my experience with the *I Ching*.

Even though the stories about my own learning retold in Chapter 5 carried us through the summer after the first year and into the second fall, when we as a staff finally developed a clear enough sense of how to construct liberating structures in this particular environment that we produced the experience recorded in Chapter 5, this chapter returns to the previous spring. For it is important to illustrate the multiplicity of structural experiments necessary on the path toward successful combinations of challenges and supports, resources and timing in any given setting. The most misleading impression that a theory of liberating structure could give would be of a mechanical recipe that leaders in different fields could apply to their organizations.

On the contrary, the entire edifice of a liberating structure merely generates the *opportunity* for developmental learning and continual quality improvement. At each actual instant of working, someone must cultivate the awareness, the commitment, and the skill to take specific actions that turn the moment into an educational drama. This chapter conveys several such moments. One of them concerns a major course-wide problem that required me to invent an extreme (for me) response that I would probably not have invented were it not for the experiences surrounding my divorce and the *I Ching*, recounted in the previous chapter. Such an extreme is likely to be reached at some point or other in any effort to cultivate liberating structures in new environments, and the

leadership must be capable of expanding its repertoire of actions in the midst of the ongoing action if it is to meet such crises.

As mentioned earlier, the staff reconstructed the overall course structure as A.S. 1 each semester, even though the overall student feedback from the previous semester was always strongly positive. After 26 years of reluctance to let go, I seemed now, after the experience with the *I Ching*, to enjoy putting all my skills to the service of letting structures and assumptions go, testing whether an underlying shared purpose or spirit would inspire still better work. As we had found in continually adjusting the course during the first semester, making changes in response to feedback about specific problems was much easier, more energizing, and more successful than trying to defend the existing structure. You can't see the beauty of self-correcting social systems because the self-correction occurs across time, but you can sure feel it.

Our choreography of the course for its second "run," during the spring semester of 1971, directly addressed the limits we had encountered during the fall:

(1) Switching groups toward the end of the semester had not worked; so now we formed arbitrary groups the very first evening of the course and had them work together throughout the semester.

(2) We had discovered that despite the weekly learning papers in the fall, groups did not develop atmospheres that encouraged inquiry and effectiveness as regularly as we would have liked; so now we created a common curriculum for all the groups for the first month, focusing on issues of leadership, conflict, and group decision making.

Each group would thereafter choose two four-week projects, one after the other, from choices offered by the faculty, or based on the group's own preferences (subject to faculty approval). The final three weeks of the course included one week devoted to evaluation, a Career Night with some 60 businesspeople from different fields, and a multimedia presentation on the final night of some of the groups' projects.

The entire semester was integrated by our ability to work at the center of the Business School in our new, colorful auditorium. And the entire semester was animated by the excitement of working with a group of student teaching assistants who had taken the course the previous semester.

Because the course grew from 240 to 420 (many students were now voluntarily choosing the course and eventually transferring into the Business School), we were forced to assign two groups to each teaching assistant, contrary to our initial intention of one group per assistant. This unintentional accommodation to an overwhelming registration turned

out to be the most enduring structural innovation of that semester. By accident, we created a wonderfully self-correcting system. In my subsequent 15 years of teaching at the undergraduate, MBA, and doctoral levels, I have always created groups of teaching assistants who have been students in such a course beforehand, and I have always assigned them to work with *two* groups of students. What I learned from this first experience has always been reinforced:

(1) the teaching assistants are overly responsible for the performance of "their" groups (reluctance to let go?), especially if their group performs poorly; this leads them to put so much effort into improving "their" group that the members resist, take still less responsibility, and matters tend to deteriorate still further; only the repeated observation that their two groups perform differently and respond to them differently persuades them to accept a more modest version of their role in the scheme of things, to let the pain of error and lack of success motivate some group members to new initiatives, then support their initiatives with advice and appropriate interventions;

(2) the project groups want their teaching assistant to solve all their problems, while simultaneously allowing them complete freedom: needless to say, this is impossible; the absence of the teaching assistant (when he or she is attending the other group) is a critical factor in breaking this dependency.

As with so many other of the systems we developed, this particular method of "semi-supervision" seems well-suited to companies that wish to encourage the development of autonomous and self-correcting work groups (see discussion in Chapter 4).

In general, the semester went very well, and we were astonished at its conclusion by the quality of many of the projects, such as

- the student-run coffee house that made a big profit,
- the steel foundry action research team that instigated a significant organizational change at that company, increasing retained earnings, and
- the team that brokered a new neighborhood park in a low-income section of Dallas by delicate negotiations with residents, local businesses, and city officials.

In addition, we had developed an intensive weekend communication workshop that some groups could choose as one of their two four-week projects. These intensive workshops gave students, should they choose to struggle, access to a deeper dimension of inquiry about, and experiments with, their patterns of action.

Reversing a Lifetime Pattern

One experience from a weekend workshop can give readers a taste for how the ugliness of a self-destructing pattern of action can be revealed and can start to transform into a more self-correcting process. Unfortunately, today, experiences such as that retold here are frequently dismissed from work and school settings with the claim that they are of a personal and emotional nature that calls for therapy. I say this tendency is unfortunate for three reasons. First, the effect of such dismissal is that the issue frequently is not addressed at all, leaving a lot of pain and dysfunctional behavior. Second, a therapeutic environment is very limited and is frequently not as potent an agent of transformation as a work setting would be, because the effects of a person's dysfunctional behavior are more obvious at work and because the opportunity for more continual support and confrontation exists at work. Third, to dismiss such issues from the work or school setting is to deprive the other participants of increasing their own self-esteem and action competence by struggling to act responsibly on the issues.

Here is how a group of students worked with one of their fellows, in a choreography of actions that gradually invited him to become a dancer of himself rather than a victim of himself.

At one point, the group turned toward a student who had been relatively quiet until this time but who gave an impression of pleasantness and sincerity. He seemed to expect to speak and to be willing to do so, once others took an initiative toward him, but at the same time he seemed apologetic about presenting himself at all.

He began by expressing his despair that he would ever become a successful businessman like his father, whom he idealized and who hoped to have his son follow in his footsteps.

Only after some urging could the student connect his feelings of despair, which were very much present in his tones and posture, to his own behavior. He reported that no matter how hard he tried to avoid it, every few weeks he would get terribly drunk and ugly and get into some kind of trouble that would often land him in jail. Even this much of the story came out only slowly because he seemed to believe that thinking about these occasions increased their likelihood of occurring again.

Now he began to insist that he was taking too much of the group's time and that we should turn to someone else. But the combination of the group's rapt and concerned attention, the spontaneous movement of two other men who had earlier expressed insecurities to sit on either side of him, and an abrupt interruption challenging him to accept the attention he was receiving returned him to his story. Nevertheless, his despair was such that he wasn't really searching for meaning in the story. For a time

the atmosphere was that of a prosecuting attorney searching for a lead with an uncooperative witness on the stand.

It turned out that each time he landed in jail his father rushed right down to the station, bailed him out, and reassured him that everything was okay, picking up his spirits, without any hint of disapproval, disappointment, or punishment. This sequence reconfirmed for the son how marvelous his father was.

The rest of us zeroed in on this interaction, asking him to look more and more microscopically at his feelings before and after his father appeared at the jail. Gradually the coloring of the situation changed, and a new structure was revealed awaiting birth, a birth requiring self-love even to see, because it demanded courageous action on the son's part. He began to feel how he wanted to become more adult, more himself and less his father's son; and how his father's bailing him out of jail was not in fact so marvelous because it meant that he, the son, repeatedly abdicated responsibility for his own conduct.

Now *he* began, for the first time, to take the initiative to make the connections: how his self-hatred increased each time his father bailed him out and how this sequence, in turn, deepened his sense of despair at meeting his father's expectations; how this despair resulted in the self-destructive cycles of drinking; how, if he wished to stop the self-destructive drinking, he had to take the initiative to define who he wished to be and accept responsibility for the results, rather than passively allowing his father to take responsibility for him; and, finally, how his past behavior had not been an expression of love for his father so much as of covert rebellion against him, and how, therefore, becoming more truly himself could be an act of love toward his father rather than, as it might at first appear, an act of defiance.

At the end of his struggle and discovery, the student's eyes had moistened and his hands clasped the legs of the men sitting next to him, but he was essentially calm and self-contained; not flooded with feeling, but relieved and ready.

Events such as this felt like profound successes, not because some authority had offered an insightful diagnosis but because the particular student or particular group had transformed from passive, reactive, relatively unconscious participation to active, conscious, self-correcting initiative.

Errors and Corrections

There were failures in certain aspects of the course structure, too, but our human information system was becoming so sensitive to signs of

low-quality performance that we picked up most of these failures right away and corrected them within the course itself. One of these failures was one aspect of the general session that we held in the auditorium during the first half hour of each week's three-hour meeting. This session was intended to generate a sense of coherence for the course as a whole. In addition to presenting some material (e.g., on sources of group conflict) that would lead into that evening's group meetings, I would take about ten minutes each week to discuss the staff's impressions of the foremost blocks and dilemmas facing some or many of the groups. As best we could make out, many students felt hostility to the traditional, top-down format of the auditorium meetings (of course they meekly accepted such a format in most of their courses). They particularly disliked my diagnostic comments, perhaps because they were hearing their frustrations described by the very person who seemed responsible for creating them. After two unsuccessful attempts to make this hostility, too, a part of the conversation, I ceased to offer the "play-by-play commentary" on the course.

Another failure, however, made me momentarily despair about the whole course. The evening of group and self-evaluations the third week before the end of the course, I began to hear more and more stories from students, teaching assistants, and other faculty of rigged, superficial, or otherwise invalid evaluations by groups. I began to feel that our objective of creating a structure that guided students toward responsible, adult goal-setting, action, and evaluation, weaning them from dependence on the predefined structure, had made no impact whatsoever on our students despite the repeated assertions by many of the students themselves that it had.

I remember sitting in my small office as I heard these reports, feeling glared at by the overhead light and feeling as though I were inside a nightmare, the victim of forces greater than whatever paltry allies I might have. The course was virtually over. We had no more leverage. One of our primary systems intended to engender reflection and self-correction was itself being subverted.

In this moment, perhaps just to get away from the glare, I closed my eyes and tried, much against my depressive inclination, to sit with myself quietly, prayerfully if you will, breath and pulse entering my awareness as well as thoughts and feelings, allowing it all without focusing on any of it, feeling a gradual diminution of the nightmarishness and a rising gratefulness to the source of this blooming attention . . .

I was reentering the present. "We never keep to the present," Pascal tells us.[1] *"We recall the past; we anticipate the future. . . . We are . . . so vain that we dream of times that are not and blindly flee the only one that is. Thus we never actually live, but hope to live, and since we are always planning to be happy, it is inevitable that we should never be so."*

Reentering the present is always confusing: there never seems to be any reason to do so; the time never seems right—either there's not enough time, or there's nothing going on, so why bother. Once I begin to detach from, and thereby make contact with, my body, thought, and feeling, there is so much to attend to; yet, again, there is no clarity about what deserves attention.

The gradual effect of sustaining this exercise, however, is to create a kind of gravitational field, like a black hole sucking time toward it, until the past and the future congregate around the rim of the present, exhibiting their relation to the present rather than distracting me from it . . .

(How many times have I thanked the teachers who introduced me to the present, and the school that repeatedly reintroduces me?)

I began to remember some of the principles that had emerged over the previous nine months. One was to take whatever appeared to be a block or barrier to progress and redefine it as a building block. Another one was, when in a jam, think of the last thing I would ordinarily do and try it out (the logic being that if what I ordinarily do were working I wouldn't be in the jam in the first place, so maybe my entire structure of interpretation and action is off).

Instead of giving up, as I may too easily have done on other occasions, I decided to fight. With this decision, the calmness that had supplanted the nightmare began to turn into anger, and the anger began to turn into the following intemperate message to the students, which describes more particularly what was making me, now, so angry. Even before the end of class, most of the message was written. After review by the staff, it was duplicated and handed to the students the following week, Career Night, along with the sparse announcement that all evaluation decisions reached between groups and staff members the previous week were null and void, to be renegotiated after discussion of this message on the final night one week hence.

CASES RELEVANT TO MOST OF SOME AND SOME OF MOST A.S. 1 STUDENTS

Courtesy of Bill Torbert

Last Wednesday evening was to be a tightly scheduled, busy three hours (the staff was working from three single-spaced pages of agenda). Groups which have engaged in various projects over the term, ranging from the study of a

steel foundry to testing the feasibility of a campus coffee house to analysis of individualism vs. collectivism, were to share their experiences with one other group involved in different activities, to compare *what* they did and *how* they did what they did. Then, each group was to evaluate its own members (leading to one third of the final grade). Finally, group members were to share their self-evaluations with one another for comments and criticism (leading to another one third of the final grade).

But that plan does not describe very much of what actually happened in many cases. Here are some examples of what actually happened:

> With regard to sharing group experiences, many groups managed to "complete" this task in about five minutes. One group asked to finish its project instead of sharing; the staff member refused (since the project was already to have been finished and because he believed the sharing exercise to be valuable); the group then covertly returned to work on its project, claimed when confronted that the other group had not been interested in sharing, and were only drawn into conversation when the other group heard the false accusation and attacked. Finally, some animated sharing ensued.

Before going on, let's take a look at this example. Like students meeting one another here, these groups were *utterly passive and even resistant to exploring one another's experience*. There is a good deal of talk around here about deep Christian feelings many students have, yet these examples exhibit *no brotherly love;* just the reverse, there is a case of outright *lying* in which a whole group participated.

> With regard to evaluating the course, a number of students complained that "Bill Torbert's lectures the first half hour of each week's meeting are utterly boring."

Let's look at this event too. Why should I complain about this evaluation, you may ask? Don't I want honesty from the students, no matter how personally painful it may be? Am I about to deny the accuracy of the evaluation with some half-baked, defensive rationalization? No, what bothers me now is not whether the evaluation is accurate. What bothers me is that I acknowledged this evaluation long ago and have not lectured at all for five weeks, making clear that I was ceasing to lecture in response to the evaluation (even though I still earlier challenged, and was never fully convinced of, its validity). Consequently, this sort of complaint strikes me as utterly *stupid*. I'm reminded of senile old men and women gossiping to one another about some notorious affair which occurred twenty-five years previously. If students' conceptual systems are so rigid that they cannot acknowledge and integrate my changed

behavior, then they themselves must be *unable to behave intelligently in a changing world.* Now, of course, if I were in a different mood, I could explain this behavior by saying that students are so unused to influencing their own education that they can't believe their own eyes when they do finally have an influence. So conditioned to being impotent, they can't believe their own potency.

> When it came time to do peer evaluations, a number of groups determined that something like an A-C range would be appropriate. But then when several persons received the lowest ranks, thereby earning C's, the groups uniformly conversed themselves into raising these grades.

Perhaps you can easily understand why this would happen. To say specifically that Joe Blow whom you've worked with all semester didn't do the work—to his face—and to insist he therefore deserves a low grade is hard. It's not only hard: it may seem embarrassing; you may feel it will hurt him. You may feel quite righteous about refusing to treat your peers that way. Well, I don't think it's righteous. I think it's *ugly.* What's more, I believe that many students who have taken steps toward authentic relationships at intensive weekends in A.S. 1 would agree with me, *if* they took the trouble to generalize their learnings on the weekend to other parts of their lives. Why is it ugly to raise low grades? Because the person is not challenged to achieve standards of excellence, to improve himself, resulting in *a culture of low-grade human beings;* because the person does not work through with the concerned parties the bad feelings he *must* have about his poor performance in a situation of choice such as this course has created, and these result in disturbed, suppressed, and alienated people. I believe that to act in ways that confirm others as low-grade, alienated, and disturbed is ugly.

> In terms of self-evaluation, some students deservedly (in my view and their peers' view) gave themselves A's. A very few honestly and painfully graded themselves lower. Some may well have deserved the A's they gave themselves even though others of us would not agree (that's one reason for giving students some control over their own grade—sometimes they know best what's happened to them). But some blatantly "blew it off," deriding others who struggled to be genuine in their evaluations. These persons were rarely severely confronted by the rest of the group. In most cases, group members also made little effort to question and assess empathically others' self-evaluation. Later, however, I heard many complaints from other students about those who "blew it off," as well as complaints against the system, since it permitted them to "cheat."

To me, there are several dimensions of ugliness in these events. One dimension of ugliness is *deriding genuineness.* Persons did have the choice to "blow

it off," but their need to deride others in the bargain shows that their choice was not free and rational but compelled by feelings of threat and defensiveness. Another dimension of ugliness is the *lack of confrontation* of these persons, since, as in the previous example, lack of confrontation confirms their ugliness. Still another dimension of ugliness is the assumption by the "righteous" persons that *the system, rather than their lack of courage, was responsible for the "cheating."* Behind this assumption lies the further implicit assumption that a cheat-proof social system, not requiring personal courage to confront others, can and should be created. I believe that such a social system neither can nor should be created, for it would lead to still further atrophy of personal responsibility and dignity.

> How about this for a summary example: A student surprises his group early in the term by revealing his deep Christian convictions, his sense of being able to talk to and be sustained by God. Although some of his earlier behavior had seemed insensitive to others, making them feel somewhat distant and wary of him, his personal revelation draws others closer to him. Thereafter, however, he gradually withdraws commitment from the group, ceasing to attend many meetings. Finally, at the time of peer evaluation, he apparently colludes before the meeting with two other members who have participated minimally to rank themselves as having contributed most to a healthy group process, simultaneously ranking those who have invested most in the group as having contributed *least*, presumably hoping to achieve an average ranking similar to others by this tactic.

Perhaps, after years as a behavioral scientist, I should be a bit more blasé about the fact that persons' behavior regularly contradicts their ideals, as in this case; or, as an educator, maybe I should just admit to myself that none of us influences very many students deeply (there is plenty of research to reassure me on this point). I find it much more hopeful, however, to respond with anger.

* * *

On the final night of the course, the auditorium was jammed. I was determined to say whatever I could to make the groups converse honestly later that evening and finally calculate how their present life-styles (what, in retrospect, I have named the subordinate culture) related to the practices encouraged by the course. I was determined to keep us all cooped up in that large, warm room until some connection occurred among us, even if it was unequivocal mutual rejection.

In what mood the students entered, I'm not sure. Staff members were tensed toward their roles with the groups, for I had insisted ferociously that they unrelentingly confront any group that tried to short-change the evaluation process, and we had role-played several possible scenarios.

Certainly, the mood was different from earlier in the semester. I now knew some 200 of the students personally, many quite intimately from intensive weekends, so I was looking into many faces I knew and cared for, meeting many eyes. By this time, my anger was less central in my feelings than my desire to challenge the many students who I knew had genuinely tasted and valued the experience of speaking and hearing truth to take the necessary risks in their groups to reawaken the taste of truth again tonight.

After all my preparation for this moment, I did not know what I was going to say. When I picked up the microphone I found myself filling everyone in on the conversation I had just had with Roger Dunbar over dinner about our sense of the successes and failures of the course, of the strengths and weaknesses of the students and the SMU culture, and of our hopes and fears for the future. From the very first words I knew that I was finally talking to everyone in the room. I was relaxed, meeting their eyes and feeling their listening.

Afterwards, as the students left the auditorium for their group meeting rooms, the "Christian" who had colluded to rig his group's peer evaluation in his own favor made his way up to shake my hand, thanking me and saying he certainly deserved whatever was about to occur in his group now.

The staff celebration at the pub that night was long and merry. Everyone had good news to share of groups coming to full accountings, even when difficult, of their semester's activities. I would hardly claim that this occasion changed many persons' lives or values noticeably, but I do believe that such events touch a deep and often hidden sense in persons of the dignity of hewing to a truth at once personal and objective—a sense that may be quickly forgotten again—but that each calling forth makes more accessible to the next call.

I know this event permanently emboldened me to pursue public confrontations, not just marital or peer culture confrontations, right through the barriers set up by social conventions, expectations, or schedules. Of course, few public events actually lead to such confrontation. Public confrontation occurs at my initiative only if I care deeply enough about meeting the purposes and the persons in question, and even then only if I can find no better approach. Ultimately, however, no safe, foolproof technique guarantees the self-correcting capacity of a person or social system. There is no guarantee whatsoever. Only the moral struggle of subordinating the fragmented attention of the members—now wayward, now willful—to a more integrative vision, a common sense that simultaneously highlights and accepts contradictions among purpose, strategy, action, and effect—only such a struggle generates the possibility of self-correcting action. Consequently, the beauty of self-correcting systems can never wholly supplant the ugliness of self-destructing systems.

The beauty of self-correcting systems can never be "safely" institutionalized apart from particular persons deeply committed to the ongoing vigilance and initiative required to exercise the power of balance. Self-correcting systems are always vulnerable to demise.

