

DuVERSITY NEWSLETTER NO. 16 2006

The leading article in this issue is from Francis Huxley, who was a presenter on our seminar-dialogue on The Synergic Epoch in 2003. Francis had a distinguished career in anthropology and his books include *Affable Savages: An Anthropologist Among the Urubœ Indians of Brazil*; *The Invisibles: Voodoo Gods in Haiti*, *The Way of the Sacred*; *The Dragon: Nature of Spirit, Spirit of Nature*; and *The Eye: The Seer and the Seen*. The article is from a talk he gave many years ago after he had worked with R. D. Laing, but we requested permission to print it in our newsletter since it is such a wonderful example of 'thinking outside the box'. That now exhaustively used phrase or slogan is rarely practiced in fact. When it is, such a person may even appear mad or undesirable. It takes courage to think and speak from oneself. Francis points out that Laing was a true *shaman* but did not conform to our quaint ideas about what shamanism is, including the fact that he remained a thorough westerner who did not have to pound drums and take drugs to get his insights.

The main article is followed by one on leadership in self-organisation, written by one of our board members, Richard Knowles (again with kind permission to make use of it here). Though it may not be at first obvious, it is a natural following to Francis's article. It takes us into the creativity of *groups*. Dick leads us to face the heart of the paradox that what groups can do spontaneously requires a special leadership to be enabled to take effect in specific projects.

The wild, spontaneous, self-organising and naturally creative powers of humans have been suppressed for the sake of control on the part of the few over the many. But for these powers to come into effect in contemporary life, they need people of *understanding* to act as advisers and guides.

It is this role of *understanding* that is taken as of primary importance in the work of the DuVersity. Little support is given to understanding because it must be impartial and serve no one group's agenda. The

approach of the DuVersity has been recently expressed in our annual membership letter, which was then excellently improved by Ben Hitchner, another of our board members. His version is reprinted in this newsletter.

Another piece you will find in this issue is a report on a segment of our Psyche Integration programme conducted in Delaware in February this year. It is rather technical but illustrates one side of our work on understanding and method. It is followed by an extract from an article posted on our linked *systematics site*.

In an era where simplistic and polarized thinking is ruling international and national events, there is an ever more urgent need for people to be educated to think in non-polar ways. Polarized thinking – which easily degenerates into 'me, right – you, wrong' – is really anti-thinking because movement of thought is not possible. Yet the very forms of discussion and communication we have, from public debates to computer technologies, are inherently linear and/or polarized.



LAING

“he appealed to the Golden Rule, to do nothing to others you would not like done to yourself, along with two others I once heard him appeal to, to make up for the lack of formal limits. One went:

What is not forbidden is allowed

What is not allowed is forbidden

whose rigour was mercifully put into question by the second rule: It's all up for grabs.”



HUXLEY

SHAMANISM, HEALING AND R. D. LAING.

Francis Huxley

Times do change. Fancy being asked to speak on the subject of shamanism, healing and R. D. Laing - of Laing, who was not a shaman but a psychiatrist, and here, under the auspices of what he took to be the House of Rimmon, the temple of anti-psychiatry, where he figured as the antipsychiatrist in person. I might not have so readily agreed to had not Laing once told me that, when invited to meet the Pope, he refused because, he said, he'd never live it down if he did - but now that he'd missed the chance, he hardly knew how to live that down either.

I am, as our chairman has told you, a social anthropologist, and before I met Laing I had the chance to live with a Brazilian tribe and learn about shamans and cannibalism, amongst other things; to have worked in an overcrowded Canadian mental hospital; to have taken an ethnopsychiatric look at vaudoun in Haiti, to have been intimate with a Brazilian practitioner who, though he came out of a possession cult, was shamanising as a solo act, etcetera etcetera etcetera, as Laing was wont to say.

Such are my credentials for speaking as I do, as they were for Laing when he invited me to join the Philadelphia Association. They also give me reason to ask why shamanism should be relevant when speaking of Laing, sexy word though it is these days. For Laing was not a shaman. It wasn't his style - he didn't beat drums, shake rattles, brandish crystals, blow tobacco smoke on his clients and make a show of sucking out the nasties. He didn't invoke his guiding spirit with songs and then fall into epileptoid fits; nor did he eat burning coals, slit his belly open, ventriloquise, get into sorcery or divination. He prescribed no remedies, did no conjuring tricks, did not hurl magic darts on the sly.

Nor was he a possession priest, of a cult such as vaudoun, candomble, makumba, umbanda, or spiritismo. These are Haitian and Brazilian forms of African possession cults, and their initiates go all the way from being conventionally normal to unconventionally abnormal, sometimes with a vengeance. I

found much of interest in these cults, such as their method of diagnosing an illness in terms of their client's *daimon*, his native character, rather than in those typifying the disorder *per se*. They do this by discerning which of a pantheon of *loa*, of gods and spirits, is the ruling spirit of their clients, and by initiating them into the mysteries of possession by that particular *loa*, manage to expel those others that have arbitrarily installed themselves in their clients' psychic economy and so take over the direction of their lives.