Note

1. Pascal, B., 1966 (Kraisheimer, A., trans.), *Pensees*, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, #47, p. 43.

12 Demise and Aftermath

At the beginning of its fourth offering in the spring of 1972, I don't think anyone at the Business School would have predicted the imminent institutional demise of A.S. 1. Based on our own experience of the previous year and on an unsympathetic faculty critique of the course, we had constructed a vibrant, highly choreographed third version of the course in the fall semester that had generated the most learning yet for students and teaching assistants. This third version of the course also helped me to make fully explicit what a liberating structure is. This version of the course and the full theory of liberating structure have been described in Chapter 5. Hence, in the spring of 1972 we had just completed our most successful offering of the course to date.

For me there was, it is true, some sense of anticlimax in looking forward to the fourth version of the course. So complete and fulfilling had the experience of giving the course the second fall been, I could hardly conceive of becoming as involved with a new group of staff and students right away again that spring. Besides, I would have the chance to continue deepening relationships and learnings with former A.S. 1 students and staff in two new courses in the spring—one called "Toward an Action Science," the other "The Future: Institutions, Values, Action Strategies." Moreover, the spring version of A.S. 1 promised to be something of a repeat of the fall because our plans for the fall had worked out so well that it seemed we could now stabilize the course, refining the existing structure without changing it radically.

By the time we were one week into the spring semester, however, all these expectations had been pleasantly shattered. The fall course had worked so well that our new teaching assistants seemed more vibrant and more skilled than ever, and I immediately felt the energy and delight of these new relationships. At the same time, my colleague, Roger Dunbar, had come up with a significantly different way of organizing the course about five days before it was to begin, and we had adopted it.

I doubt that anyone reviewing what actually occurred in the course that spring would have characterized it as a course on the verge of demise. Roger's new way of organizing the course amounted to a drastic simplification of its structure and of the basic concepts with which the students were presented. I remember a definite twinge when he proposed "killing" the whole "purpose, process, task" language and structure (see Chapter 5), although I had to admit that however meaningful it may have been for the staff, few students appreciated the sequential nature of the course. He kept the basic sequence and the learning papers, but he proposed having three practical group projects rather than two, the first project to begin the first night in groups of four and to last just one week. In this way students would experience from the outset all the problems and possibilities of making realistic contracts for self-directed collaborative projects and would therefore more easily see the relevance of the group process exercises.

I found that this strategy worked remarkably well. In my two groups of twelve there were six small teams of four for the one-week project. All were agog at the notion of coming up with a project they wished to do together in the final hour of the first meeting, then completing it and presenting it a week later. Some really worked and played at it, though, and came up with interesting projects, while others "blew it off" and devised minimal contracts without provision for evaluation, and then agreed quickly to let me evaluate the result.

The following week all six subgroups presented their projects to the other 20 students (and a similar pattern was occurring throughout the course). The variety among the products and experiences was astounding, clear to everyone present, and easily predictable. In short, those who had taken the time to find creative and realistic projects that grew from their real interests had had a great time and performed magnificently, as illustrated by a group that had already developed and priced specific plans to turn an abandoned gasoline station into a pub. Those who had chosen arbitrary projects "just to get it over with" in some cases did not even complete them. The grades ranged from Honors to No Credit, and, to round out the evening, we had an excellent discussion about the relation of a group's sense of purpose to its actual process of working to its success in task accomplishment. Instead of "preaching" the relation of purpose, process, and task and then demonstrating it, we were now helping students discover it for themselves within the first week of class.

Explosions

There were, however, other aspects of the course that might suggest that we were beginning to overreach ourselves, as successful Americans

seem to have an inbred tendency to do. We had taken on more teaching assistants than ever and had split into day and night sections, with two other members of the faculty overseeing the day sections while Mick McGill, Roger Dunbar, and I continued to work on Wednesday evenings. In this way the course was split, and it was never clear to me whether the staff of the day sections maintained anything like the intense learning culture among themselves that I regarded as necessary to prevent defensive or otherwise incompetent behavior from crystallizing in inexperienced, heavily challenged teaching assistants. Several hearsay stories reinforced my fears, but no explosions resulted.

The explosions tended to occur, instead, in the night sections. The night sections now included Dallas businesspeople from the extension school, a change to which we originally agreed without much thought as part of our way of paying for the renewal of the Auditorium and to add spice to our efforts. This decision may have been another example of overreaching ourselves; certainly, their presence changed the course dramatically.

The political maneuvering that a number of these people began when they received No Credit for one or more learning papers was staggering. When they didn't like what was going on in the course, they did not choose typical subordinate culture alternatives, such as remaining passive, or complaining to the teaching assistants or the faculty. Instead, they acted like members of the superior culture, going straight over our heads to the Dean of the Business School, the Provost of the University, and their own companies. For example, one group lobbied against us with its company (General Electric) to which we had applied for a national award in business education. They claimed that the statistics and learning paper samples we submitted as evidence for the course were distorted and false because everybody they knew hated the course. (They never did construct and administer an unbiased questionnaire, as we offered them the opportunity to do as their project for the course. Indeed, the main protester was simply not doing his work and dropped out before the end of the course, after endlessly repeating his syllogism that the course must be crazy because he was a successful businessman and had never gotten anything less than A at this school before.)

Another group of five "militants," claiming to represent a much larger united front, brought its complaints to Bobby Lyle, the Acting Dean of the School in Jack Grayson's absence as Price Commissioner in Washington. To their discomfiture, Bobby asked Mick McGill and me to sit in on the session so that we could act to ameliorate any justified complaints as quickly as possible. It did turn out that some Dallas College students needed an A-F grade rather than an Honors-No Credit grade if they were to receive continued educational benefits from their companies, and we could agree on the spot to meet this need.

As for the dynamics of the meeting, I offer the perspective of one of the businesswomen present, because she chose to focus her next learning paper on the incident:

> I was approached last Tuesday night (March 7) by a fellow student at Dallas College of SMU. He asked me if I would be interested in going to talk with the Dean about this A.S. 1 course. At first I said "No," but as the week went by, I thought "Why not?" "I've nothing to lose and it really might be interesting to find out why some of the students are so hostile about his course."
>
> Finally, on Wednesday morning I decided to go to the meeting that afternoon. Then I began to wonder what I would say, how would I say it, did I like the course, is it beneficial to me, and millions of other things. Anyway, right before [it was] time for us to go I had almost changed my mind about going, but I didn't.
>
> We arrived at about 12:50 P.M. and waited in the hall until 1:00 P.M. (the time the meeting was to start). We (5 of us) were shown into the Dean's office and were introduced and were asked to be seated.
>
> The Dean started the meeting by stating what he thought [was] the purpose of the meeting. Well, this got things rolling.
>
> I don't remember the statements exactly as they were or the order in which they came, so what follows is only my very own views and opinions about the meeting.
>
> The first guy, I'll call Joe, started off with something like, "*I'm* a BMOC and *I* have an important job, and *I* already have a degree in Engineering, my time is budgeted, I spend more time on this class than any other, etc., and I have only received NC's on my learning papers. *I* can't understand this." To me he was saying that he was a big shot, he was an "I" character and wouldn't even try to understand why he had gotten NC's. (Neither do I, but I didn't grade his paper nor am I capable of grading it).
>
> Another guy told about writing technical papers, making speeches, flying here and there being a VIP, and then getting NC's on his learning papers. He couldn't understand why.
>
> I was on their side at first. I thought that anybody who was that smart could surely write a good learning paper, but then as I listened to them, I felt as if I were on the other side. I found fault with what they were saying. Really it almost became funny, because here were these two big shots almost begging for something, what I don't know, but something. I guess it wasn't really funny, but I got to wondering how many times some of their employees had come to them with some problem that was important to them. I also wondered if they listened as attentively to their employees as the TA's [these were actually Mick and myself, but I guess

> we were young enough to pass as undergraduates] and the Dean listened to them.
>
> I really didn't have too much to say, as my purpose for going to the meeting really was to observe and I did observe everyone and everything that was said.
>
> I was impressed by what seemed to me a real devotion to this cause by the TA's (I know one of them wasn't a TA but I don't know what he is). They didn't give up nor did they become angry or upset at any point in the meeting. They seemed very calm, cool and collected; whereas the two guys from GE were fidgeting and perspiring on the outer edges.
>
> I am glad I went to the meeting. It did make the course more meaningful to me. I don't feel as if everything was settled or that the GE men feel any better towards this course.

We can hear a very definite Diplomat-like, subordinate-culture tone in this woman's description—from her careful avoidance of participating in the conflict, to her rapidly changing positions based on external impressions about who was right, to her lack of substantive reflection about which of the actions she observed was more and less competent and why. At the same time, we can see that the process of open, public conflict gradually exposed some of the shortcomings in the businessmen's posturing and some elements of our approach that were more attractive to her. It seems likely that she was thereafter more positively engaged in the course, even if the GE men were not.

We dealt our (self-defined) opponents a tactical defeat on this occasion, but we almost certainly did not transform them in any way. Our response to superior culture attempts at back-room manipulation was competent insofar as it successfully defended and amended our efforts by the use of methods consistent with our principles (e.g., open conversation, efforts to establish valid information). But we did not practice an active strategy (articulated in Chapter 6) for transforming the superior culture. For example, we did not approach GE to challenge the few students' unsupported and untrue contention that our statistics were distorted.

High Performing Balance or Overreaching?

Of course, we did not know whether our pedagogical techniques *could* succeed with older, part-time students, especially under the conditions of status-reversal that they experienced when they found themselves among freshmen and with a much younger teaching assistant who had some control over their destiny in the course. Both we and they were painfully

aware that A.S. 1 tended to have some impact on them because of the many conflicts that erupted, but whether that impact was finally positive we could only begin to assess at the end of the term. At that time, with each staff member assessing the adult students in his or her group (and with the clear understanding that this information was not to be used in any propagandistic way and that our only interest was in the truth of what had occurred as best each person could judge), the staff judged that 30 of the 35 businesspeople had had strong negative reactions to the course at its outset; the remaining five were judged to have been neutral.

By the end of the course, 6 of the 35 had dropped out, or received No Credit, and we assumed that these deserved to be rated as strongly negative. Four others were judged as negative, while having performed satisfactorily. Of the remaining 25, 10 were judged to have become neutral or mildly positive about the course, and 15 were regarded as very positive about the course.

Obviously, these are mixed results, but they are certainly predominantly positive. On average, these adult students had moved slightly more than two units in a positive direction, from very close to the "Strongly Negative" pole at the outset to closer to "Positive" than "Neutral" at the end. At the same time, the staff believed that the course should *not* be required of persons who had virtually completed their degrees. A much better policy would have been to require the course only of newly entering students (the reader will recall from Chapter 8 that we had encountered the same kind of problem with the full-time students during the first semester).

Part of an embarassingly positive but nonetheless sincere final learning paper by one of these businessmen can conclude our discussion of this particular issue and of the internal dynamics of the fourth version of the course:

> AS-1 has got to be one of the most unique courses that is offered on campus today. It is unique in the sense that there is very little structure in the course. I have found this to be an advantage rather than a disadvantage. When I first started attending AS-1, I really despised it, but after I was able to change my attitude I found the course to be very rewarding.
>
> I believe that one of the main things that I have gotten out of AS-1 is the fact that I am now able to work with people. In AS-1 we, or I should say my group, has worked as a "group." I believe that we have accomplished very much in all the projects that we have undertaken. From participating in these group projects I have gained a vast insight into my life. I know that it has really helped me out in my job because before I used to tackle problems by myself, but now instead of trying to solve a problem

completely by myself I find myself seeking the aid of others, and together we seem to solve one another's problems better. . . .

As far as having new dimensions I felt that I have gained one new dimension as a result of this course, this being a dimension that has truly changed my life. As you well know, I am truly a quiet person, but I have not been like this all my life. When I was in Vietnam I saw so many ugly things that as a result I just shut myself off from the world. I did not assume any leadership roles during this semester, instead I shied away from people and played the role of a follower. I am not saying that I did not participate in group projects because I feel that I carried my full share of the projects along with everybody else.

During encounter weekend I gained a whole new perspective on life. I shared some of these ugly things that happened while I was in Vietnam. I believe that I confided more in these people that weekend than I have confided in anybody else in the two years that I have been home. It was such a refreshing feeling to let go of something that I had been keeping bottled up inside of me for so long. As a result of encounter weekend my outlook on life has changed completely. During this weekend I experienced so much love; before I felt that the whole world was full of hate. I have again assumed leadership roles and find myself seeking out people instead of shying away from them. I am now happy instead of sad, laughing instead of crying, and leading instead of following, all as a result of spending a few hours with a group of truly wonderful people who helped me to believe in the human race once again.

Was this almost inadvertent inclusion of a whole new element in the course—the older, extension school businesspeople—a case of overreaching? Or was it simply the case of an organization at a state of balanced and relaxed high performance willing and able to take on major new challenges? Both, I would now say. In the short run, our vigilance, concern, and aggressiveness made it more the latter than the former, I think. But in the longer run (which made itself felt very shortly), we were up against the phenomenon of superior culture resistance that we were not meeting in a transforming fashion. Instead, we were responding with tactics more appropriate for dealing with the subordinate culture.

The superior culture was at work on another front as well.

Faculty Politics

From the beginning of the fourth term, a different process had been occurring quietly in the faculty politics of the Business School. An influential old guard faculty member who was now president of the Faculty

Senate—the same person who had sent the campus newspaper story about Pat Canavan to downtown businesspeople a year and a half before—sent a memo to the rest of the faculty at the beginning of the spring term suggesting that "all required courses . . . be eliminated as required courses . . . (in order to) provide students more opportunity to evaluate their individual academic needs." This was, of course, a "polite" reference to A.S. 1 because it was the only required undergraduate course. It was an (intentionally?) ironic initiative in that it applied part of the logic that had earlier been used by Jack Grayson to end all the previous requirements to suggest ending the innovative requirement.

During the spring, Mick McGill, Roger Dunbar, and I—the three faculty members most invested in the course—could never quite decide, curiously enough, whether we cared about keeping the requirement. I suggested we might take the lead in ending the requirement on the grounds that the faculty itself required a sense of shared purpose before it could legitimately require anything of students. The rather flip nature of this suggestion itself suggests my lack of seriousness in dealing with the politics of the superior culture. (Actually, Bobby Lyle, the Acting Dean, had made an exciting and firm speech to the faculty in mid-February in which, among other things, he strongly affirmed a goal-setting-and-evaluation standard for faculty and administrative behavior, in the form of Faculty Action Plans that each faculty member would develop each year. So, some of the A.S. 1 principles of liberating structure *were* being applied to the faculty.)

As the spring went on, a very different reason emerged for ceasing to require the course. Our team of three was breaking up—Mick to coordinate the Master's Program and I to take another job. We knew that the success of the course depended entirely on the immense shared trust, initiative, and commitment we felt among ourselves and could transfer each term to the teaching assistants. Without that atmosphere, requiring the course of some 300 students would surely generate a deadly bureaucratic nightmare. Under these conditions, simply continuing to require the course would have been irresponsible. We might, however, have invented other solutions to the dilemma of leadership for the course, but we did not.

The Commitee on Educational Affairs held several debates on the course and reaffirmed the importance of its goals. Mick and Roger suggested that students be required to meet these goals either by taking A.S. 1 or by some other means that they could propose for approval by the Committtee. Eventually however, the President of the Faculty managed, at a late June meeting when many of the new guard faculty were not in town, to get a faculty vote simply to abrogate the requirement of A.S. 1. Thereafter, it continued for two more years under Roger's guidance, with enrollments of 40 to 100 students each term, until Mick and I combined

forces to persuade him to find a new setting for his attention. Thus did A.S. 1—so vigorous, so rapidly growing, and so successful in its brief youth—suddenly reach its senescence and demise.

In the meantime, as I have already indicated, I had decided rather suddenly and unexpectedly to accept an offer to join the faculty at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. I was so happy at SMU and harbored so many prejudices against Harvard that I at first declined even to visit the School of Education. But as I thought about it more, I realized that although I would undoubtedly find less institutional support and sense of community for my ways of actually doing education at Harvard, I might find more persons interested in educational theory there than at SMU. I *did* want to see whether, as I believed, I had something to say about education that was simultaneously relevant to ordinary persons in everyday life, to professionals in education, and to scholars interested in doing a new kind of social research. The Harvard Ed School would allow me to relate to the latter two groups.

At the same time, though, I did not want to run out on the Business School because, with all its battles, I deeply believed in what Jack Grayson and Bobby Lyle were trying to do. But then I asked myself whether I hadn't perhaps already shot my bolt at SMU and essentially failed. The microcosm of A.S. 1 felt successful, of course, but we weren't having any noticeable influence on the faculty as a whole. Indeed, by devoting so much energy to A.S. 1 from the outset, I had become relatively disengaged and walled off from much of the rest of the faculty and other elements of the superior culture at and around SMU. Moreover, I was beginning to become concerned that a number of students were shaping their entire curriculum and life around what I had to offer, and I had done nothing to discourage this. How healthy was that degree of dependence? To stay and engage in a new way with the faculty while disengaging gracefully from these students seemed infinitely more difficult (even if more honorable) than to leave.

But to leave *and* to be honest about my motives *and not* to cut myself off from my friends in Dallas once I made the decision (as I had accustomed myself to doing as a child each time my family moved to my father's next Foreign Service post)—that would be difficult too. And that is what I chose to do.

Remaining Present While Taking Leave

Instead of emotionally "packing my bags" as soon as I returned to SMU from my visit to Harvard, I tried to remain alert and open to the feelings my decision touched off in me and my friends. Where I had begun to feel an overdependence on students' parts, I said so if I had not already.

Although there were difficult moments, and although I was as embarrassed then as I am now to be speaking so directly about deep personal feelings, the experience as a whole was immensely revealing and a deep blessing. For about ten days my leaving was the topic of many conversations, and the dominant moods were anger at me, or concern for the future of the school, or my fear of the power of the whole dynamic, or just mourning. Then everyone involved seemed to complete disgesting the separation, and we returned to working together in a still lighter, more intimate, and more productive way.

I became aware, once again, of how infinitely small is my understanding of feelings and of how powerful are the feelings unleashed in persons when they encounter the possibility of a deeper sense of Self. For example, I was shocked to receive the following message from a man who had been a teaching assistant during the first year, but with whom I had not had much close contact during the second year.

The man was one of the toughest, most demanding and most independent students I had met at SMU. He had been a teaching assistant the second term of A.S. 1. One day he had told me that he had originally come to SMU on a football scholarship, filled with violent, directionless energy, and had failed out of school. Eventually, he took himself in hand, which, he confessed, sometimes involved sitting rigidly in a chair at home for hours gripping the arms tightly, while convulsions of raging energy shook him until he calmed. He returned to school during this time and attained a very high grade point average.

During my second year, this man had gone on to the Master's Program where he took a major role in organizing and administering a huge business game that his fellow students played, with Dallas businesspeople serving as Boards of Directors for the different mock companies. I had hardly seen him at all during this year.

One morning when I arrived at the office, I found a kind of poem on my desk, with sections entitled "Questions," "Answers," and "Request." It began like this:

Questions at 2:00 a.m. 5/1/72

Who is this man: William—Rockwell—Torbert?
Why am I letting him disrupt my world?
Is he physically attractive?
—not particularly
Is he extremely eloquent?
—not really
Does he have a charisma which attracts large crowds?
—not recently
Is he a demon who possesses my soul?
—not that I am aware of

Do he and I philosophically agree?
—not completely

Then why do I love this man: William—Rockwell—Torbert?
Would not hate be more appropriate?
Have not my inner tensions become stronger since our meeting?
Are not my frustrations less easy to resolve?
Do not my friends(?) stare at me, curiously, as if I have lost touch with reality?
Has not my very soul been used as a battleground between the old and the new at this school?
Is not my mind turning farther and farther inward, desperately searching for equilibrium?

Are you satisfied: William—Rockwell—Torbert?
Does it make you smile to know my protective shield has crumbled?
Why did you do this to me?
Why must I be the one who faces heat without shade, and cold without clothing?
Why did you wake me from my sleep?
Why did you sever the umbilical cord?
Why did you not let me fade into the crowd?

I was deeply scared by these words, and his "Answers," and "Request," because he was attributing to me so much more than I had done—so much, in fact, of what he had done for himself. And his request—that I embrace him once, so that he could know that my spirit was with him before he took a step alone—for a moment seemed to be a correspondingly heavy demand. My God, could I really say that I loved him?

How could this have happened? I wished to influence others, it was true; I wished to create settings for transforming learning; I wished to participate in the exercise of transforming power; but was this sort of continuing underground dependence the outcome of my influence? There was something too personal about this poem, something unbalanced about my influence. There must be a more impersonal power of balance I had yet to master. I concluded once again that I must be blind to the actual relationships between me and others.

And then I read the words again, more prepared. This time I saw a remarkably courageous man—a man long deeply alone with an unknown, untamed energy—an energy that threatened him and yet was him. He wrestled with it, with himself, trying to befriend himself, questioning. This man had met someone else incredibly like himself in these aspects (as we all really are, though rarely obviously). By virtue of this meeting his hidden secret became his future potential. Now, a year later,

he requested a single embrace as token of our mutual meeting with the unknown. To this request I could respond with joy and awe.

Aftermath

For me, the two-year period at SMU was a more intense period of success, empowerment, and transformation than any similar length of time before or since in my life. I believe that I mastered both the theory and practice of leadership and of designing liberating structures in relation to the subordinate culture. I also broke through to new levels of understanding and practice in relation to generating a true peer culture, although in this arena I certainly did not attain mastery, and the learning continues inconclusively to this day. Finally, the events surrounding Pat's early departure and the events recounted in this chapter made me inescapably aware of a deeply embedded superior culture that strives to protect its assumptions from inquiry and is, therefore, threatened by and hostile to the transforming learning celebrated and encouraged by a culture of true peers. I learned little, however, about how to deal successfully with such a superior culture. The more elaborate theory of power developed in Section I of this book and the longer term, subtler practice outlined in Chapter 4 in that section represent some of the learning I have done since.

This same two-year period also transformed the SMU Business School in a permanent fashion, even though the particular innovations did not last. Two years after my departure, some of the basic concepts of action learning, such as contract-based projects, were in fact diffusing rapidly and visibly throughout the school to the point where students now expected to chart their own careers both within and beyond the school rather than to follow a pre-defined set of requirements. A course taught collaboratively by members of the marketing, management science, and organizational behavior departments and based on projects attracted 170 students. Members of the finance and accounting departments had completed a self-paced, video introduction to those two subjects, had experimented to their satisfaction with the use of teaching assistants (starting with a former A.S. 1 teaching assistant), and over half of the entering business students were now choosing this method of instruction. Two A.S. 1 faculty members continued to teach the Action Science course I had introduced and expanded it to three sections, with over 100 students. A Life-Planning Center had been created, and about 200 students a year were choosing to go through a career planning process as one of their courses.

In faculty and administrative matters the school was also becoming increasingly contract- and project-based. The yearly Faculty Action Plans

that Bobby Lyle had announced before I left had become institutionalized. Faculty members chose which department and which program they wished to belong to and developed their action plans with that chairman and that program director. From a pattern of late submissions of budgetary and instructional data and projections to the university, the school became the earliest to submit its budget and other documents. Jack Grayson had returned from his stint as Price Commissioner in Washington (still unaware, as was I) of the chain of events that had sent him there in the first place, and, working with Bobby Lyle, was preparing for a major fund drive for the school.

The emphasis on action learning was proving attractive to both students and businesspeople. Both the number of students and the amount of funds being attracted to the school were increasing. In a year (1974) when there was a faculty hiring freeze in all other schools and departments at the university, the Business School was scouting the country for *19* new faculty.

On a less visible level, my conversations with faculty and former teaching assistants two years later—when 13 of them read and critiqued the first draft of this section—revealed a continuing digestion of the initiatives from the earlier time. One former teaching assistant said, "A.S. 1 was such a shock to my system that I spent most of my senior year recovering from it and integrating it all. I really did—that was a very dormant time and I felt like the school was a lot quieter, which was good for me."

Several faculty members, some of whom had not been on the A.S. 1 faculty, spoke of applying the action learning approach to more and more areas of their professional and personal lives. As one of them said in response to reading the first draft of this section,

> The idea that you came into the system and diagnosed some of the motivating forces and then drew up a model, designed a strategy, hammered it out with others, acted, observed, revised, acted again—that model is a fascinating perspective for me to see the events through. I didn't see the events through that perspective at the time. I wish I had, but I didn't.

Nevertheless, something invisible about the continual quality improvement process that A.S. 1 had illustrated was no longer operative. "We're getting very, very good at doing what we were doing two years ago," Mick McGill reflected. "And these new people are very competent. They'll relieve some of the overload. But the new blood has not been expanding our range, adding whole new perspectives." Bobby Lyle was finding it more difficult than he had anticipated to get many of the faculty to take the initiative necessary to craft personally and organizationally

useful Faculty Action Plans. "This kind of organization depends on the various individuals and groupings within it to take initiatives," he said, "but instead people keep asking me how much authority they have." At the same time, the faculty with whom I spoke unanimously viewed Bobby as using the Faculty Action Plans and the new Program Directors as ways of achieving tighter top-down control over the system.

Roger Dunbar put it this way,

> There are now more visible symbols of external control and fewer of getting in touch with your own power, which is what A.S. 1 was really about. The external part of A.S. 1—the contracts and projects—got diffused to the rest of the system. But the internal part—the consciousness—has disappeared except for a few individuals. I think the people who have already felt their power still experience a lot of freedom in this system, but those who haven't see a lot of controls.

A former teaching assistant added, "There's no longer an active support system welcoming anyone who wishes to search for who she is and where she's going." And Mick concluded, "People have always respected one another's skills here, and that makes it a good place to work, but once there was a kind of awe, a going to learn, going to the mountain, each to the other."

SECTION III

Vision and Method

13 The Vision of Action Inquiry

The vision of action inquiry is an attention that spans and integrates the four territories of human experience. This attention is what sees, embraces, and corrects incongruities among mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes. It is the source of the "true sanity of natural awareness of the whole."

This attention, or "consciousness," is cultivated by personal exercise, peer cultures, and liberating structures. It is one fundamental aim of human development.

This attention generates transforming power and the power of balance. These, in turn, generate continual quality improvement and increasingly just action.

But, this source of vision is itself relatively invisible. Its appearance and its disappearance are often not apparent.

"There are now more visible symbols of external control and fewer of getting in touch with your own power," said a faculty member, two years after the irony of "a required course to make students free" was eliminated from his school's curriculum. "The external part—the contracts and projects—got diffused to the rest of the system. But the internal part—the consciousness—has disappeared except for a few individuals."

It is certainly easy for the consciousness guiding an innovation to disappear, because consciousness is not visible in the first place. "[This is] a good place to work," said another faculty member. "But once there was a kind of awe, a going to learn, going to the mountain, each to the other." But the mountain of consciousness is invisible[1] in the three-dimensional, spatial world; it may be long after persons are no longer climbing it together—the essential action of a peer culture—that someone notices something missing from the outward pattern of behavior—"a going to learn, . . . each to the other." (And, of course, in most organizational

settings these meta-physical mountain climbing expeditions don't happen with any deliberateness or regularity in the first place.)

I have tried to convey some of the critical moments when I contacted this consciousness, this widening of attention and fuller entering into the present, in the previous chapters. One example was the moment at the beginning of the third version of the course (Section I, Chapter 5) when I and another faculty member interrupted the planned agenda to use the incident that was occurring to illustrate confronting and correcting error at the moment of practice. Another example (Section II, Chapter 11) occurred at the end of another version of the course, when I allowed my depression about the student groups that rigged the evaluation process to evolve into anger and corrective action. And there are other examples....

But the point is hopefully clear: No degree of skill and charisma in leadership and no degree of subtlety and comprehensiveness in structures and systems will prevent occasions from arising when an embracing consciousness of the present and the courage to inquire into it is necessary if justice is to be done, or effectiveness is to be achieved, truth to be gained, or grace realized. Moreover, the very best leadership and the very best structures will require and cultivate just such an embracing consciousness of the present.

So has Section I argued. So has Section II illustrated.

Now, Section III introduces the kind of social science that derives from, and cultivates, not a particular intellectual theory of consciousness, but rather the actual presence of such an embracing consciousness in all its participants. In this chapter, the effort is to introduce and to ground the paradigmatic axioms of this type of social science. The next chapter offers an illustration of the findings and effects of two different studies—one based on the mainline social science paradigm, the other based on the action inquiry paradigm introduced here—on one particular effort to transform a city government. The final chapter of this section and of the book explores the embracing experience of "living inquiry," rather than of conducting a formal and defined academic inquiry.

Inquiry in Everyday Life

The type of *action inquiry* being proposed as a model for social science and social action *is a kind of scientific inquiry that is conducted in everyday life* (including the everyday life of academic scholarship), not a kind of scientific inquiry conducted only within sanitized experimental environments, survey designs, or reflective, clinical, critical settings.

As a result, and unlike the other kinds of social science practiced today, *action inquiry is a kind of social science that deals primarily with "primary" data encountered "on-line" in the midst of perception and action* and only secondarily with secondary, or instrumented data, collected and analyzed "off-line" (although, as the foregoing stories show, there is a special art and craft to designing and using instrumented data to challenge, to support, and to bring a fuller attention to primary data).

"Consciousness" in the midst of action—a special kind of widened attention that embraces all four territories of experience (intuition, reason, one's own action, and the outside world)—*is, therefore, both the ultimate aim and the primary research instrument in action inquiry.*

We must gain an appreciation more grounded in our own experience of this critically important, constructive, but invisible consciousness, if we are to begin to understand and to enact the profound difference between action inquiry as a form of social science and the conventional forms of social science today, whether quantitative or qualitative, whether positivistic, interpretive, or critical. The following pages will address this objective, showing how we can each, through an action inquiry process, test and validate the objective existence of all four territories of experience. At the same time, these pages will, I believe, demonstrate that the action inquiry paradigm of four territories of experience is a more inclusive and satisfying paradigm than the conventional social science paradigm that collapses the world into two primitive terms—the "map" and the "territory." The map is the inside world of cognition (in which consciousness and intuition are included). The territory is the outside, empirical world (in which our own behavior is included because it is visible from the outside).

After testing what kind of internal, personal action widens our attention to permit more objective inquiry, we will examine what kinds of interpersonal actions accomplish an analogous purpose among colleagues or friends, and what ordering of political principles follows from this paradigm of inquiry and action.

Widening Our Attention and Verifying How Little We Know

All persons throughout history and at the present moment share a dilemma that permeates everyone's life at every moment, yet this dilemma is rarely felt directly—even by geniuses. Even more rarely does someone address this dilemma directly as it is felt, acknowledging it and widening one's awareness. Indeed, many of us unawaredly bend our

capacities for physical strength, emotional satisfaction, and cognitive problem-solving so as to minimize awareness of this dilemma.

This dilemma is, simply, that our knowledge of what is occurring at any given moment of our lives—within us, around us, and beyond us—*must* be inadequate to what is actually occurring. As Zorba the Greek is reported to have said, "Am I not a man? And is not a man stupid?"

For the most part, our attention simply does not register a great deal of what occurs. Reading this book, for example, the reader is likely to become oblivious for protracted periods of time to sounds and other events in his or her environment, oblivious too to his or her own body position and breathing, oblivious even to the fact of the book as a material object as distinct from the cognitive meaning of the words and sentences.

Being reminded of these "facts" now may momentarily jolt the reader into a widened awareness. (Not necessarily, however; the reader may remain entirely within the cognitive territory, arguing the point, "OK, so I'm not aware of everything all the time: What's the point? I'm aware of what I need to be aware of . . . " etc.; or, the reader may shift his or her attention from the cognitive territory to the outside world territory, rather than widening it to include both, becoming transfixed by the view from the window of clouds, blue sky, and trees swirling their green costumes in the wind.)

Even if we do widen our awareness momentarily in response to some reminder, it narrows again very soon, and we do not feel its narrowness and the consequent inadequacy of our knowledge of the present.

A second source of the necessary inadequacy of our knowledge of what is occurring at each moment of our lives is the very narrow cognitive-emotional interpretive net we apply to our perceptions. For example, even the most erudite among us typically think in only one language and one mood at a time, without feeling how those patterns limit our awareness of what is occurring. (Having had to speak four languages on a daily basis as a young child, I have occasionally made the effort to think about the same problem in [my childish version of] all four languages in quick sequence and have seen how the different languages lead my thoughts and feelings in significantly different directions.) If the developmental theories introduced in Section I are at all correct, our thinking and feeling are still more circumscribed to stage-related subpatterns of language and emotion of which we are not ordinarily aware.

A third source of the inadequacy of our knowledge is that our own actions generate the conditions we discover in, and the knowledge we receive from, others and from the environment; yet we rarely feel how our actions determine and skew what we know. Let us say, for example, that in a bright and cheerful manner, I pop into coworkers' offices briefly to find out things I need to know, always careful not to bother them long.

I may not learn for years that they view me as constantly interrupting them and putting my agenda first, with the effect that they withhold significant information and oppose me much more than they otherwise might.

We are rarely directly aware of our own behavior and others' reactions as we act. Seeing and hearing oneself on a videotape is almost invariably shocking: one had no idea of the gestures one makes in public, of the facial expressions, of the tones of voice, of the run-on sentences, and so forth. But seeing and hearing oneself on a videotape is itself not at all the same as direct awareness of oneself as one acts. First efforts toward such awareness typically generate a mortifying and paralyzing self-consciousness from which one flees either into obliviousness or into some temporary cognitive-emotional crusade to change something about oneself. How to cultivate an ongoing, facilitative, enlightening subsidiary awareness of how one is acting is key to continual quality improvement, both personally and organizationally, and is itself an inquiry and a practice for a lifetime.

A fourth source of the necessary inadequacy of our knowledge of what is occurring at any given moment in our lives is that the data we have about the outside, empirical world is ordinarily about the past, not the present, is ordinarily drastically unsystematic and incomplete, and is rarely tested for validity on the spot. Moreover, no amount of data and no degree of sophistication in scientific research methods can suffice to prove an empirical proposition to be generally true (that is, true for all moments, and thus true for the present as well). Scientific methods, as we have known them over the past centuries, can unequivocally *dis*confirm empirical propositions, but cannot unequivocally confirm them.[2]

Moreover, although conventional scientific methods can provide us with (always questionable) *knowledge about* the other three territories of experience mentioned above—namely, the territory of one's own behavior, the territory of one's own thinking/feeling, and the territory of one's attention—it never provides us with *direct awareness* of *what is occurring in the present* in these territories of experience.[3]

So . . . *the first thing we can know with certainty is that our knowledge of what is occurring at any given moment in our lives must be inadequate to what is actually occurring*. The way we can know this with certainty is to test, as often as possible and whenever it occurs to us, whether our attention includes all four territories of experience mentioned above. Almost invariably, when we make this test, we will find that our attention before the moment of the test has been restricted to one territory of experience. Occasionally, when we make this test, we may find that our attention before the moment of the test may have included two territories (for example, I may have been observing myself insisting that a group

decision be made by consensus, aware both of the emphasis on collaboration in the thinking territory and of the emphasis on unilateral action in the behavioral territory).

Very, very rarely, we may find that our attention includes all four territories. In such cases, we will be directly aware of the limited penetration of our attention against the vast and obscure background of our ignorance. Seeing into all four territories, we see how little and how uncertainly we see what is there. Seeing so, we feel both a deeper humility than usual and a sharper initiative to reach out, through this widening awareness, to all that is Other.

Verifying that There Are Four Territories of Experience

The second thing we can know with certainty is that there are four qualitatively distinct territories of experience. Again, this is determined by experiential testing.

Descartes's "I think; therefore, I am" represented his conclusion that the thinking territory must exist and that he must exist in the thinking territory, a conclusion that he came to after a long period of testing.[4] Implicitly concentrating his attention in the territory of thought, Descartes tried to decide what he could rely on as true. Because he could not rely on anything in the outside world to remain constant, nor on his senses to provide undistorted data, Descartes decided that none of the things we take for granted can be affirmed with certainty. Any one of these things could turn out to be either impermanent or altogether illusory. He reached the same conclusion about any particular idea that he tried to set up as a "first principle."

But then came his "illumination"—an experience of widening awareness when he "saw" that there was one thing he could not succeed in doubting: He could not doubt the fact that he was thinking, for the doubting was itself an act of thinking. To doubt that he could think *was* to think. The awareness of the act of thinking, at that moment, was intuitively more plausible than the passive content of the thought. Each of us can share Descartes's illumination if we in fact conduct the experiential test that is being described here.

We can follow a similar process of experiential testing in order to establish the certainty of the other three territories of experience. Both modern science and our own personal experiences often confirm Descartes's conclusion that no particular aspect of the outside world, no particular sensation, and no particular thought deserves to be treated as an ultimate truth. But just as Descartes became certain that thinking must

exist and that he must exist in the thinking territory, so can we become certain as well of the existence of the other three territories and of our existence in them.

Let us begin with the outside world—not specific facts about the outside world, but the outside world as an overall, distinct territory. Can we doubt the existence of the outside world? At any moment and in any position (sitting, lying down, ambulating, etc.) that we may attempt to widen our awareness to include the outside world, do we ever *not* sense support or resistance from something that is outside ourselves, from something that is not us? We may not know clearly *what* is supporting/resisting us, but whenever we widen our awareness and test, we "see" *that* we are supported/resisted. We may forget for long periods of time that this is our condition, but whenever we test, we find that the support/resistance of the other is present.

Let us examine next whether and how we can be certain of the existence of our own behavior/sensation/perception as a distinct territory of experience. First, it is important to emphasize that we are now speaking of the behavior of each person as he or she experiences it from the inside, not as empirical data gathered by somebody else from the outside. Second, we can note that each time we affirm the support/resistance of the outside world territory through the testing procedure outlined above, we are also affirming the existence of the behavior/perception territory, for our awareness widens to the outside world *through* the sensation/perception territory. When we test for the presence of the outside world, we feel our embodiment as we touch the outside world—we "see" (conscious insight) ourselves seeing (sensory "out"sight) the outside world.

We can also ask the same question of this territory that we did of the outside world territory: When we attempt to widen our awareness to test whether the own-behavior territory exists, do we ever *not* sense our own embodiment? This question is probably not so simple to answer as the question about the outside world because few of us are accustomed to intentionally seeking to widen awareness to our sensation of embodiment. If, for example, we seek to become aware of one hand, it is easier to look at it and/or think about it (to treat it as part of the outside world territory or the thinking territory) than it is to become aware of the hand from the inside. To come to, and then to maintain, an awareness of the whole mass, surface, and movement of our body is even more unusual and difficult. This is one critical reason why behavior-change and performance-improvement is so difficult: We are not attuned to our ongoing actions. We can be far gone into the very practice that we are committed, in the thinking territory, to end (say, mumbling when we speak in a meeting, or smoking a cigarette), before we become aware of what we are doing. Whereas most of us have worn rather deep habitual ruts into the

paths of focusing on the outside world territory and floating in the thinking territory, the path to the sensation of embodiment is relatively little traveled.

Even when we do physical exercise, such as jogging or swimming, few of us use the exercise as a vehicle for widening our attention to an ongoing experience of the sensation of embodiment. Instead, we tend to enter the thinking territory and daydream. Moreover, our culture provides us with few reasons, few incentives, and few occasions for the work and play of widening our awareness to our full embodiment.

Nevertheless, the question remains: When we do attempt to widen our awareness to test whether the own-behavior territory exists (and when our wayward attention is not interrupted), do we ever *not* sense our own embodiment? Again, each must test for himself or herself in order to achieve firsthand certainty. The only time in my life when I conducted such a test and was not able to sense my embodiment fully was just after the back operation mentioned in Section II, when, for about two days, I could not sense my legs. In this case, there was an incongruity between my sensory knowledge (I could not sense my legs) and my empirical knowledge (I could see my legs) and I chose (due to confirming memories in the thinking territory) to believe the empirical evidence. . . .

Let us turn, finally, to the question of whether we know with certainty that the attention exists as a distinct territory of experience. Because Descartes was concentrating so fiercely on finding *one* thing that he could affirm with certainty, he focused on the certainty that his experiential test provided that he was thinking. In doing so, I believe he failed to describe the experience as clearly as I have a few pages above and consequently did not realize that he had in fact indubitably experienced *two* things, not just one. He had not just indubitably experienced the thinking territory, but also the distinct territory of the attention qua attention—consciousness. He had experienced not just the doubting, but also the "seeing" of the doubting.

The particular difficulty of affirming the territory of attention with certainty is that it is itself the organ of awareness that widens and narrows, usually involuntarily. We begin to experience the attention as a distinct territory only as we begin to conduct the kinds of tests being described here, all of which involve intentionally widening the attention. In all of the tests described above in reference to the existence of the other three territories of experience, we can simultaneously affirm the distinct existence of the consciousness territory.

Let us review where we have come in the previous pages. We began with the claim that our knowledge of what is occurring at any given moment in our lives must be inadequate to what is actually occurring. Next, we examined four sources of this inadequacy: our ordinarily nar-

row attention; our ordinarily narrow conceptual-emotional interpretive process; our ordinary lack of awareness of our own actions and how they influence and skew what we know; and, finally, our ordinarily incomplete, unsystematic, and untested data about the present. Indeed, I invited the reader to test whether his or her attention ordinarily even included all four of these territories of experience. If you are anything like me, when you begin to make such tests, your answer will be an unequivocal "No." If so, then clearly the knowledge we have of what is occurring in the present must be inadequate, for it tends to exclude whole territories of experience. This negative and highly abstract "fact" we can know with certainty.