The effectiveness of this highly ritualised approach may be gauged by what happened when a Haitian troupe put on vaudoun ceremonies in France some forty years ago. Quite a few spectators were then possessed by the relevant *loa* of the ritual moment even though the audience was entirely unfamiliar with such goings-on. (Maya Deren, in *The Divine Horsemen*, reported a more complex experience of this kind that happened to herself.) A sociologist who had witnessed the affair discovered that those possessed had all been under some form of therapeutic treatment, and that after their possession they felt so much saner that, for a year, none of them had found cause to return to medical forms of relief.

But Laing was not a possession priest any more than he was a shaman. Could you call him a nabi? Nabi is the Hebrew word the Bible translates as *prophet* (which Laing certainly was, in his own way) - those who speak vehemently in God's name, calling for repentance, admonishing the ungodly, and being consulted by kings about politics. They also heal: Elisha, for example, cured Naaman the Syrian of leprosy, who then declared he now believed there was no God except that of Israel, and asked forgiveness if he had to accompany his king into the House of Rimmon and there bow. (Go in peace, Elisha told him.). Nabis of this kind are now defunct in Israel, though according to Margaret Field, in *Search for Security*, they flourish in Ghana as possession priests, diviners, magicians, healers and exorcists.

But are such latter-day nabis nabis proper? For that matter, what distinguishes them from shamans? Mircea Eliade, when discussing shamanism, defined that vocation as the ability to keep self-witness when taken by a fit of

inspiration, and set it apart from possession cults in which self-witness is lost. There are so many exceptions to this rule in both camps, however, as to make it nugatory. Even in the heartland of shamanism proper, most shamans are possessed by their spirits – mounted by them, Haitians would say - before being able to ride them: while in vaudoun the final stage of initiation, which authorises a servitor to set up a temple and control its activities, is known as *la prise des yeux* the taking hold of the eyes. This is a state in which, for all the nearly intolerable turmoil occasioned by a full inspirational upsurge*, the privileged victims are able to retain self-witness. Such being the case, it is best to recast the question in terms of the inspirational fit and the different theatres of action in which it displays itself, the difficulty of retaining self-witness being the same whatever the style adopted.

[* This upsurge affects the inner ear and hence the postural reflexes it coordinates. The sense of balance being the first to go, it is soon followed by failure to control the movements of the limbs, also those of the eyes, which then roll upwards; meanwhile, notable changes occur in breathing and heart-beat. Following this large-scale dissociation, the *loa* responsible for the upsurge can then invest the locus of self-witness with their own characteristics.]

There is yet one mark by which a nabi proper may be distinguished from one half-made or merely pretending, as there is with a shaman or a possession priest, this being what, in the Bible, is called the discernment of spirits - an instant recognition of what afflicts a client, together with the ability to get to the heart of the matter on the spur of the moment. True, the gift is not restricted to them, as I hardly need remind you: I have known a doctor who could diagnose at twenty paces, as well as a philosopher, a painter, a novelist, a psychotherapist or two of various persuasions, a garage mechanic, a priest and of course Laing himself, who could do as much. All the same, it is an arduous task to perfect this gift, for though it is native to us all it is commonly repressed - with some reason, for it goes to that place where the sense of one's self is permeated by the sense of others, often to one's confusion.

What then is the nature of self-witness? I take it that Coleridge was speaking to this point when he said that the organs of spiritual sense were consubstantial with their objects - a profound remark from a man who evidently knew as much by direct experience. And so was it with Coventry Patmore when he declared love to be

"that marvelous state in which each of two persons in distinct bodies perceives sensibly all that the other feels in regard to him or herself, although their feelings are of the most opposite characteristics. "

One cannot say as much, unfortunately, for Levy-Bruhl, whose writings on mystical participation suffer accordingly or, for that matter, for modern physicists who hold, without even appealing to Heisenberg, that if two particles are identical in their behaviour, they may safely be counted as one.

As much to the point is the sense of being what one perceives during nightmares. I mention nightmare for its close association with possession states, as the literature on the subject makes clear, while folklore records the saving grace of such an experience by advising the sufferer to take a nightmare by its toe, when it will transform into a voluptuous moment. This, along with what Coleridge and Patmore have declared, tells us that the two-fold sense of consubstantial mutuality is also the breeding ground of personifications, and raises the problem of how to deal with them when they get out of hand.

Here then is what I take to be the actual subject I have been asked to speak upon today, a subject whose natural focus is an I-Thou moment - this being when two-fold sense meets two-fold sense - whose energetics are well characterised in Jacob Boehme's words "the being of beings is a wrestling power".