Next, we explored whether there are any positive "facts" we can know with certainty. We began by following Descartes's tests of what he could know with certainty; some readers may have performed the test of whether one can affirm with certainty the existence of the thinking territory. From there, I suggested tests whereby one can confirm with certainty that all four of the territories of experience alluded to from the outset—consciousness, thought, embodiment, and the outside world—do exist. We can be aware of them, if we intentionally widen our awareness, though our awareness ordinarily floats in one territory of experience at a time.

These four, primitive positive "facts" that we can know are, of course, not particular empirically observable facts, but rather general, experiential "facts." To know with certainty that these four territories exist does not contradict the initial proposition that our knowledge of what occurs to us in the present must be inadequate, but rather heightens our awareness of the inadequacy of our knowledge each time we rediscover that we have been altogether inattentive to one or more territories. Moreover, to know for certain that the four territories exist and to widen our awareness intentionally and repeatedly to include them shows us with increasing frequency how little and how uncertainly we know what is going on in the different territories.

The Liberating Paradigm of Action Inquiry

This initial framework for experiential reality can help us to continue contrasting action inquiry with the academic social sciences usually practiced today.

Modern social (and natural) science is a dialectical, intellectual process that seeks to discover congruent patterns between two territories of experience—thinking and the outside world—in the form of a theory or

map (in the thinking territory) and data (from the outside world territory). By contrast, action inquiry is a dialectical, experiential process that treats the four territories of experience as distinct—vision, strategy (reasoned or felt), action, and the outside world—and that seeks to enact congruent patterns across all four territories of experience.

Modern science investigates the outside, empirical world, whereas action inquiry investigates one's own (and others') experience and of the interrelation among territories of experience, including the outside world. In modern social science, the researcher occupies a social role distinct from those of the social actors that he or she studies. (At the extreme closest to action inquiry, in participant observation, the mainline social researcher may "pretend" to be an actor to gain entry to a setting [an ethically questionable procedure]). By contrast, in action inquiry the practitioner integrates study and action, taking the role of an "observing participant" and making this dual role public.

Modern science is an investigation of the past in order to predict the future, whereas action inquiry—from the first efforts to widen one's attention intentionally—is a simultaneous study and transformation of the present—a study that transforms the present. In modern science, paradigms are implicit, taken-for-granted assumptions that unawaredly limit scientists' attention, strategies, and methods. By contrast, the action inquiry paradigm of four territories of experience is an explicit, liberating structure that challenges practitioners to widen their attention intentionally, hence widening the scope of alternative strategies and methods.[5]

Despite these various contrasting characterizations of conventional social science and action inquiry, the two are by no means necessarily antagonistic to one another, nor are they unintegratable. As the first two sections of this book illustrate, empirical research can tell us about the structures of our thinking (e.g., the sentence completion tests that measure stage of development). Empirical science can also tell us about the patterns of our actual behavior (e.g., tape recordings of meetings and behavior counts based on different classification schemes), and is one way of testing the outcomes of action inquiry.

Although none of these empirical findings generate direct awareness, the dialectic between them and our direct awareness can heighten awareness and reduce incongruities among the territories. Indeed, an extraordinary amount of empirical research was conducted in relation both to the A.S. 1 course at SMU and to the MBA program at Boston College's Carroll School of Management—so much so that we occasionally sought before-and-after measures of perceived learning of single sessions and also quantified students' behavior during those sessions and in their papers about the sessions (Chapter 5, Chapter 8).

Within the action inquiry paradigm, the results of empirical research are used somewhat differently from their use within the conventional

social scientific approach. Whereas the conventional science approach to data is to organize it into an article for publication (thus inviting further testing by academic colleagues in one's field), in action inquiry the data is first fed back to the participants in the research, whenever possible, in order to heighten awareness of incongruities, to serve as a corrective to further practice, and to test the respondents' perceptions of the validity and usefulness of the results. Also, over a longer term, the primary commitment is to institutionalizing the inquiry and feedback process within that particular community of social practice. Only after the secondary, instrumented data has been tested through a public, primary experience, and only in the context of an ongoing effort to institutionalize inquiry at the primary location, is there an attempt, if some of the practitioners belong to the community of academic social science, to generate a published, secondary version of the experience and the empirical data.[6]

This book is itself a published version of the intuitive paradigm, the rational theory, the actual experiences, and the empirical data associated with early explorations of action inquiry. Although my fond hope is that it may be of interest to practitioners in politics, business, and education, I recognize that the format, the publisher, and the weight of the argument all address my colleagues in the social sciences and professional schools more directly than anyone else. This is as it should be—for my community of practice is, first and foremost, academic social science and university-based professional education.

Moreover, I believe that as a knowledge-based society, the kernel of the superior culture of the planet today is academic social science, professional education, and the university as a whole (along with the media, which share with the modern university the paradigm of freedom to pursue detached, analytic, "objective" knowledge without taking into account one's action effects on the world). Neither the religious priesthoods nor the world's political leaders any longer occupy the central seats of cultural power. God is dead, said Nietzsche's madman a century ago.[7] The presidency is dead, wrote Ogilvy more than a decade ago.[8] The university, as I suggested in the introduction (and as Pirsig declares in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*[9]) is the church of modernity.

Hence, I believe that the most constructive force for social transformation in today's world could be the civilizing process whereby universities (and the media) would engage simultaneously in empirical and action inquiry research on their paradigms, strategies, practices, and outcomes. This new kind of social science, management, teaching, and learning aims at *creating communities of inquiry (peer cultures) within communities of social practice (which are typically characterized dominantly by superior and subordinate cultures).*[10]

The Strategy of Creating Communities of Inquiry Within Communities of Social Practice

What does this mean—to create communities of inquiry within communities of social practice?

In some sense, each company in an uncertain and changing environment, each social science and each distinct research project, each university and each distinct classroom is ideally intended to be a community of inquiry. At the same time, each of these settings is also in fact a community of social practice. In each case, the ideal community of inquiry and the actual community of practice are in tension with one another. The pursuit of truth, whether it be the truth about the most effectual strategy for a company or the truth about the most effectual classroom practice for a teacher, is in tension with the habits, taboos, limited ideologies, and unexamined assumptions of any person or social community.

In principle, this tension is perfectly healthy and is the dynamic that can and does generate progress. Senior management and Boards of Directors function, at best, as communities of inquiry testing the relationships among mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes within their organizations (and the continual quality improvement process introduced in this book seeks to widen this inquiry to embrace the entire organization). Similarly, full professors properly function as such communities of inquiry within a university (and properly seek to widen the inquiry to embrace junior colleagues and students). Indeed, on a larger scale, we generally view modern science and the modern university as the institutionalization of a community of inquiry within the society as a whole. And we generally view this tension between inquiry and current practice as a primary source, if not *the* primary source, of progress over the past five centuries.

The paradox of the generalizable knowledge that conventional social science—whether positivistic or interpretive—seeks is that it is precisely *not* generalizable to the conditions of our individual lives and organizations. For, in our own lives and our own organizations, we are not just rational but also embodied and passionate actors; our wish to know is not for purely descriptive, value-free purposes, but is rather connected to our normative, valued agendas; our situations are not just subsets of general categories, but are also unique in ways it would be to our advantage to recognize; and, finally, our objective is not just to act in a timelessly valid, universalizable fashion, as Kant would have us do, but also to act in a way uniquely appropriate to this particular time, person, or setting—uniquely appropriate to this "I" (oneself) and this "Thou."[11]

Putting these points differently, in our own lives each of us is the primary social scientist who is studying our social situation and our experiments to become more efficient, effective, and legitimate. Just like academic social scientists today, each of us "consumes" other social scientific work as background and context for our own efforts; but, primarily, each of us *enacts* (a flawed version of) social science. Unlike the natural/technological sciences of the past five centuries, the social/human sciences of the next five centuries, if they increasingly adopt the action inquiry paradigm, will be generalizable only one person at a time, as persons choose to *do* this form of social science. It follows, too, that what is generalizable in this form of science is primarily an approach to action rather than the content of certain information.

Only such a social science can help us to improve our performances in particular settings in ways that make our own particular lives (and others' particular lives) better. Only such a social science can make us more effective actors in a way that is authentic, not affected—in a way that generates existential significance, not merely statistical significance or intellectual elegance.

The peculiar twist of modern science and the modern university, however, is that neither is dedicated to the study of one's own practice and to the practice of the community or organization(s) one currently inhabits. The aim is not the cultivation of a living awareness in the midst of real-time action of one's own and one's organization's intuitive mission, current strategy, actual operating pattern, and effects on the environment, and of incongruities among these. In modern science, the ideal community of inquiry remains a disembodied, purely cognitive ideal.

Consider how truth is determined in this ideal community: " 'What it means for a statement to be true is that it would be the one on which all agents would agree if they were to discuss all of human experience in absolutely free and uncoerced circumstances for an indefinite period of time.' "[12] Clearly, such conditions do not and cannot arise in any community of practice, even in a so-called ivory tower university setting. The particular ideal of a community of inquiry, in which no one is anything but a disembodied, reasoning voice, is impractical. Because time constraint is an essential feature of the mortal condition, it is necessary to use power, as well as reason, to resolve conflicts of perspective and priority.

The question becomes, "What kind of power resolves conflicts of perspective and priority in such a way as to widen the arena for reason and inquiry now and in the future?" Only a power that invites and encourages mutuality, as well as confrontation of its own assumptions and practices, can do so. As the reader has seen, first in Chapter 3, both transforming power and the power of balance are so defined and so practiced.

A truly practical community of inquiry—that is to say, a practic*ing* community of inquiry—is a group of people, however large, committed to discovering propositions about the world, life, their particular organization(s), and themselves that they will test in their own actions with others. Such propositions may initially derive from radically different and not necessarily explicit perspectives (Christian, midwest Republican, positivist, Marxist, Italian peasant, Islamic, anthropological, Rabelaisian, psychoanalytic, etc.). Hence, the true, practicing community of inquiry will admit of, and endeavor to explicate, to bridge, and to test, the validity of multiple perspectives or paradigms, not just the validity of facts and theories.

To meet this demand of testing whole paradigms is both difficult and paradoxical, for a paradigm itself sets the criteria of rationality and validity for work conducted within it and typically remains outside of the awareness of its practitioners. This is why the unique character of the action inquiry paradigm, described earlier in this chapter, is so important. This paradigm is explicit rather than implicit, functions to widen awareness rather than to restrict it, and invites testing of any implicit assumptions and incongruities that may be embedded within it or within practice purporting to be based on it.

This book as a whole, especially from Chapter 3 on, attempts to illustrate how transforming power and the power of balance operate to create a community of inquiry within a community of social practice. Put abstractly, such power operates through peer cultures, liberating structures, and timely actions. Cultures are truly peer-like, structures are liberating, and actions are timely, if they simultaneously promote widening inquiry about what is the appropriate mission, strategy, and practice for the given person or organization or nation, while accomplishing established objectives in an increasingly efficient, effective, and self-legitimizing manner.

Quite a trick!

If we can really discover the principles and the practices of such organizing and such acting, we will have discovered the key to ongoing legitimacy, vigor, and competence for governments and businesses, as well as for social science and higher education. This positive kind of power—that balances inquiry and effectiveness, awareness and action, timeless principle and timely practice, dynamic change and sane stability, sexuality and spirituality, politics and poetry—is, once again, what I am calling the power of balance. I have tried to provide some preliminary concrete illustrations of such power and such organizing in the first two sections of this book.

Public Testing in Interpersonal Practice

The more we practice widening the attention to embrace the four territories of experience, the more the different social phenomena we glimpse come to participate in an analogical, simultaneous—sometimes sinuous and integrated, often fragmented and incongruent—multi-territoriality. For example, all our speaking in daily, professional, and intimate conversations can be understood and practiced as efforts to communicate in all four territories of experience. Looked at this way, all conversation and public utterance is an effort, implicitly or explicitly, to communicate:

(1) a *frame*—the assumptions that bound the conversation, the "name of the game," the purpose of speaking;
(2) an *advocacy*—a particular goal to be achieved, an abstract assertion about perception or action;
(3) an *illustration*—a concrete example, a colorful story; and
(4) an *inquiry*—an invitation to respond, an effort to determine the effects of one's action (one's speaking) or others' perspectives on the matter.

Any given comment may explicate one, two, three, or all four of these "parts of speech," although most comments explicate no more than one or two. Conversationalists are likely to mis-attribute what frame the others are employing or what advocacy they are making to the degree that that part of speech remains implicit throughout a conversation. It is remarkable, for example, how many people do not get what they want simply because they do not advocate it. Instead of saying, "I would like to go at 8 P.M. Is that okay with you?" to which the answer may very well be "Sure," they say, "Would you like to leave at 8?" to which the answer is more likely to be, "No, I'd rather leave at 7." Similarly, it is remarkable how many people complain that no one in a group responds to them, only to find upon analysis of their own comments that they never inquire of the others in the first place.

But the point of seeking to explicate all four constituents of the speech act is not merely, nor is it even primarily, to get one's own way. It is just as much a test of whether others are willing to share in one's direction; just as much an invitation to correct incongruities that others may see among one's frame, advocacy, illustration, and inquiry; and again just as much an opportunity to generate a new and better (e.g., more inclusive, more aesthetic, or more efficient) frame or advocacy. The point is to gain a better understanding and more effective leverage through inquiring

even as one acts. The process is to invite the exercise of mutual influence and transforming power, while increasing the validity of the data available about how participants are experiencing the situation. Few, today, have the interpersonal skills to weave together the four territories of experience as they talk—at once declaring (rather than taking for granted) the frame they bring to the interaction, advocating (rather than merely insinuating) their view, offering illustrations that go to the heart of the matter, and inquiring in a way that genuinely seeks valid information about others' responses.[13]

The Hierarchy of Political Principles in the Action Inquiry Paradigm

Because action inquiry is simultaneously a type of inquiry and a type of action—a type of science and a type of politics—it is appropriate to end this chapter with a consideration of its ordering of political principles. The action inquiry paradigm embraces and orders the three traditional political principles—Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity—and adds two more principles that have not heretofore been treated as political—Quality and Inquiry.

Inquiry—the aim of creating existential communities of inquiry—is the primary political principle.

Peerdom (Fraternity and Equality, without the sexist connotation of Fraternity) is the secondary political principle. True Peerdom is only approached as a peer culture or community of inquiry is created.

Liberty is the tertiary political principle. Liberty is only approached in the context of a system, community, or culture that encourages peerlike inquiry and that grants equal rights—only in the context of Peerdom.

And *Quality* is the quaternary political principle, approached only in the context of the commitment, attention, and skill cultivated through ongoing practice of the the first three principles.

Presented so briefly and so abstractly, the interdependencies among these four political principles are hardly obvious. I attempted to state these principles and their interrelations for myself 15 years ago. Although the language remains abstract and the tone of voice comes out more missionary, as a public utterance, than I am altogether comfortable with, I share it here:

The Politics of Inquiry

If I am to inquire into the meaning of human being as I act—if I am to act humanly and not automatically—I wish immediately to share this inquiry with all human beings.

The meaning of human being is not some answer worked out by one for many. The meaning of human being is revealed in the response of each to each as we engage together in world transforming inquiry-in-action. There is no genuine community of inquiry that does not include the entire species because no one's imagination can encompass another's reality—can encompass the full meaning of human being.

As one wishing to inquire, I speak of my respect for you, of my esteem for you, yes, even of my love for you, when I address you as a stranger. As I address you in this way, and you reply, and our familiarity grows, you become stranger and stranger, until at moments I come to appreciate your Infinite Strangeness (my Infinite Strangeness), your individuality (my individuality), your craftiness (my craftiness).

As our mutual value thus appreciates through fraternal inquiry, so does the value of our works. Indeed, as we come to appreciate the full mystery and majesty of human being, we begin for the first time wholeheartedly to seek to craft goods—products, services, and celebrations in-formed by the openness, discipline, and inspiration of living inquiry. All craft—whether verbal or manual—requires an inquiry-in-action repeatedly reawakening us to the matter and the moment at hand.

As initial author of the words above and below, I can say, after 13 years of increasingly independent questioning, that I experience their truth. I experience how these ideas found my questioning. I experience how they sculpt me. The call of these ideas so obviously animates, interpenetrates, and illuminates my daily life alone and with others (to the small degree that I can bear illumination) that I feel increasingly as though they are staking their life in me. (To say that I am willing to stake my life in them would be to treat them as contingent and myself as capable of choosing other foundations—which is not how I experience the situation.)

I believe these ideas are fundamental to a just and inclusive world community, and I believe that all persons can come to experience their truth through inquiry. Thus, I do not urge anyone to believe what I say, but rather to join in the inquiry. Yet so few find their way even that far: to join in the inquiry. Indeed, this is the great mystery: how to generate a politics of inquiry.

In the past, three great political principles have been propounded—liberty, equality, and fraternity. No state has ever attained all three. Indeed, none of the three has ever been attained alone, though some states have approached one and some another.

What some persons regard as the path toward just practice, other persons regard, equally assuredly, as the path toward hell. We are missing a fourth political principle—a principle never before recognized as political—the principle of inquiry. The only political principle that invites the potential transformation of everyone's perspective is the principle of inquiry.

Quality results can never occur so long as persons have no genuine felt sense of individual liberty—so long as persons do not experience their visceral power to craft. In the absence of the voluntarily assumed, empowering discipline of craft, people are reduced to the status of consumers, requiring more of the same thing than another in order to imagine themselves better than the other, since they cannot really feel good about themselves.

A positively empowering sense of individual liberty can only rarely occur, in turn, so long as groups, organizations, and nations do not create equality of opportunity, equality before the law, as well as genuinely friendly atmospheres where each seeks to meet the otherness of others. Only meetings under such conditions encourage and challenge persons to set their own goals, to risk for the sake of quality, and to grow in response-ability, rather than simply to conform externally to narrow norms of appropriate behavior.

But such a genuine peer culture—an inclusive atmosphere that actively encourages quality, liberty, and equality—can, in its turn, never develop except in the service of the questions and dilemmas that face the human species as a whole. Any sense of fraternity rooted in specific answers must be implicitly, if not explicitly, elitist and imperialistic. (Which is not to say that a community of inquiry has no place whatsoever for answers: The strong declarative quality of the foregoing paragraphs may illustrate that foundational questions generate many answers in time, but answers that are rooted in and enliven inquiry rather than ending it.)

Not only is the development of a worldwide community of inquiry unlikely (all organization is, after all, improbable by definition), but the process by which it develops must be doubly unknown. If achievement of the community of inquiry comprising the species as a whole is the condition for full appreciation of the unknowns at the center of human being, then the fact of the unknown itself remains largely unknown during the process by which some promote evolution toward the community of all. Doubly unknown, this process of introducing the unknown can nonetheless certainly be characterized as ironic and as unlike any political process we have witnessed heretofore.

That I wish to share the inquiry into the meaning of human being with all human beings and that a liberating peer culture requires such shared

inquiry—these facts do not, of course, imply that anyone else in the world, much less everyone else, wishes to join in such inquiry at the outset.

Indeed, the very glory of our civilization—its development of production technologies and information systems that make global material welfare feasible—distracts our attention from the less tangible realms of liberty, peerdom, and inquiry, making the development of a community of inquiry all the more unlikely.

Conclusion

Modern science is characteristic of a prolonged era of human history during which the principle dynamic has been the effort to elevate human communities from a reliance on custom to a reliance on reason. As custom ceases to glue people's interactions as reliably as before, their behavior oscillates between guidance by reason, by custom, and by market exchange or terror. Such is our world today.

On the brink of the twenty-first century, the United Nations struggles to find some principle and practice that can, without destroying local initiative, supercede national law in weaving a global community. It has yet to discover the primary potential source of its power. Not arms and unilateral force, not diplomacy nor law will be its primary instruments of power, if it is indeed to contribute significantly to global development, global productivity, and global justice. Cross-cultural, cross-paradigmatic, transforming inquiry in the midst of ongoing practice must be the kind of power that the United Nations cultivates, if it is to play a truly constructive leadership role in the coming centuries. An Inter-Cultural Inquiry Corps could dispatch multiprofessional, six-person teams throughout the world to relate to specific organizations and communities, to provide leadership training to individuals, and, on behalf of a not-for-profit investment consortium, to identify businesses that deserve microdevelopment capital investments. The degree to which nations contributed to and invited the presence of such an Inter-Cultural Inquiry Corps would provide an immediate measure of their openness as a polity to inquiry and self-transformation.

Such experiments in personal and social transformation will be frought with risk and difficulty, as have been the ones described earlier in this book and in the next chapter. Everyone will be reaching beyond themselves at the same time, for few are now dedicated to questioning their own assumptions in the midst of action by widening their attention while continuing to act. Few explicate the frames they are assuming, the advocacies they mean to make, the illustrations that influence them, and the inquiries that would test and validate or invalidate their current

direction of action. Still fewer are prepared to create, implement, and recreate liberating structures. And fewer yet are prepared to joust creatively and nonviolently with deeply ambivalent and at least semihostile superior cultures as they do so.

The next chapter provides an impression of such an experiment in a local community government and of how it was affected by two different social scientific studies of it—one study based on the mainline social science paradigm, the other based on the action inquiry approach.

Notes

1. Daumal, R., 1971, *Mount Analogue*, San Francisco: City Lights Books.

2. Karl Popper has offered the most succinct and influential argument that science is preeminently a process for *dis*confirming propositions. See Popper, K., 1959, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, New York: Harper & Row.

3. E. F. Schumacher, in his final book before his death, argued that the scientific worldview is highly misleading because it will admit only knowledge about which we can be relatively certain (that has survived empirical attempts to disconfirm it) onto our map of reality. Thus the scientific worldview misses the entire world of direct awareness of the attentional, cognitive-emotional, and personal behavior territories. See Schumacher, E., 1977, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, New York: Harper & Row.

As Schumacher put it, the scientific map of the world "maximize[s] the risk of missing out on what may be the subtlest, most important, and most rewarding things in life" (p. 3).

Based on traditional wisdom, Schumacher posits four qualitatively different "levels of being"—mineral, plant, animal, and human. Only the mineral level is fully externalized, fully visible (fully in the 'outside world' territory), and thus fully knowable to empirical science. Each of the other three levels (which correspond to the three territories of own behavior, cognitive-emotional structure, and attention) includes progressively more internalized, invisible qualities, as well as their external appearances, and these invisible qualities are not fully accessible to scientific observation through our five senses. Humankind must develop the illumination implicit in our potential for self-awareness if we are to know these subtler qualities, for the "instrument" of knowledge must mirror the subtlety of the quality to be known if it is to be known at all. One who is not self-aware cannot envision self-awareness in others.

4. Descartes, R., 1960, *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, New York: Macmillan, especially pp. 25-26.

5. Additional reflections on the difference between conventional social science and action inquiry can be found in three of my previous books, *Learning from Experience*, *Creating a Community of Inquiry*, and *Managing the Corporate Dream*, as well as in Torbert, W., 1981, (ch. 11) "Why educational research has been so uneducational: The case for a new model of social science based on collaborative inquiry"; (ch. 29) "A collaborative inquiry into voluntary metropolitan desegregation"; and (ch. 37) "Empirical, behavioural, theoretical, and attentional skills necessary for collaborative inquiry," in Reason, P., & Rowan, J. (Eds.), *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*, New York: John Wiley.

6. Three scholarly articles of which I am aware eventuated from the SMU experience: (1) Dunbar, R., & Dutton, J., 1972, "Student learning in a restructured environ-

ment," *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 6: 26-37; (2) Torbert, W., 1978, "Educating toward shared purpose, self-direction and quality work: The theory and practice of liberating structure," *Journal of Higher Education*, 49, 2: 109-135; and (3) Dunbar, R., Dutton, J., & Torbert, W., 1982, "Crossing mother: Ideological constraints on organizational improvements," *Journal of Management Studies*, 19, 1: 91-108. The empirical research relating to Boston College's Carroll School MBA program has generated numerous publications, most of which are referred to in the notes to Chapters 3 and 4.

7. Nietzsche, F., 1974 (reprinted from 1887), *The Gay Science* (trans. W. Kaufmann), New York: Vintage, pp. 181-182.

8. Ogilvy, J., 1977, *Many Dimensional Man: Decentralizing Self, Society, and the Sacred*, New York: Oxford University Press.

9. Pirsig, R., 1974, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, New York: William Morrow.

10. This vision of social science seems to me highly compatible with the directions suggested in the work of Bernstein and Gadamer and Argyris. See Bernstein, R., 1985, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Gedamer, H., 1982, *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad Publishing; and Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & Smith, D., 1985, *Action Science*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Argyris, Putnam, and Smith have recently articulated a vision and practice of science that relates both to the existing, dominant scientific perspective and to the vision advocated here. A brief glance at their version of "action science" (a term they borrow, but use somewhat differently, from Torbert, *op. cit.* 1976) can launch us.

They begin (p. 11 ff) very much in the spirit of the vision of science proposed here. Focusing on the relation of science to community, they distinguish among four versions of science—mainstream, phenomenological, the Kuhnian view, and their action science.

The mainstream version focuses on *science* as an ideal, requiring a *community of inquiry*—i.e., rational criticism of one another's claims—*among scientists* as a guarantor of truth claims.

The phenomenological version of science focuses on the everyday world of practice, reconstructing *how communities of practice understand themselves* (they do not generally understand themselves as communities of inquiry).

The Kuhnian version focuses on *science* as itself part of the everyday world of practice—*as a community of practice*—and highlights how far short of its ideal of a community of inquiry it falls whenever its own framework or presuppositions come into question. That is, the sciences do not encourage inquiry about their own paradigmatic assumptions.

Finally, the Argyris, Putnam, and Smith version of action science *"seeks to enact communities of inquiry in communities of social practice"* (p. 12). Expressed in this way, this vision is consistent with the vision proposed here. But notice that this brief formulation overlooks several questions that emerge from juxtaposing the three prior versions of science. The first question is how far communities of practice in the everyday world diverge from the ideal of a community of inquiry. The second question is how far the community of scientists itself diverges from a community of inquiry. The third question is how far the current scientific ideal of a community of inquiry diverges from an ideal that can, on the one hand, resolve paradigm disputes and, on the other hand, be realized in communities of practice. In other words, the Argyrisian formulation does not address how great the distance is between present conditions and the enactment of communities of inquiry in communities of social practice.

Without explicitly considering these questions, Argyris and his colleagues appear to assume that the distance in all cases is relatively small, one of degree and not of kind. For, they continue by saying, "In action science we build on the practices for coming to agreement in everyday life, in ways that make them more consistent with scientific values such as valid information and public testing" (p. 12). This sentence implies that science has something to offer practice, but not vice-versa. It also implies that the distance between everyday life and scientific values is relatively small—that they are not fundamentally inconsistent, that adding in some scientific value will do the trick. It also implies that there is a relatively small distance between mainstream scientific values and action science values (since valid information and public testing are positive values for both), and that this relatively unified and relatively known scientific ideal of a community of inquiry is eminently realizable in practice.[14]

But these implications are disconfirmed by explicit reflection. Such reflection shows that these distances are in fact great. In the first place, the lack of conversation between mainstream empirical scientists and phenomenologists suggests that the different versions of science that Argyris, Putnam, and Smith introduce are not minor, but paradigmatic in nature. Hence, it suggests that both the difference between mainstream science and action science, and the difference between any of the versions of science and other communities of social practice, are paradigmatic.

In the second place, Kuhnian analysis highlights how current scientific communities as communities of social practice are generally unable to resolve paradigm disputes. Hence, communities of practice—whether in the academic social sciences or in the business world—are likely to resist the enactment of practicing communities of inquiry within themselves, for such communities of inquiry will be experienced as paradigm threats to the communities of practice.

11. Buber, M., 1937, *I and Thou*, Edinburgh, Scotland: R & R Clark; also, Buber, M., 1965, *Between Man and Man*, New York: Macmillan.

12. Argyris, Putnam, and Smith present this quote approvingly (Action Science, p. 75). The quote is originally from Geuss, R., 1981, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 65).

13. These four parts of speech are discussed and illustrated in great detail in *MCD* and in Torbert, W., 1981, "Interpersonal competence," in Chickering, A. (Ed.), *The Modern American College*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. I am indebted to the earlier work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön for the terms themselves. See Argyris, C., & Schön, D., 1974, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; and Schön, D., 1983, *The Reflective Practitioner*, New York: Basic Books.

14. I realize that at other points in *Action Science* and in his other writings Argyris emphasizes the *differences* between mainstream and action science in their strategies, their objectives, and their methods. Indeed, it could be said that within the organization sciences, Argyris is known precisely for the rigor of the contrast that he insists so lucidly upon between mainstream and action science. Moreover, his most substantial theoretical contribution to the field of organizational behavior and organization development concerns the distinction between the kind of behavior typical in most communities of practice (what he calls Model I) and the kind of behavior necessary to permit second order learning and a community of inquiry in practice (what he calls Model II). But the point here is that he does not treat these differences as a difference in principle, as a paradigm difference (and this point has been confirmed in conversation with him). A secondary point is that he has not illustrated how to create a community of inquiry within a community of social practice.

14 The Method of Action Inquiry

The two territories of experience within the action inquiry paradigm that are least familiar to practitioners of mainstream social science are the territories of *consciousness* and of *one's own embodiment*.

In presenting the *vision* of action inquiry, the previous chapter primarily emphasized the process of widening attention to the *consciousness* territory, becoming aware of one's assumptions, and inviting them to be challenged. The result is the most abstract chapter in this book.

In presenting the *method* of action inquiry, this chapter will primarily emphasize the process and results of becoming more aware of *one's own embodiment* in a demanding action setting, of carefully recording one's own action with others and experimenting to make it more effective. This chapter will also be much more concrete than the previous chapter by offering a tale of changes in one city government as documented and influenced by two different studies—one using mainstream social science methods, the other using action inquiry methods.

The administration of a newly elected mayor of a major U.S. city introduced a Quality of Working Life (QWL) program as part of a promised effort to transform city services from an inefficient, patronage-driven, "shark-like" culture to a more responsive, performance-based, participatory culture. In the language of the last chapter, the effort was to transform a community of practice based largely on custom, exchange, and terror to a community of practice based more on law and inquiry. This chapter compares the methods, findings, and impact on the QWL program of two different studies, each one a doctoral dissertation at a different university. Study A used quantitative and qualitative field methods characteristic of mainline social science and met the standards of one of the world's foremost research universities. Study B was conducted by the director of the QWL program itself and used the action inquiry or "observant participation" method.

There are three general features that distinguish the observant participation method, used in Study B, from mainstream social science:

(1) *The researcher views himself or herself as a participant in the action to be studied—indeed, as a committed participant; instead of "participant observation," the researcher creates a role of "observing participation."*[1] Researcher B clearly held such a role in initially championing the QWL project for inclusion in the candidate's platform, in securing funding, in becoming the first director, and in publicly contracting to conduct his doctoral research on the program.

(2) *The researcher views his or her own experience and action as within the field of study, not only in order to explore the effects of the research on the setting, but also in order to explore how to become more effective.* Researcher B took Loevinger's sentence completion test, was scored as entering the Strategist stage, and recognized that this suggested his perspective would be developmentally different from most of his coworkers, but probably not yet fully up to the existential demands of exercising transforming power. Hence, he invited me and another QWL consultant to serve as his community of inquiry, in order to critique and contribute to his own action effectiveness (as well as the effectiveness of the QWL worksite groups and the oversight committee). During the first two years of the project, he would tape record his intentions on the way in to work and his reconstructed actions on his way home on a daily basis. He also wrote up a detailed critical incident once a week, based on these tapes, and reviewed and role-played alternative actions with his two consultants. In addition, he took the lead in securing funding for Study A and repeatedly sought feedback about the program from it. In all these ways, Study B clearly meets the second guideline for "observant participation."

(3) *The researcher expects the study to be longitudinal in nature—and not just six months or one year.* This follows in part from the first guideline: A one-year commitment is hardly one that inspires trust in the context of an action enterprise. It also follows from the very nature of developmental transformations: To date, I am aware of no evidence showing stage changes by individuals in less than two years; moreover, it is difficult to conceive of a big institution fully institutionalizing a developmental change in much less than five years.[2] Study B covered a three-year period, and Researcher B has continued working for the city since, consulting to the QWL program and developing a city-wide in-house school of management and consulting center supported by a consortium of 80 private companies and universities. The training center and the performance evaluation system were developed when it became obvious that the QWL program in effect attempted to insert communities of inquiry within communities (worksites) dominated by custom, thereby unintentionally skipping the stage of transforming

from custom to law (e.g. job descriptions, equitable reviews, performance feedback, and training). Thus the learning that Researcher B gained from his study led to a strategic change in his behavior and in the focus of his organizing (as well as to various tactical changes).

Obviously, Researcher B was an active participant in the setting he was studying. In addition, I served as an active clinical advisor to Study B and as a member of the dissertation committee. Consequently, the reader is invited to read the following pages with extra alertness to possible bias in the analysis. The action inquiry approach does not attempt to preclude bias about, or influence on, events by distancing. Instead, it recognizes and explicitly tests for the possibility of bias, and for the actual type of influence that is operating between research and practice (between "community of inquiry" and "community of social practice"), at each point of action and interpretation. The underlying principle is that neither distance nor intimacy will *ipso facto* generate either objectivity or bias on the part of the observer, either impact or lack of impact on the observed.[3] This chapter will illustrate how each study tested for possible bias and for actual influence.

Chronology of Events

Table 14.1 offers a brief chronology of significant events over the first two years in the development of the QWL program and of the two studies of the program. As the chronology shows, the eventual program director and author of Study B was very much the "champion" of the QWL program, having proposed it early in the mayoral campaign, having obtain widespread local publicity for the idea just as the new administration was taking office, and having played a central role in obtaining federal funding both for the program and for the research that eventuated in Study A.

The program was eventually launched in conjunction with Union A, one of two municipal unions. As the chronology notes, an early crisis occurred when the other union, Union B, not only decided not to participate, but actively tried to block receipt of the federal grant. Because Union B was the larger union and the union that had supported the new mayor in the election, the new mayor was reluctant thereafter to offer his personal support to the program.

Two facilitators, one appointed by the union and one by the management oversight committee for the program, worked directly with worksite groups that discussed ways of improving services and quality of working life in their own areas. The program director (Researcher B) adopted a practice of inviting feedback on his managerial and facilitative

Table 14.1
Chronology of Municipal QWL Program

May 1983	Future program direction (Researcher B) proposes QWL idea to mayoral candidate's policy staff and is told to develop it.
November 1983	Mayoral candidate wins primary and election.
January 1984	Future program director appointed to mayor's transition task force on Basic City Services; writes 'op ed' column for city's major paper on municipal QWL.
April 1984	Future program director appointed Deputy Director of Personnel for city, with mandate to develop and secure funding for QWL program.
August 1984	Program wins one federal grant, applies for second; first Oversite Committee meeting; national search for facilitator, program consultant, and research group begins.
October 1984	Initial departments are chosen for work site groups.
	Crisis #1: Union B, which had decided not to participate in program, tries to block receipt of grant in City Council.
January 1985	First training of work site group participants; Study A research team offers feedback of baseline research.
Spring 1985	Work site groups meet regularly, progress is slow; additional department joins program; high tension between program director and management facilitator.
	Crisis #2: Program director/Researcher B's notes pilfered from Personnel Department word processing system, anonymously distributed; false inferences made about program director's intentions, decisions.
Summer 1985	Public crisis with extensive media coverage in one of the two original work site group departments, work site groups work well, are perceived as positive factor in situation.
	Top managers in other original work site group department lose confidence in program because of quality of facilitation; Researcher A informally evaluates program as "dead in the water."
	Crisis #3: Program director reassigns the management facilitator out of program; in response, Union A suspends program; infighting through fall.

(continued)

Table 14.1
Continued

December 1985	Program director's decision stands and program restarts, but director loses support of some top management; co-director of program named.
February 1986	City assumes full budget of program; with new facilitator, work site groups in third department working particularly well.
April 1986	Crisis #4: Report of research associated with Study A leads one department to drop out of program; city administrators then learn that different, secret report sent to Department of Labor; program nearly canceled, program director (now co-director) nearly forced out.
January 1988	Program continues; several key "enemies" of program leave administration; program director gains stature and major new responsibilities at both city and state levels as events bear out his earlier actions and as he overcomes tendency toward self-deauthorization that contributed to earlier problems.

competence, arranged for two consultants to work with him and with the oversight committee and worksite group facilitators, and urged the facilitators and the worksite groups to develop similar action inquiry norms.

The management facilitator, in particular, resisted examining his behavioral effectiveness in facilitating the worksite groups, and, as the chronology notes, meetings between the program director and the management facilitator were characterized by high tension. Both consultants role-played with the program director ways of more effectively confronting the management facilitator, advising that such confrontation was necessary if the program was in fact to enact a continual quality improvement process and influence the dominant city hall culture in the direction originally intended.

At this point, a second crisis occurred. The program director (Researcher B) typed some research journal notes after work one evening and neglected to remove the text from the city's personnel department word processing system until the following workday. By that time, the text had been anonymously pilfered and distributed to the management facilitator and the president of Union A. The notes included a reference to the need for the program director to learn how to confront the management facilitator more directly. They also included notes from a telephone conversation with the union president, the purpose of which was to help the program director learn how to deal with the union president's strong, abrupt, and unilateral manner. Both the management facilitator and the union president erroneously assumed that the program director was

planning to fire the management facilitator, that he had illegally taped his telephone conversation with the union president, and that I, his academic advisor, was "controlling city hall decisions." They demanded a meeting with the program director and myself. The meeting ended the uproar, because my confrontation of the union president's and management facilitator's invalid attributiveness and unilateralness in effect created a stalemate. But the meeting did not influence either the union president or the management facilitator to reexamine seriously their own actions or the aims of the program. The overall strategy of creating a community of inquiry within a community of social practice was neither intuitively familiar, nor intuitively plausible, nor particularly significant to these two players at that time.

One of the two departments with worksite groups encountered a public crisis during the summer of 1985, and the research and proposals of the worksite groups were adopted as a solution to the problems, with media approval. This was the first significant success of the program.

But managers in the other department were losing confidence in the program because, they said, of the quality of facilitation. Researcher A informally evaluated the program at this time as "dead in the water." His warmest informant relationships were with the two worksite facilitators and the union president, who struggled most with the program director. Also, he saw the program director's concerns and managerial style as more problematic than the worksite facilitators' styles. I can find virtually no behavioral data in Study A that suggests what was problematic or not problematic about any of the styles, although the study does document that other players *evaluated* the program director's style as negative. The closest Study A comes to offering behavioral data is to say that the program director frequently asked Researcher A for feedback on the findings of Study A.

Excerpts from each study about one critical worksite group event illustrate some of the tensions among styles and interpretations that existed. These excerpts also illustrate how subtle is the action of simultaneously improving productivity and empowering participants at all levels. I offer excerpts from Study B first because they introduce the context more fully:

Excerpts from Study B

> At times [Researcher A] viewed facilitation issues solely in class terms . . . as did the union facilitator and the union leader—and missed the organizational and micro issues. An example of this was in the spring of 1985 when employees in one work unit, led by a facilitator, petitioned that management take responsibility for cleaning up their work area. From the perspective of the program director:

> The worksite group had not tried to bring managers in to solve the issue nor approached Building Maintenance; it focused its petition on a manager who was most likely to feel pushed into a corner by the strategy. I saw this as a problem with the management facilitator's understanding of the process; he was increasingly becoming hostile to management, and so slipping into an adversarial mode. This paralleled his personal feelings toward me. Both [the consultant] and I felt that the groups were not getting facilitation which helped them to experiment with truly new behavior—one which empowered them to solve the problems more directly, rather than by demanding a solution from management. [The consultant] worked with the facilitator long distance at night on the phone to try to convince him to work with the group to get them to see the pattern. He agreed with [the consultant] [he had rejected my analysis], but was very unconvincing with the group; he did not seem to grasp it.

Both the union facilitator and [Researcher A] saw the situation from more classic class attitudes. As [Researcher A] said to a staff meeting, "when the lid comes off [class feelings], you cannot control how it comes off." The union facilitator and the management facilitator agreed.[4]

Excerpts from Study A About the Same Incident

> The facilitators urged the group to develop concrete proposals for the kinds of training they wanted, or to agree on one small problem and devise a detailed solution to it. But at least half of the members 'just didn't get it,' as one put it later. They were not prepared to plan or take action; they simply wanted management to treat them well. . . .
>
> A petition to sweep the floors and take care of other housekeeping chores (was) circulated by (a) Worksite Group . . . but then confiscated by a manager, exacerbating tensions between workers and managers and between the program director and facilitators. . . .
>
> [The program director] became alarmed that the Worksite Group had precipitated a confrontation with senior management and gave the chairperson of the group what she and others considered to be a reprimand for dealing with senior management in such an "adversary way." . . . The [members] could not understand why management, who had initiated the program, was now berating them for developing an initiative.[5]

Four months after the foregoing incident and two months after the meeting about the pilfered research notes, the program director concluded that he should reassign the management facilitator to some other role, if worksite groups in the disenchanted department were to have any chance to succeed and if the program were to gain any momentum. After attempting to consult with the union president about the issue prior to

taking action, but being rebuffed before he could raise the issue, he did reassign the management facilitator.

The third program crisis was underway: The union president suspended the program for several months in response to the program director's action, arguing that the program director's unilateral action was outside the cooperative spirit of the program (note the apparent unilateralness of the union leader's actions).

During a discussion with work site groups, the program director used the (informal) overall program evaluation of Researcher A (the "dead in the water" comment) as one aspect of his explanation for his strong action (the point being that the reassignment was performance-based, not based on the program director's subjective whim).

Study A's mention of this discussion is strikingly different: The incident is presented briefly, with much evaluative language and little descriptive language, as the most damaging illustration of what Researcher A calls the program director's "exotic behavior":

> [The program director] also tried, on a few occasions, to use me in his efforts to manipulate the perceptions of other actors; at one point claiming (falsely) to a room full of outraged worksite group representatives that he had summarily fired a program facilitator after consulting with me about the matter.[6]

We see from the difference in perspective and tone of the excerpts from the two different studies how dramatically different their interpretation of program events was becoming (these differences will be disccussed below).

After much political infighting during the fall, the program director's decision to reassign the management facilitator stood. The program was reinstated, with the city assuming the full budget of the program. A new facilitator was hired, and work site groups were expanded to a third department where they got off to a much faster start. Along with these significant "victories," the program director also lost some top management support, as symbolized by the appointment of a codirector (although this was someone the program director had trained and with whom he had a positive working relationship).

The spring of 1986 brought the fourth major crisis. The team with which Researcher A had been working presented its official feedback report to the city.[7] The general reaction to the report was negative because it was three months too late for the information to be helpful and because it did not address current action alternatives. One of the three departments participating in the program withdrew, submitting a six-page single-spaced outline of purported inaccuracies in the report regarding that department.

But this was not the only prong of the fourth crisis. Apparently because the research team felt that its true view of the setting was too sensitive to share locally or might be subject to influence from the city, it sent a *different* report to its funding source, the United States Department of Labor. Given the nature of political life, the existence and major theme of this report became known to the program director and other senior city officials within days. Its theme, consistent with Researcher A's view at that time, was that the program director was to blame for the program's problems. The ironic result is reported in Study B:

> Top management learned of the secret report several days after their decision to increase support for the program. . . . Anger at the existence of the report, *at the program director for having advocated (Study A)* [emphasis added], and at the program itself reached a peak. . . . The immediate results were that top management no longer spoke to the program director, for a period of two months he was on the "seriously injured list."[8]

In the five years since that time, the program has survived within the municipality. Two successive new directors of human resources have understood and promoted the program more vigorously and have supported the program director. The mayor has publicly endorsed the program. The program director now serves as a consultant to the program and runs a public/private partnership to improve public sector management supported by a large consortium of businesses. Researcher A has since accepted an academic appointment in a different region of the country.

Interpreting These Events

Let us examine more closely the occasions where Study A and Study B have been quoted in the foregoing description of program crises, in order to test for possible bias in this report. The reader may have felt, for example, that Researcher B and Study B were favored in the description of the controversy about how the facilitator should have handled the work site group issue with management. *Even if Researcher B's DESCRIPTION is valid*, it is possible that historical class differences in this municipality are so polarized that the *ANALYSIS he imputes to Researcher A is in fact correct* and that the program director's preoccupation with increasing the effectiveness of the facilitator is so consuming that he is "asking the impossible." On the other hand, Researcher B offers a clear and plausible analysis of how and why his facilitation strategy would be more empowering of the work site group and more effective in the immediate situation;

moreover, the work site facilitator is reported to have agreed with this approach when it was presented by the consultant, but then could not implement it successfully. On the basis of the evidence presented in the two studies, no certain conclusion can be drawn.

Again, the reader may have felt that Study B and Researcher B's position were being favored in the discussion of how Researcher A's comment that the QWL program was "dead in the water" got used. Because there is no tape recording or neutral observational report of the program director's (Researcher B's) meetings with Researcher A and with the work site groups, it is conceivable that Researcher A never made the "dead in the water" comment to begin with. Even if he did make it, the program director may have quoted it out of context at the meeting with work site groups. Furthermore, the program director may have been divulging a confidential communication. Still another possibility is that the program director gave this comment undue emphasis. On the other hand, it is possible that offering research findings to program participants as feedback on current effectiveness is so foreign to, and illegitimate within, Researcher A's mainstream science paradigm that he felt violated by that alone (his reference to the program director's requests for feedback as part of his negative evaluation of the program director supports this inference). Yet again, Researcher A could have felt placed in a peculiarly awkward position when he found his research findings being used as a basis for the director's action against a person with whom he had a warm informant relationship. Certainly, the fourth crisis of the program, caused by the way the team associated with Study A fed back a later report, indicates a lack of cogency about the ethics and pragmatics of feedback among the researchers with whom Researcher A was associated. We must again conclude, however, that the evidence available in the two studies permits no firm conclusion about this incident.

Despite the great caution that must be taken in interpreting the particular events recounted in outline above, it does seem clear: (1) that a number of power-related crises occurred in the course of the first two years of the program; (2) that what could count as a legitimate interpretation was frequently a central issue in the enactment and in the study of this change effort; and (3) that both studies had a direct impact on the development of the program. Let us examine how each study deals with the issue of these power-related crises, with the issue of multiple possible interpretations, and with the issue of its own impact on the action.

Study A

Study A, based on normal science methods, was initially designed as a before-and-after (one year later) study using a survey and semi-struc-

tured interviews. When the QWL project under study did not develop as the researcher had implicitly expected it to (there was more conflict, less focused attention, and less progress), Researcher A began to develop additional approaches.[9]

On the one hand, he backed off, did a comparative study (based on secondary sources) of other municipal QWL programs, and eventually discovered that the problems that had dismayed him—the degree of "ideological" (Researcher A's term) commitment by the director, the lack of strong mayoral support, and the level of conflict surrounding implementation—were in fact more frequently than not the norm for such programs.[10]

On the other hand, Researcher A attempted to get closer to the day-to-day dynamics of the program by doing more qualitative on-site observation and cultivating informants. He *evaluates* his relationship with the program director (Researcher B), who had initially invited the Study A research, as "particularly difficult,"[11] yet, as already suggested, he offers virtually no description of what behavior was difficult. Instead, he acknowledges that the project director was often the only one within the city government to see Study A as valuable.

By contrast to this "difficult" relationship, Researcher A's relationship with the two worksite group facilitators and with the union president became much warmer. He discusses briefly his concern that his interactions with them might be influencing the program, as follows:

> They told me that my comments in these discussions affected their thoughts about their work and helped them formulate strategies for action. When I first heard this . . . , I considered abbreviating the discussions, since I thought it would be ludicrous to claim that I had no stake in the program if I were involved in running it. I decided, however, that my influence on events through these discussions was negligible and that it would be foolish to deny myself such a valuable source of data.[12]

The researcher also discusses briefly how, in shifting toward more of a participant observer role, "I slipped, somewhat inadvertently, into the role of program newscaster in the worksites."[13] He concludes, however:

> I can see only one major shortcoming of this evolutionary and multimethod research approach, and particularly of its less structured components. While I was collecting the data, I never felt that I had enough, but when I was done, I realized that I had collected far more than I needed to tell the story. Moreover, I had to write the story, or parts of it, a few times before I became more or less certain as to which story I was telling.[14]

In reading Study A, it seems that the researcher's story changed over time. When the program initially became problematic for Researcher A

and he moved closer in to study the dynamics, he became convinced that the program director was responsible for the problems. Later, when he compared the program to others and realized that the problems were typical, these later findings became his main story line. But he found it difficult to drop the earlier story line:

> It is difficult not to blame (the program director) for many of the program's problems.[15]
>
> As my study ended several months later, I found myself still preoccupied with the exotic behavior of (the program director).[16]

(We have already examined, insofar as the two studies permit us to do so, what Researcher A was referring to as the program director's most "exotic behavior.")

The foregoing quotations, drawn mostly from an appendix to Study A, represent virtually every mention in that study of the three issues identified earlier: the issue of the four power-related crises, the issue of multiple possible interpretations of events, and the issue of the impact of each study on those events. With regard to the power-related crises, Study A does refer (as, in part, quoted above) to Crisis #3. But it never refers to Crises #1, #2, or #4 at all (it does say that Union B did not participate in the program). With regard to the issue of multiple interpretations, although Study A mentions the program director repeatedly, it never mentions that he too was conducting a study of the program, or that his interpretations of events might be based on a systematic and defensible perspective (every mention of his perspective is cast in negative evaluative terms). With regard to the issue of its own impact on the program, Study A evaluates the impact as negligible, despite the evidence we have here that his interpretations were allied with those of opponents to the program director in Crisis #3, and that the eventual feedback related to Study A caused Crisis #4.

Study B

Study B, as already indicated, was conducted by the program director. It describes all four power-related crises. It also describes the fact, and the interpretive angle, of Study A and compares it with Study B, devoting an entire major section to this topic. Finally, Study B describes its own impact on the QWL program (e.g., Crisis #2), and offers a 27-page analysis and critique of the program director's effectiveness.

The following summary statement provides a taste of the unsparing nature of the program director/researcher's self-critique. This critique

also highlights a major issue for anyone attempting to develop beyond merely unilateral uses of power toward exercising mutually empowering, transforming power. As I mentioned earlier in this book (Chapter 6), my own first step toward empowering others was to disempower myself rather than to exercise power in an empowering way. Researcher B found a similar tendency in himself:

> One principal area of learning was the program director's ambivalence about power, leading to a tendency to "deauthorize" himself. . . . This led him to feel relatively powerless when he himself had given up the authority to others (e.g., his staff). In a culture where toughness is important, deauthorization could be viewed as an important weakness. It was an issue which created problems not only for the program director but also for his staff, the union leadership, and the managers who needed to depend on his judgment.[17]

Developmental Analysis of the Two Studies

Study A went through an evolution, perhaps a developmental evolution. The original before-and-after tests suggest the pristine logic of the Technician stage, and the eventual adjustments to comparative and qualitative methods suggest movement toward the Achiever stage approach of using multiple methods—whatever helps to achieve the end. At the end of Study A, the findings from these methods do not appear fully digested, because the dissonance between the comparative findings and the participant observer findings is not discussed.

Several other pieces of evidence suggest that Study A predominantly represents a Technician stage perspective. From the Technician perspective only logistical power, which is not viewed as a type of power but rather as reason and skill, is legitimate. This perspective fits the mainstream social science effort to distance research from action—reason from power—as a means to achieve objectivity. Researcher A's brief analysis and dismissal of his possible influence on the program as "negligible" fits with this orientation. The fact that Study A essentially ignores three of the four major power crises of the program also fits with this orientation.

Another aspect of the Technician perspective is the view that one's craft heroes and one's own craft logic are the only authoritative form of reason. Other worldviews and logics are simply viewed as inaccurate and pernicious, not as potentially valid alternatives. Hence, there is no attempt to see and assess the impact of his own or others' overall worldview. Study A reflects this perspective in that unlike Study B, which explicitly examines the assumptions and effects of both studies, it does not examine the

tensions between the two researchers as possibly related to their fundamentally different approaches to action and research. Researcher A's difficulty with the program director (Researcher B), along with the lack of behavioral description and analysis of this difficulty, is also consistent with this perspective.

Researcher A chose not to accept an invitation to participate in the present study by taking the Loevinger sentence completion form that measures developmental stage (with control over whether the results would be published) or by reviewing and commenting on the manuscript. (Two years later, just before publication, he responded to a second request for comments and thereby helped to improve this chapter.) Hence, there is no validated, secondary, instrumented data about the researcher's personal stage of development. This is, perhaps, just as well; for the focus of this chapter is on the developmental perspective of *Study A* as an illustration of mainline social science, not on the developmental stage of *Researcher A*. The data offered above as the basis for interpretation of the developmental perspective of Study A are primary case data, such as a practitioner uses to guide further testing and action.

The point is to illustrate:

(1) how research-related decisions and actions can be interpreted from a developmental point of view;

(2) how the mainline social science paradigm and methods reflect the Technician perspective;

(3) how tentatively such interpretations need to be held, because the evidence is often as sketchy as ours is here; and

(4) how the action inquiry approach may be threatening, alien, and indigestible to research that is based on the logic of one of the early stages of development.

Study B, by contrast to Study A, appears to fit the developmental logic of the Strategist. (We have already seen that Researcher B was measured at the Strategist stage personally.) The Strategist perspective recognizes the interplay of opposites such as process/outcome, action/research, as Study B does in its careful documentation of actions. The Strategist perspective also recognizes the multiplicity of potentially valid perspectives and actively attempts to test for, include, and reconcile them, as Study B did by including Study A within its purview. Finally, the Strategist perspective can recognize and test the validity and effectiveness of its own frame and actions. An interesting additional example of the latter two characteristics occurs at the end of Study B's assessment of Study A, where Study B describes six *positive* contributions of Study A, including that its final report to the program conclusively demonstrated the relative *lack* of top management support for the program director/Researcher B

at that time. (I would like to add that Study A provides valuable historical analysis of the city, valuable comparative analyses of other municipal QWL programs, and valuable worksite group descriptions, especially when read in conjunction with Study B.)

If the available evidence supports the claim that Study B and Researcher B reflect a Strategist perspective, it also seems clear that Researcher B was *not* functioning at the Magician or the Ironist stage of development. Rather than conveying both authority and vulnerability as a Magician could, Researcher B instead conveyed "self-deauthorization" in the early stages of the project. Also, during the time of the study, Researcher B did not succeed in developing a peer culture among colleagues, as a Magician could, nor in developing a coherent liberating structure that confronted others with clear choices between entering a conflict cycle or a learning cycle (Chapter 5). Over a longer period, however, Researcher B and the program, and the much larger management education center that evolved, learned in a performance-improving manner, survived, and succeeded in an environment where the superior culture was extremely ambivalent and often semi-hostile.

Conclusion

No generalizations whatsoever are warranted when the sample size is two and the cell sizes are one. This chapter as a whole is intended to provide one concrete illustration of the abstract contrast, offered in the previous chapter, between the perspectives and action-impacts of mainline social science and action inquiry. It is also intended to provide one concrete illustration of exercising the politics of inquiry in an environment that is already extremely politicized in conventional terms and is correspondingly cynical about new political ideals, especially when championed by a middle manager who is not yet a full practitioner of transforming power and the power of balance.

Because but a single illustration is offered, each reader will speculate at will and conclude at will. My own conclusion—based on numerous illustrations and on the overall sense of the two paradigms—is that mainline social science research, like Study A, is an actively dangerous social phenomenon that cannot, in principle, be expected to shed light on transforming leadership or to help ongoing action settings. It is actively dangerous because of its inability to address and assess its impact on the world of action. It cannot be expected to shed light on transforming leadership because it loses its bearings under transformational conditions, seeking so hard to remain detached and invulnerable that it distorts events and overlooks its own impact on them.

By contrast, action inquiry and the observant participation method illustrated by Study B can throw much light on political, organizational, and personal barriers on the path toward exercising transforming power, because it generates:

(1) social theory that treats everyone, including the researcher, as having an ideology or worldview to be examined;
(2) methodology that empirically and experientially examines the interplay between the research and the setting researched—between the researcher's behavior and its effects; and
(3) researchers developmentally capable of acknowledging, presenting, examining, and evaluating negative feedback about their own actions and assumptions and those of other participants.

To choose to explore such a research paradigm is, obviously, a much more significant life choice than choosing a research methodology is commonly thought to be. Moreover, most persons who wish to engage in action inquiry and the observant participation method will not be coming to it as professional social scientists. The next and final chapter explores, in a very different language and mode, some of the unexpected twists and turns that this path of "living inquiry" may entail.

Notes

1. The participative action research (PAR) approach is probably the closest of existing methods to the observant participation action inquiry approach. But in that approach, as in the action science work of Argyris, the researcher/consultant continues to take a social role that is preeminently that of a researcher/consultant external to the system being studied. In the observant participation action inquiry approach, the researcher takes a social role defined as within the system that she or he is studying. See Brown, L., & Tandon, R., 1983, "Ideology and political economy in inquiry: Action research and participatory research," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 19, 3: 277-294; Elden, M., 1983, "Participatory research at work," *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, 4, 1: 43-58; Whyte, W., (Ed.), 1991, *Participative Action Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

2. I have recently played the observing participant role in one developmental transformation of an institution over a nine-year period. I am currently an observing participant in four other institutions—one of which has been in the throes of a developmental transformation for at least ten years; another of which appears to be half way through such a transformation and progressing well after four years; a third is all but paralyzed three years into an effort at transformation; and the fourth seems to have completed a significant transformation at the Board and executive level in just one year and seems poised to complete the overall organizational transformation in the next three years.

3. Even the most rigorously controlled experimental (or survey) research does not study—nor does it succeed, by distancing, in eliminating—influences by the researcher on the subjects, as shown in the following studies, among others. See Bakan, D., 1967, *On Method: Toward a Reconstruction of Psychological Investigation*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; Friedman, N., 1967, *The Social Nature of Psychological Research*, New York: Basic Books; and Rosenthal, R., 1966, *Experimenter Effects in Behavioral Research*, New York: Appleton.

4. Krim, R., 1986, *The Challenge of Creating Organizational Effectiveness: Labor-Management Cooperation and Learning Strategies in the Public Sector*, doctoral dissertation, Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College, Department of Sociology, pp. 388-389.

5. Accordino, J., 1987, *Quality of Working Life Systems in Municipalities: A Lasting Innovation?* doctoral dissertation, Boston, MA: MIT, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, pp. 165-168.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 363.

7. Researcher A discontinued his association with the larger team at this point and does not discuss the two prongs of this event in his dissertation.

8. Krim, *Creating Organizational Effectiveness*, p. 400.

9. Accordino, *Quality of Working Life*, p. 356.

10. *Ibid.* Also, another five-year longitudinal study of a municipal QWL program in a different state reports essentially the same phenomena: See Mersky, J., 1987, *Labor-Management Cooperation in the Public Sector*, doctoral dissertation, Berkeley, CA: Wright Institute. Also, none of the other first seven efforts to create a QWL program in smaller municipalities in the same state survived their second birthday, as per Krim, R., 1988, "Managing to learn: Action inquiry in city hall," in Reason, P., (Ed.), *Human Inquiry in Action*, London: John Wiley.

11. Accordino, *Quality of Working Life*, p. 362.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 370.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

17. Krim, *Creating Organizational Effectiveness*, p. 331.

15 Living Inquiry

What might it mean, what might it feel like, to observe as scientists not just the external world, but our own behavior, breathing, feeling, and thinking? What is the art, not of intellectual inquiry alone, but of *living inquiry*? How can our inquiry itself transform over a lifetime, gradually revealing itself—and not our interim answers—to be the source of the nonviolent power of balance?

The very questions themselves suggest that there may be kinds of inquiry, kinds of attention, and kinds of knowledge—a kind of balance among mind, passion, and body—of a fundamentally higher calibre than Western scientific inquiry and knowledge generates. How can we begin thinking about a kind of inquiry and knowledge that is fundamentally different from, yet not altogether unrelated to, science as we have composed it over the past five centuries? How are we to think about a kind of inquiry that goes beyond "thinking about" the world outside to a direct experiencing of the relationship between the world inside and the world outside (a direct experiencing that includes the experience of "thinking about")?

The idea of dimensions may help us. In geometry, different dimensions are incommensurable with one another. No matter what direction one moves on a two-dimensional plane, for example, one never enters the third dimension. Science as we have known it has concerned the three dimensions of space and has begun exploring the fourth dimension of durational time during the twentieth century. The experiential science of action inquiry concerns these four dimensions, but also additional dimensions of time that are not "reachable" within the other four.

Two experiences led me to think of different kinds of inquiry and knowledge as occupying different dimensions. One experience was a graduate psychology course on different theories of motivation—a course

that, on the whole, did not motivate me. The dry theories appeared to have no connection to me and to the continuous pain I was then feeling because of the sudden discontinuation of a relationship with an older woman. One day, however, the professor introduced the idea that what moves or motivates us may not be explainable by reference to other events that are measurable on the same "surface" as our movement. Something occurring in another ("subsurface") dimension may be moving us. This idea seemed plausible, mysterious, and fascinating to me.

To my surprise both the professor and the other students quickly dismissed the notion because it was not easily empirically verifiable. (I was surprised because the idea of multiple dimensions was perfectly plausible in its own terms, and it seemed to me that the very point the professor was originally making was that motivation may originate from a different dimension than the three-dimensional, spatial, visible world where empirical verification occurs. To my mind, the professor and the students did not succeed in dismissing the idea; instead, the idea dismissed them.)

Several years later, I was introduced to the short cartoon movie *Flatland*. All the creatures of Flatland are two-dimensional (circles, triangles, squares, etc.) and live entirely in a two-dimensional universe. One of them has a "mystical" experience of the third dimension but is ostracized by its fellow citizens as a lunatic when it tries to convey its experience to them.

Both these experiences showed me dramatically that higher dimensions can hardly be imagined from the point of view of a given dimension. They must be experienced. Yet one must have a mental universe that includes the notion of higher dimensions if one is to be able to interpret the experience of higher dimensions as such. Modern science by and large seeks to reduce all phenomena to a single level of explanation and as such tends to obscure the experience of higher dimensions.

From these experiences, I tentatively formulated the notion of four kinds, or dimensions, of inquiry and knowledge—four types of relationship between questions and answers—points (no dimensions), straight lines (1 dimension), circles (2 dimensions), and spheres (3 dimensions). Because questions and answers occur in time, all these dimensions refer to time. Let us see how.

A question arcs out from a point (a person); but if it finds no answer, no relation to anything else, it retreats, remaining at most a point (zero-dimensional knowledge). In this case, the person remains a three-dimensional, spatial being but does not succeed in gaining knowledge that helps him or her make sense out of how to get from here to there in time. One response to this experiential helplessness is to seek unilateral power to "make" things happen as one wishes.

If the question does find an answer, the straight line between question an answer describes the resulting knowledge (one-dimensional knowledge). In this case, the person has an answer that is determinably either valid or invalid about how to navigate in the local space-time continuum (e.g., how to get to the bathroom in this office building, or how to behave so as to be accepted by this group). This kind of knowledge permits one to exercise diplomatic power and logistical power.

If the validity of this knowledge itself comes into question, and/or if the question is one to which one wishes an answer that is always and in principle true, the question (e.g., is there God?) is asked again and again. Within durational time (the first dimension of time), one finds different, possibly incompatible answers. One may begin to examine the answers "outside of time"—in relation to their different contexts, in relation to one another, and in relation to the differences in oneself at the different times of asking. In effect, whether one says so or not to oneself, one is thinking theoretically. One may eventually discover a pattern among the answers. Or—and this would in principle be a more inclusive pattern, hence a more adequate theory—one may eventually experience the pattern that the very asking-and-answering makes in one's life. Through the proper alchemy of commitment to, and detachment from, the question, the pattern of its askings transforms into the answer. Through a special kind of attentiveness, the question answers itself, forming a circle (two-dimensional knowledge). Put differently, two-dimensional knowledge includes the second dimension of time—eternity—as well as the first dimension of time—duration. We will return below to illustrations of this second dimension of time/consciousness.

First, we must consider a final type of questioning and answering. One may ask what the pattern is among the circles and straight lines (between two-dimensional knowledge and one-dimensional knowledge). That is, one may ask, what is the pattern among all the moments of my life? Who am I? Posed this way, the question clearly demands to be asked not occasionally and intellectually, but rather continuously and existentially. Because none of us can claim to have asked any question continuously heretofore, the demand of this question obviously only gradually dawns on us, if it dawns on us at all, and only gradually illuminates all the moments of our lives, many of them only retrospectively in memory, many of them only prospectively as possibility, each moment seen in its relation to the present.

In terms of the geometry of experience, the presence of such a question, common to one's entire life, draws all the circles and the linear tangents into a three-dimensional, spherical, temporal object. Such a three-dimensional attention can interweave task (one-dimensional, durational, goal

achievement), process (two-dimensional, eternal patterns of relationship), and purpose (what integrates and directs all actions and subpatterns for a given person or organization, whenever anything in fact does). Only a three-dimensional kind of inquiry is truly and fully living inquiry.

Let us explore what this abstract, geometric notion of different dimensions of inquiry, attention, and knowledge feels like in somewhat more concrete terms—in stories. For if geometry is the frame of space, then story is the frame of time.

"Something I think about a lot," said Maria, starting from her huddled reverie on the far side of the front seat as we were driving a twisting road toward the sea, "is, why are we alive?"

"Yes, why?" I said, shocked into an effort at alertness, the green of the trees brought into focus by the seriousness of the child at my side. "Yes, why do we need people," chimed in Tito from the back seat. "No," said Maria, "why are we alive? God could have lived alone with all the things in the universe."

"And do you get answers to your questions?" I asked. "No," she said quickly, annoyed. "That's why I have to keep asking."

"Is there anything out there," I said, pointing, "that gives you any clues about the answer—trees, river, mountain, houses, roads?" "No," said Tito, "people go around all day and do things as if this question didn't exist." "Well, maybe it doesn't exist," I said. "Maybe it's just in your imagination; maybe it's just an idea in your head." "Oh no it isn't," insisted Maria. "This question is in my body, in my feelings, and in my head. It's in everything."

What an unusual question, I thought. "Sometimes you're just in your head, like when you're thinking, right?" "Yes." "And sometimes you're just in your body, like when we were playing Dodge Ball last night and you were jumping away from the ball, right?" "Yes." "But you say this question is in your head, your body, and your feelings all at once?" "Yes." "So it's different from most things, isn't it?" "Yes, but how?" "Well, most things are sort of by themselves, but this question seems to pull things together." "OK, but what's the answer to the question? Why are we alive?"

"Maybe that's the answer." "What?" "Maybe we're alive to ask this question." "But," (now Tito again) "that isn't any answer." "Well, if asking the question helps pull things together, maybe it is the answer. Maybe after God made all the different things, he needed us to help pull them back together again into a universe by asking this question." "But a question isn't an answer!" Tito exclaimed heatedly, refusing to be cheated, yet on the verge of bitterness after his initial excitement at my interest in their question. "A question can't be an answer."

"Well, maybe that's just as well," I teased, "because you know what happens when people find answers to questions like this, don't you? They start to think about them, don't they? And they start to forget about other things and to get angry when other people don't agree with their answer. And pretty soon each answer gets an army to defend it and there's a war between two answers and a lot of people get killed. I don't think that's the answer. I don't think we're alive in order to kill each other. Answers don't seem to pull things together. You see, if I gave you an answer to your question, what would happen? Why, we'd stop talking. We'd go apart. Your question is what is bringing us together right now in this conversation."

"So this question is the answer," pounced Maria, a glint of victory in her eye as the car rounded the curve and the sea came into view. "You are giving an answer!" "Well, if you believe that," I responded with mock ferocity, pointing ahead at the same time to the panorama of our stream meeting the sea, "my advice to you is to forget it, just forget it . . . but remember the question. See how different they are? This question really is different from an answer.

"Do you ask the question 'Why are we alive?' all the time?"

"No, of course not. Just some of the time."

"Well then, it hasn't pulled your life together yet. When you really believe this question is the answer, you will taste yourself asking it all the time."[1]

Zero-Dimensional Knowledge

Imagine the child as a point whose questions arc out into a wider universe. If the child receives no answers, or is answered arbitrarily or uncaringly, or is punished for questioning, the child will presumably tend to cease valuing the kind of attention that raises questions.[2] The child may come to believe that there is no internally coherent, meaningful order in the universe—that solipsistic atoms interact randomly in a world meandering toward entropy, a world where might makes right rather than the other way around. The child, grown older, may seek totalitarian, terroristic power as a solace.

Such a child will tend to remain essentially a mere point in temporal terms, a zero-dimensional being, with no self-esteem. Whatever esteem he or she garners will be entirely contingent upon external conditions, how many resources—how many guns and how much butter—he or she controls. This child's time will be organized rather arbitrarily by whatever needs speak most loudly from within at a given time and by the social pressures in the immediate environment. Knowledge, to such a child, will seem like one more arbitrary element in the environment, without any

inherent truth value—just one more element to be manipulated insofar as possible for one's own advantage, or else to be manipulated by.[3] An extreme example, offered by the Jungian analylist Marie-Louise von Franz, can bring this deadly pattern alive for us:

> I remember the case of the pronounced psychological illness of a woman who could not digest anything and had to take everything in pills. When half-starved, she came to analysis because her doctor had finally come to the conclusion that her illness must be psychological. The woman's mother had been a nurse in a hospital, and had lived the Christian, self-sacrificing attitude of considering her life valueless and wanting nothing from it. Life should be given to the service of others, and with this went a suicidal tendency, a real problem which many nurses in hospitals have—although this self-sacrificing attitude did not stop her from catching the head doctor of the hospital. After marriage her animus came up again, and she would moan to her husband and children that she should not have married or had children, but should have remained a nurse.
>
> So the children grew up in an atmosphere in which the mother's animus informed them from morning to evening that their existence was a mistake, that it was wrong for them to be alive. Now the daughter gave in to whatever was asked of her, since she felt she had to propitiate people. She was frightened of everyone, her basic attitude being that she had no right to be alive—"but please do not kill me, and I will do anything you want!" . . .
>
> The strange thing was that when she first came into analysis, I felt as if something had been put over my head and I was falling asleep. I always let myself go into such fantasies when I get an impression from an analysand. My feeling in this case was that I should get up and put my head under the cold water tap. There was quite a pleasant atmosphere, for she was like a little duckling in my hands and never contradicted or opposed me in any way. She interested me, and I felt sympathetic, and yet had this sleepiness, which depicted her own situation. She had not woken up to the fact that she had the right to live. For years the analysis consisted in showing her in all the events of her life where she had unconsciously, continually given in. We always came back to the same thing. But she had fallen into an abyss of unhappiness and was completely unable to digest anything. To digest is to react. But this woman had no reaction to what happened to her.[4]

So, a person limited to zero-dimensional knowledge may vary between the extremes of terroristic sadism and suicidal masochism. The story in Chapter 11 of the student who would go through vicious cycles of drinking, landing in jail, and being bailed out by his father is reminiscent of the

pattern being described here, including the detail of the despairing manner in which he told the story.

One-Dimensional Knowledge

A second, more positive type of knowledge accrues to a child who receives answers that seem to make sense to his or her questions. In this case, the child's question-arcs arrive at a destination, with the one-dimensional straight line between answer-point and question-point providing meaningful definition of one's relation to the world.

This sort of question-answer relationship yields a specific kind of knowledge: situation-specific, time-bound facts. The validity of this kind of fact is normally tested by using it to achieve some goal. For example, if I am in a strange building, ask where the bathroom is, and then end up at a bathroom when I follow the directions given, I have learned a situation-specific, time-bound fact. Obviously, this kind of fact about the direction to the bathroom is valid only in a conditional fashion, only for this particular building and for the time the building exists without major modification. Obviously, too, this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary to daily living.[5] To feel that this kind of knowledge exists—that questions about "local" facts normally produce useful answers—generates a sense that the world is understandable and that one can negotiate with nature and human beings.

The one-dimensional self-esteem generated through such successful negotiations represents a great leap beyond zero-dimensional, purely external esteem.[6] Yet it is problematic to the degree that the person experiencing this type of self-esteem does not realize how conditional it is.

The phrase "situation-specific, time-bound facts" is meant to emphasize the conditionality of this kind of knowledge. But, of course, we do not roll this phrase over our tongues each time we deal with the everyday facts of our lives. It is only too easy subconsciously to treat all of our relations to a wider world as involving *only* this kind of knowledge (e.g., to treat theoretical propositions and eternal questions ["Does God exist?"] as though they are factual). It is only too easy to delude ourselves into believing we have factual answers when we do not (and could not, in the case of second and third dimensional questions and answers). And it is only too easy to begin to think of contingent facts as eternal verities.

The self-esteem of a person who implicitly believes that all knowledge is factual—that all questions have factual answers—is real but conditional, conditional upon having or getting the right answer in a given situation. Because the validity of such answers is tested by whether one achieves goals using the knowledge, this person will tend to organize

time as a linear series of concrete projects to achieve specific goals (the specific goals to be achieved and even the types of goals [status, wealth, productivity, beauty] can vary widely[7]). This person will assume—don't most of us?—that time is limited to the dimension of duration (the first dimension of time, Einstein's fourth dimension).

This person will also tend to seek to maintain unilateral control over how situations are defined and how time is organized. The explicit intention is to maximize goal achievement; the implicit intention is to minimize the likelihood of becoming confused and helpless in the face of a situation that appears to have no coherent definition, no answer.[8]

In the foregoing story about two years at SMU, we saw how powerfully and controllingly some Dallas businesspeople reacted to Pat's "Disorientation session" (Chapter 9). We also saw how many of the A.S. 1 course structures were aimed at helping students discover that they could keep their balance, even act entrepreneurially, in situations that appeared to have little coherent definition to begin with.

Educational and job experiences, as we know them today, rarely provide us with opportunities to develop anything other than no self-esteem (zero-dimensional knowledge) or conditional self-esteem (one-dimensional knowledge).[9] Often, even liberal arts courses in colleges are taught (or learned) as though there are specific, factual, right answers to all questions. Even in the most purely theoretical of subjects such as logic and mathematics, students sometimes learn only the factual steps that demonstrate the solution to given problems, rather than learning logical or mathematical thinking. But the purpose of a liberal arts education is generally viewed, not as the inculcation of certain historical or scientific facts, but rather as the awakening of students' interest in "eternal questions."

Eternal Questions: Two-Dimensional Knowledge

Eternal questions are questions at the center of human culture throughout history, questions that deserve to be asked and pondered again and again throughout one's life, questions that do not have a single right answer as a factual question does. Eternal questions properly receive many contrasting answers at different times while gradually circling around and answering themselves by the place they take, the pattern they make, in one's life with others.

Eternal questions concern each person's and humankind's relationship to love, power, justice, truth, beauty, death, and cosmic order. The appropriate relationships between parent and child, between teacher and student, between friends, between state and citizen, and among beginnings,

middles, and endings are also eternal questions. Likewise, the appropriate relationships among economics, politics, and ethics and among matter, energy, and intelligence are eternal questions that whole periods of history, such as the modern era, virtually forget to ask. (The history of philosophy comes to feel less like a progressive history of solving certain issues and moving on to others and more like a cyclical history of continual return to these same fundamental questions.)

Although the foregoing questions have a theoretical and archetypal flavor more than a factual flavor, they also are intended to convey a personal more than an impersonal, academic flavor. Persons who think theoretically, such as some academics and research scientists, do not necessarily attain the experience of eternal questions. Most persons who think theoretically do so in armchair style: seduced away from ongoing self-awareness by the boob-tube-like ease of focusing on anything else (including our Walter Mitty dreams); cushioned from the immediate physical and emotional demands of action, either because we hold an academic role or because we are temporarily at leisure; and protected likewise from metaphysical winds by a framework for thought that we take for granted as appropriate (e.g., scientific method or Christian dogma). Under such conditions, theoretical thinking does not confront the narrowness of our own attention, nor (for it would take a wider attention to catch this) the disconnections among our thoughts, feelings, actions, and effects on others—does not confront the multiple, mutually intertwining and interrupting patterns that condition our experience from moment to moment. Instead, armchair theorizing results in one-dimensional, single-structure answers that disguise the scale of the unknown and disguise our participation in the reality described.[10]

Only as one thinks nakedly in action situations that are simultaneously making physical, emotional, and intellectual demands and where there is no accepted, shared framework—only as one wonders amidst multiple possible ways of structuring answers and amidst the pressures of acting somehow—does one begin to appreciate how inadequate is any single way of structuring language and social exchange to the actual cultural pluralism, cybernetic complexity, and unique action demands of human situations.

Only as one wonders amidst multiple possible ways of structuring answers, feeling the demand to act Now, does one begin to appreciate that certain truths can be approached only through the self-renewing openness of eternal questions—only through just such active wondering. Like the Kundalini snake if it were to bite its own tail, circles of examined experiencing contain a dramatic energy—an alchemical process at once biologically determined and metaphysically liberating. Although references to eternity usually connote an unimaginably long time, understood mathematically and poetically eternity is in fact instantaneous—a dimen-

sion of time orthogonal to durational time, always and only accessible through wider awareness in the present moment.

The experience of eternal questioning—of wondering beyond any one factual answer while simultaneously recognizing that the very patterns of one's ongoing thought, feeling, and action represent an ongoing answering—is mortifying to the kind of self-esteem that is conditional upon having the right answer. One may react to the embarrassment and mortification with self-pity, or one may digest each such minute experience of ego-death as a call to a humble, prayerful, attentive thinking.[11] Insofar as one accepts the call to begin thinking, feeling, and sensing anew, one begins, gradually, to taste another kind of self-esteem based on a special wakefulness to ongoing experiencing—based on facing the unknown along with other inquirers through the ages who wished to enter the present and face their own time fully. This kind of self-esteem is deeply rooted in the very process of human experiencing. It is not contingent on and determined by the particular answers of a particular time in history and position in society.

It may be that few people are related to someone who displays the self-esteem of wrestling with eternal questions. Certainly, many people today are under the uncivilizing illusion that science is gradually providing factual (one-dimensional) answers to all questions and proving that the higher mysteries do not exist.

I am fortunate enough to have received tastes of eternity from earliest childhood through an elderly grandmother who was the incarnation of youthful alertness. I remember returning to Washington with my family from our Foreign Service posting abroad when I was eleven, driving to my grandmother's small country home for the first time. The trees and vines of her yard created a cool, dark bower on that hot summer day. The screen door was open, but she was nowhere to be found. Suddenly, my eyes took in what they were seeing amidst the green: my grandmother sitting cross-legged and perfectly still. I knew instantly that I was seeing something absolutely new to me, something that I could never have imagined and for which I had no words, a human being wholly devoted, in the moment, to listening.

In her language:

That Moment

"Small change, my Lord," I say,
"This that you ask in pay,
When I would give the livelong incandescent day
And thus my debt defray:
Nay, I'd include the range
Of weeks and months, the change
Of seasons, not one moment only: strange,

To lifetime's bounty You prefer small change.
Why, not to disavow
My debt, I'd servile bow
Beneath thy yoke for eons, take a vow
To serve eternally."

He smiled, "I'll not allow
Such tribute: give one moment only,
But that moment now."

—Alice Coyle Torbert
February 15, 1957

This elusive sense of the intimacy of eternity, how it curls inside time, is my inheritance from my grandmother:

We had come to visit my grandmother's grave, my mother, my father, and I. We let ourselves in through the wrought iron gate with a key Dad had.

The grey barked and stoned, green budded hillside coolly accepted its unkemptness that early spring afternoon. A recent storm had strewn the rough paths with branches and knocked the heads of various gravestones askew. Such jaunty carelessness, I mused, like the ribaldry of great lords and ladies at a bacchanalian celebration.

We found the place without making any special ceremony about it, just moving with respect and with the focusing memory of my grandmother's poet's eyes and ears, still seeing anew at 92, closed at 93 when she refused blindness, tumbling from the sixth floor railing that she'd struggled to climb. The rich dirt and wan grass looked back at me in the pale light, my own quiet breathing permitting me to hear something open in me. Once again, I joyfully promised to treasure her soul in mine.

After searching out the marks of other ancestors, ones I never knew and hardly was aware of feeling, we walked down into the park where Mom and Dad had walked me as a baby, and where I had run many times since.

Rock Creek Park weaves its own reality in a winding valley through the midst of our capital city. Running silently on soft, shadowy paths under the bridges of avenues that are really near neighbors, though far apart by car, has always filled me with a boyish sense of secret knowledge.

And now my parents reawakened me to a still nearer reality, turning through a gate I'd never wondered at into a park within the park, a smaller spur of the valley, cuddled in on itself but open to the sun, once a private estate. This ground, unknown to me, had been our destination on those early walks as it was again today.

Persons who begin to appreciate eternal questions as their own—such as questions about the appropriate relations between origins and destinations, between life and death, between integrity and profitability—continue to fall frequently into much more rigid attentional postures. In the more rigid attentional postures, our self-esteem is wounded when our questions are not valued by the world around us, and we are proud when we are valued for having the right answer. Like society as a whole, each person becomes, at best, an arena of struggle among different influences on his or her self-esteem. Indeed, the question of the source of genuine self-esteem is itself an eternal question—a question worthy of deepening wonder.

In the context of eternal questions, organizing time ceases to appear as an egocentric problem of how to achieve my (your) particular goals. This sort of problem remains, of course, but it is subordinated within wider concerns. One begins to see (that one rarely sees) the patterns organizing time. One begins to see (that one rarely sees) one's own deepest yearnings, motives, intentions (that may very well not have been clear at the outset of action, just as they were not clear at the outset of life).

As eternal questions begin to take a place in my life, I begin to recognize that I am fundamentally two-faced like Janus, the Roman god of doorways. One face is that of a business(wo)man; the other face is that of a monk (nun). The businessman's attention focuses on solving (one-dimensional) problems, whether at work, with family, or alone. The monk's attention is always turning to and straying from the (two-dimensional) dilemma of what is really asked of me in this situation, and who is asking.

Living Inquiry: Three-Dimensional Knowledge

In order to organize time as I would truly wish, I must discover the relationship between these two faces of attention, I must discover their underlying unity—my integrity—the pattern of my life's possibility and how each particular goal and project reflects (or does not reflect) that.

As one varies between occasional tastes of eternal questions in the present and the more common experiences of concentrating linearly to achieve a goal or floating almost randomly among daydreams, a new kind of questioning can arise to complement factual questions and eternal questions. Who asks these questions? Who experiences all these different states? Who am I? Of course, the words of this question can be spoken and listened to as though the question were susceptible to a factual answer; or the words can be spoken and listened to as though some eternal formula (such as, "I am Atman") were responsive to it. But these

ways of asking and answering this question do not meet its special challenge. The question "Who experiences all these states?" calls, not for a factual answer or a theoretical system, but rather for a subjective feeling of all one's states—and not just of all one's states in isolation from one another or in isolation from the wider world, but rather of one's unique lifeline-in-the-world. This kind of questioning seeks to become continuous and coexistent with one's other ongoing activities and eternal questions. Through this kind of questioning the past, present, and future come into dialogue with one another in all their variability.[12]

The experience of asking eternal questions provides a certain preparation for seeking to see one's unique lifeline-in-the-world. Each eternal question gathers various different times in one's past life and relates them to one another in the present. The process of asking eternal questions also offers practice in listening for a more intimate reality cuddled in on itself but open to the active attention.

But the experience of asking eternal questions can also deter and confound one's wish to know oneself. For to ask eternal questions and to begin to appreciate archetypal patterns in one's life with others is to participate awaredly in the age-old, recurrent rhythms of humankind—is to participate awaredly in and wonder at all that is imitative and typical in one's character.

By contrast, one's lifeline-in-the-world is unique and includes the future as well as the past. This uniqueness can be approached only through an original (nonimitative) line of questioning, a line of questioning so sly that it can come to enter every moment of one's lifetime with exuberance, with discrimination, and with impartiality, so that one is truly living inquiry. Whereas eternal patterns, like Mozart's music, are profoundly attractive—always in good taste—a unique lifeline is fundamentally grotesque—necessarily in questionable taste. It fits no preexisting pattern or convention fully and comfortably. As was true of the lives of Socrates or Kierkegaard or Gandhi, the unique lifeline cannot be fully encompassed by any intellectual formulation and raises unsettling questions that do not die.

To ask "Who am I?"—not in an anguished, intellectual, self-absorbed way but in the way now being described—is to ask about uniqueness in another sense as well. Whereas factual questions open to the *timebound* quality of experience, and eternal questions open to the *timeless* quality of experience, questions seeking contact with one's lifeline-in-the-world open toward the possibility of uniquely *timely* action. "What is up to me (and no one else) to do at this particular moment in my life and in the life of the group/ organization/nation with which I am interacting?"

Obviously, the answer to this kind of question cannot occur in factual or theoretical terms, for these kinds of knowledge presume external referents and generalizability across time. The answer to this question

occurs in actual, history-making terms. Such timely action is not oblivious to, but rather embraces, empirical facts and archetypal patterns. At the same time, it transcends and transforms and thereby further defines the human situation it addresses.[13]

It seems to require great passion, concentration, searching, and determination intertwined with impartiality, relaxation, acceptance, and humor to open toward this dimension of reality. It felt to me as though I was touched by this dimension of reality in my agonies over the decision to divorce my wife (Chapter 10). Certainly, there was a powerful sense of penetrating beyond lawful reasons for and against the decision to my own unique perspective, whether it was justifiable or not in general terms, and of gaining balance as I did so. To be true to this perspective—even to rediscover it—has proved to be the greatest challenge of my life since.

In terms of the "geometry of questions" introduced at the outset, this kind of questioning discovers a dimension beyond eternal two-dimensional circles, bringing these circles into relationship with one another in a three-dimensional sphere, *if* the questioning and the relationship to this dimension can be sustained. The resulting three-dimensional body is not spatial but temporal, a lifetime body of experiencing that appreciates and respects the magical rings of eternal law while simultaneously using their interplay to real-ize new possibilities. Space is time's body, time its soul.[14]

What is the gait of such questioning? What Janusian gate both blocks and opens to such vision? I have kept asking and been rewarded by a variety of peculiar experiences in the years since the events recounted in Section II, as the following excerpt from my journal, written during the summer of 1979, attests:

> I am thinking of Castaneda's metaphor for an active, human sense of timing—"the gait of power"—that feline grace in movement displayed by the Don Juans of this world. And I am thinking too of another gate of power, the Kafkaesque door to the Law, with its guard standing between one's ordinary state and (ONE'SELF).[15]
>
> (ONE'SELF)ness is contained, self-aware participation in the universal play. Is there really such a drama going on about us and within us, beckoning us to join in by cues we rarely have the patience to listen for? Or is life limited to whatever arbitrary meaning our social customs and variable willfulness impose upon it?
>
> If the former, then love is the rhythm we find in relations when each enacts (ONE'SELF). If the latter, then "love" is the sugarcoating of our mutual exploitation.
>
> If the former, then the highest human culture is an invitation to this play. If the latter, then all culture is cake and circuses to make us forget our unfulfillable desires.

But I am not merely hypothesizing: I am experiencing (ONE'SELF)ness as I think about Castaneda's gait of power and Kafka's gate of power, and as my partially paralyzed old man's body returns to view, laboring and stumbling along a wooded path, only gradually relearning how to breathe the sea air after a week in the city.

This curious stumbling action, only partially connected to my ongoing thought, I suddenly recognize as an essential quality of the lifetime sentence I am serving here. The disciplined rhythmic movement of my body works to digest the karmic pain at the base of the spine where a surgeon long ago cut muscles from bone to scrape out two ruptured discs which were shockingly pinching and gradually deadening the sciatic nerve down my left leg. Meanwhile, my feeling strives to digest the scene in the house a few moments before.

In the large living room atop the bluff overlooking the bay, I sat amidst my parents, my brother's family and my own. Our twins, Michael and Patrick, were cozying up to their cousin Laura, seven months their senior at three. My father sat in the far corner reading *Foreign Affairs* and occasionally including himself in the conversation at its heartiest moments. Theta, my brother's wife, and Jennifer, mine, sat quietly around the fire, contrasting studies in gauntgoatladyness and italianpeasantplumpitude. At the mantle, my brother Jim talked to Mom, showing her a sketch of the layout of the Arkansas farm home he and Theta had just bought.

As I listened in a deepening silence to the voices of my brother and my mother, I became aware how rare it was for me to hear a simple loving conversation between the two of them. For a generation now our family had usually been separated by oceans and had come together only once every three years or so; but that did not fully explain the matter. I realized that when we did come together I was usually the one speaking with my mother.

Putting aside the readymade explanation for this pattern, I suddenly began to feel directly the deeply possessive relationship between myself and my mother; along with a jealousy of my brother so grand that I had never before in my memory permitted it to enact itself in me, using the simple expedient of monopolizing my mother as a defense against this feeling of mad power.

I closed my eyes and kept my head down, as though still reading, trying in the quietest way possible not to dismiss this feeling from my awareness. My head seemed to be filling with blood. Deep, measured breathing convinced me I was not fainting, but also increased the warm, pulsing confusion in my mind. I continued to hear their relaxed voices clearly and enjoyably, even as the jealousy choking my chest and threatening to explode amazed me.

And now my jealousy began to change into something else even as it amazed me, my mind shedding many skins quickly, each breath transporting all its images with it as it evacuated me. I kept grasping for recognizable impressions—the breath, the sounds, the backbone pulse, the eyes blinking to glimpse the open book in my lap (Barbara Tuchman . . . the Black Plague . . .)—releasing these impressions even as their familiarity reassured me; all this in twinklings amidst the now unrecognizable feeling coursing through me, mingling with each impression to render it Infinitely Strange, unhesitatingly entering even the open portal of the Law, the guard having stood aside at a knowing glance.

Lifting me from my seat and walking me to the door, this elfish feeling set me to jogging down the path upon which I recalled Castaneda's gait of power.

Yes, this stumbling gait—thought, feeling, and action only occasionally at one—seems to be my gait of power. My dilemma seems always to be how to appreciate the confusions of my life—the various, not-obviously-coordinated inclinations and passions, circumstances and possibilities—as a single dance in time.

I fall away from my gait of power, not so much when I become uncoordinated or when I cease to appreciate the pattern my life-with-others is weaving—such experiences are motivating—but rather when I fall into believing that I know the pattern, or when I fall into believing that any one part of my life or any one language is the crucible or the code for this evolving pattern.

Confusion and the will-I-am to listen through such confusions are the two legs of my gait of power.

I call their stumbling gait "living inquiry."

But, of course, the ultimate moment in action inquiry is the moment of maximum possible awareness of one's lifetime self—the moment of the ultimate transformation for which it may be given us to prepare—the moment of the end of the story when the attention may widen beyond it—the moment of death. Each of us approaches our own unique moment of death in our own unique way. But most of us have in common that we back toward it. The story of Socrates's death is perhaps our best-known story of facing death inquiringly at the end of an entire lifetime faced inquiringly. But I have gained my own strongest taste of what faces death inquiringly from my vigil with Minor White during the six months of his final preparations.

Minor White, the well-known photographer, taught at MIT during the final years of his life.[16] His friends included his younger colleagues there,

the young photographers who lived with him each year, apprenticing, and the staff at *Aperture*, the photographic journal he had founded. His friends also included the members of the Boston Society for Experimental Studies, a group dedicated to studying the attention necessary for craftlike work and action, of which he was president and I was vice-president at that time. For Minor, all these communities of social practice were simultaneously communities of inquiry. Here is how that inquiry evolved as he approached death:

On my birthday, in February 1976, I was at Minor White's home in Arlington, just outside Boston, as he continued to recover from his heart attack of early December.

Abe, one of the young photographers who lived with Minor this year, had pulled Minor's tongue out of his throat and gotten him to a hospital. Then a lawyer who had only recently met Minor got himself named executor and stopped all work on Minor's publications while Minor lay in a coma.

No one really believed that Minor would return to us this time, so the fact that he had made no will, thus leaving his lifework to the whims of this unknown lawyer, disturbed us deeply.

* * *

Although Minor was reported to have opened his eyes occasionally by the time I came to visit him in the hospital, no one had elicited a sure sign of recognition from him. He was, of course, in "intensive care." Machines hovered all around his bed, connected to him by all manner of tubes and straps at wrist, arm, throat, and scalp.

The pale, emaciated face, framed by his long and wispy white hair, the hospital bed, and the hovering machines, horrified me. What chance had life in this monstrous environment?

His eyes opened and, as they touched mine, I began to weep and to speak what I must say to him, on the chance that he could hear. He too wept and, with a lurch, ripped his arm up from its embalmed position to grasp my hand. He could make no coherent sound, only gurgles, but we communicated fully. Old enough to be my father, he and I were nonetheless brothers. My preparations for his death faced me with my own mortality—with the smallness of my own time, with my adulthood—as no other moment yet had.

* * *

But then Minor did begin to return to us. By mid-January we had him home, with one of us by his side 24 hours a day to help him sit up and

move to the bathroom, to help him keep to his complex schedule of pills, to shield him from phone calls and visitors, and to talk him back to our world from the shadowy images with which he had spent the previous six weeks.

Again and again I returned to his simple, silent home with the high ceilings. Minor slept much and alternated, when he spoke, between vagueness and a sharpness I had never before seen in him. He knew that this time was a gift, not to be used in merely continuing his previous work, but rather in bringing it to an end, intentionally. In his weakness, something in him that had always sought expression was now concentrating itself instead.

As winter passed into spring, we occasionally brought our group meetings to his home and could feel the new edge of his silent alertness cutting through our preoccupations.

* * *

In June, his heart's muscle weakened again, and Minor returned to the hospital for his final hours.

Does a life have meaning beyond its mute gestures? Is there a preparation for death that concentrates a faculty capable of reaching, through death, a permanent engagement in inquiry?

Doctors' practice today is to drug their patients into insensibility in order to spare them pain.

Minor's practice was to suffer voluntarily in seeking an alertness that could survive death.

Our quiet efforts to influence these well-intentioned men had no effect at first. But, when all his vital signs assured the doctors it was his last day, they withheld the drugs, and Minor spoke directly to each of us sitting and standing about his small room. To me, he said, "You have prepared yourself carefully for leadership and you have now completed that preparation. But beware. You know what happens to leaders: people like nothing better than to leave a leader high and dry."

Each of us went up to his bed for a final farewell. Then the woman to whom we looked for guidance invited us to rest with Minor, awake to our state.

After a blissful hour in a state utterly unfamiliar to me, I again heard Minor's voice, a croaking whisper through the hiss of the tube swallowing the saliva in his mouth, asking one after another of us what we were thinking about. As each spoke, Minor would respond, until we had all met one another again and again taken our leave.

* * *

Nevertheless, the next day Minor continued to live.

Now half a dozen of us alternated sitting with him.

In my last week at Harvard, simultaneously moving out of my office and completing a controversial report on school desegregation efforts in Boston, I could stop at the hospital for only three or four hours at a time.

Minor, so weak he could not move, so weak he could scarcely whisper, was continuously restless, wanting to know the time, then realizing he meant his own time, wanting to be lifted into a sitting position to see better, then realizing his seeing must move in the reverse direction, inwardly.

People from all over the world were beginning to converge on Boston for his funeral, but he had not yet completed his preparation to die.

On Tuesday his kidneys ceased to function. Blood poisoning and death follow within six hours at most, the doctors told us. Still, he continued his undefinable struggle through the night and then throughout Wednesday, telling us that day, "I've seen the other side, but I can't seem to find the right boat for the crossing."

At 4 A.M. Thursday morning, some kind of transformation occurred—he relaxed announcing that he now knew the time and saying "See you at 7." We gathered about his bed at 7 A.M., without wanting to take his words literally. Nothing special happened; he continued to breathe.

Throughout that day he spoke only to his closest companion. That evening I was having a farewell supper with a philosopher friend at my home, sharing this experience with him. As he listened, touched, and spoke of the two deathbed scenes he was reminded of—Jacob's and Socrates's—summer thunder suddenly filled the hot, clear sky. It was 7 P.M.

Within minutes, I received a phone call that Minor had just died.

* * *

At his funeral, I described our experience in these words:

> We are brought together this morning, as we have been brought together in different groups and at different times before, by Minor White.
>
> This past week some of us have been privileged to be at his bedside as he consciously completed his preparation to continue his search through death. He showed us in a new way that liberation from fear of death can be achieved—that through a work in the body the spirit can be liberated.
>
> I feel I speak with deepest knowledge when I say that Minor does not require our mourning. Instead, we will honor him if we now listen to the life of the body and the life of the spirit in ourselves—just as he attempted in his photography, in his life, and at his death—as we hear the teaching

of the New Testament about life in the body and life after we die to our bodies (I Corinthians 15, 20-28, 35-52).

Notes

1. When these stories are not otherwise noted, they come from a journal in which I occasionally write, this entry from a day in July, 1976.

2. Research in schools long ago showed that children tend to ask fewer questions each year. See Fahey, G., 1942, "The questioning activity of children," *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 60: 334-55; and Fahey, G., 1942, "The extent of classroom questioning among high school pupils," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 33: 128-37.

3. In developmental terms, such a person does not develop beyond the Opportunistic stage, wherein appropriate action is determined by one's conception of one's short-term advantage, as discussed in Chapter 2 and in *MCD*.

4. See von Franz, M., 1972, *Problems of the Feminine in Fairy Tales*, Zurich, Switzerland: Spring Publications, pp. 44-45. This passage reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston.

5. Any single fact is contingent, as just described, but to affirm absolutely that this kind of contingent daily knowledge exists requires no great feat of philosophical erudition. Any person can affirm that this kind of knowledge exists just as definitely as one can affirm one's own hearing, perception, movement, and arrival at the bathroom indicated (in other words, just as definitely as he or she is awake). In regard to possible difficulties in determining whether one is awake, those in doubt are referred to the first chapter of this section and to Boss, M., 1977, "Dreaming and the dreamed in the daseinsanalytical way of seeing," *Soundings*, 60: 234-264; and Ouspensky, P., 1949, *In Search of the Miraculous*, New York: Harcourt.

6. In developmental terms, a person characterized preeminently by one-dimensional knowledge inhabits the Diplomat, Technician, or Achiever stages (see Chapter 2, and *MCD*).

7. As reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, developmental research finds the vast majority of persons inhabit stages of development, the logic of which falls within the broad notion of one-dimensional self-esteem presented here. See also Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

8. The research of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön on patterns of interpersonal behavior finds that the vast majority of persons display behavior that fits this pattern. See Argyris, C., & Schön, D., 1974, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

9. See Torbert, W., 1972, *Being for the Most Part Puppets: Interactions Among Men's Labor, Leisure, and Politics*, Cambridge, MA: Schenkman.

10. Occasionally, persons with an academic, armchair orientation fall out of their armchair in the course of their study and try to describe what actually happens to them and to their understanding of their original object of study as a result. See, for example, Carlos Castaneda's infinite series of books, starting as an anthropology graduate student, on his Yaqui Indian informant, Don Juan—e.g., Castaneda, C., 1968, *The Teachings of Don Juan*, Berkeley: The University of California Press; 1972, *Journey to Ixtlan*, New York: Simon & Schuster; or Martin Duberman's history of Black Mountain College—Duberman, M., 1973, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday; or Charles Hampden-Turner's sociological study—Hampden-

Turner, C., 1976, *Sane Asylum*, San Francisco: San Francisco Book Company; or Robert Pirsig's philosophical investigations—Pirsig, R., 1974, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, New York: William Morris.

11. Heidegger, M., 1972, *What Is Called Thinking?* New York: Harper Torchbook. Heidegger illustrates this rare, two-dimensional thinking throughout.

12. Percy, W., 1975, *The Message in a Bottle*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. In the title essay, Percy offers a somewhat similar tripartite division of types of questions human beings can ask.

13. Hawking, S., 1988, *A Brief History of Time*, New York: Bantam. Hawking suggests that because God made the universe "evolve in a very regular way according to certain laws . . . it therefore seems equally reasonable to suppose that there are also laws governing the initial state" (p. 11). If one understands time as three-dimensional in the way being described here, then natural laws represent the second dimension of time and originating action comes from a dimension of possibility that can create law and abide by law, but is not governed by it.

14. Needleman, J., 1982, *Lost Christianity: A Journey of Rediscovery to the Center of Christian Experience*, New York: Bantam. "The mediating attention of the heart is spontaneously activated in man in the state of profound self-questioning, a state that is almost always inaccurately recognized and wrongly valued in everyday experience. 'God can only speak to the soul,' Father Sylvan writes, 'and only when the soul exists.' He goes on: 'But the soul of man only exists for a moment, as long as it takes for the Question to appear and then to disappear, as, for example, in the encounter with death between grief and sadness, between shock and fear; or in the encounter with super-satisfaction, between emptiness and boredom; or in the encounter with life's revolutionary disappointments, before free fall turns to self-pity' " (p. 162).

15. Castaneda, C., 1972, *Journey to Ixtlan*; Kafka, K., 1960, *Der Prozess*, Frankfurt: Fischer Bucherei.

16. Hall, J., 1978, "Biographical essay," in *Minor White: Rites and Passages*, Millerton, NY: Aperture. This book introduces Minor's photography and life. The Minor White Archives reside at the Princeton University Art Museum.

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About the Author

William R. Torbert holds a B.A. in politics and economics and a Ph.D. in administrative sciences from Yale University. He served for nine years as Graduate Dean of the Boston College School of Management and currently serves as Professor of Management. During his deanship, the school pioneered a new "action effectiveness" model of MBA education that gained national recognition for the school.

Dr. Torbert has founded and directed two organizations and has consulted to many others, including Bellcore, Citizens Energy, the City of Boston, Digital Equipment Corporation, Gillette, Odebrecht Construction (Brazil), Phillips Academy, and Pilgrim Health Care. He has served on the Boards of Directors for the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society, Svigals Associates (architecture), and Franklin Research and Development (investment advisors). He has also just completed two years of service on the National Commission for the Future of Graduate Management Education, which has published its findings as "Leadership for a Changing World."

In addition to numerous articles, he has authored four books: *Being for the Most Part Puppets: Interactions Among Men's Labor, Leisure, and Politics* (1972), *Learning from Experience: Toward Consciousness* (1973), *Creating a Community of Inquiry: Conflict, Collaboration, Transformation* (1976), and *Managing the Corporate Dream: Restructuring for Long-Term Success* (1987; recipient of the Alpha Sigma Nu national book award).