Every shaman I have met, and every member of a possession cult, would agree that such is the case: as of course Laing would have, along with many another whatever their vocation. For shamanism is a vocation - the utmost of vocations - in that its practitioners are called to it. much as they might wish to avoid that laborious, painful and alienating destiny. How should it not be, when they first hear its voice in a nightmare, into which they again fall should they cease to shamanise, as

happened to Jonah - Jonah the scapegoat? Or, if you prefer, the wounded healer.

I take it meanwhile that the awakening of the two-fold sense to its own existence is part and parcel of initiation in general, an event that is usually staged at puberty as a horror story accompanied by painful moments of every kind, with a view to awaken the young to their place in the scheme of things. However, quite a number of people wake up to this their self-witness at a much earlier age - Eileen Garret, who had once been Conan Doyle's trance-medium, told me that she woken up in this fashion when, at the age of four, she was harshly reprimanded by her parents for telling them of an event she thought natural but which they regarded as supernaturally disrespectful even to mention. Mid-life crises may also provide the occasion for such awakenings

What has been called the shamanic illness usually strikes around puberty, but by no means always, and takes much the same form whatever the diagnosis according to Western custom. Epilepsy was, for a time, a favourite diagnosis, soon to be followed by arctic hysteria, which under other names was recognised by tribal peoples whose women-folk were especially prone to it - brought on by those long sunless winters, and blizzards in which, the Inuit say, one can hear the spirits of the dead howling their recriminations. Knut Rasmussen, that best of past ethnographers, tells of how they countered this dismal affect when he and a party of Inuit were caught in just such a blizzard. After slogging through it for terrible hours, they found shelter in the ruins of a summer dwelling. Rasmussen collapsed behind a wall, but not so his companions - to his amazed vexation, they set about making themselves snug, they talked, they laughed, they sang - "How can you be *singing* after all we've gone through?" he at last inquired. "Ah," said one of them, "if we weren't happy, we would die." This was also Laing's view: he not only extolled the virtues of conviviality but made a point of setting it in motion by getting people to sing Noel Coward songs, or Victorian ones such as "O for the wings of a dove" or "The Lost Chord", while accompanying them on the piano - though I admit there were other times when he was in such an unconvivial mood, his companions were afflicted with hesitation and gloom. He rather

enjoyed such moments, I suspect, for the insights they gave him into what happens to a group when deprived of an agenda - a practice in which W. R. Bion excelled by remaining steadfastly unconvivial whatever the mood of his group.

Then there's tropical hysteria - that is, latak - for which quite another explanation must be found; there's the effects of traumatic shock, as when an Inuit had his kayak overturned by an enraged walrus, that tusked him through the lungs - his companions saw him to the shore of ice, built him an igloo and left him there for days without dressing his wounds, lighting an oil-lamp or providing him with food, and that's how he became an *angedkok*, a shaman.. And then there are shamans that have been diagnosed as schizothymic, schizophrenic, idiopathic-paranoiac, etcetera etcetera, who have recovered some if not all of their senses by undergoing the classical shamanic experience of being dismembered, tormented, and remade with iron bones or rock-crystals stolen from the sky, with one, two, even seven bones left over which represent new and special powers powers which, alas, have to be paid for indirectly with the life of one of the shaman's immediate family. (Such things happen closer to home: see Laing's writings on the family.)

Having now sketched this outline of what it is to be a shaman I may now bring in R.D.Laing on his own count. For though he was a psychiatrist and not a shaman, I must now so far contradict myself as to hold that he yet had a shamanic temperament. I don't suppose this to be all that different from the creative temperament whether it be artistic or scientific - a notable instance of this last being Testa, the *ipsissimus* of electricity - or psychologic, as exemplified by C. G. Jung in self, both of whom have left accounts of their awakening to its existence. I don't know when Laing woke up in like vein - fairly early I suppose, I never heard though I do know under whose patronage he may be said to have done so, for he told me. He had just come back from Iona, and paid me an unexpected visit. I gave him a drink: he stood with an elbow on the mantel-piece and after a companionable silence told me he was, as it were, a reincarnation of St Odran, whose legend he started to tell me. He did so with

such stumbles and rollings-up of the eyes, I thought to save him the trouble of switching on his memory by looking into the top of his head - "But I've just come across the story myself," I broke in, found the book - *Ten Thousand Saints*, a study of Irish and European origins by Hubert Butler - turned to the page, and read the precis of the legend aloud:

St Odran was a famous saint of Iona. It is said that St Columba, finding that demons were infesting a site [where he wished to build a chapel - St Odran's chapel, it is now called], discovered that only by burying a holy man alive could they be exorcised. St Odran volunteered but after three days Columba decided to dig him up again for news of Heaven. St Odran, on being uncovered, instead of giving suitable information said, "There is no wonder in Death, and Hell is not as it is reported" Thereupon Columba cried out furiously: "Earth, earth upon the mouth of Odran that he may blab no more!" And he was covered up again.

Laing heard me out with an approving smile, which I thought friendly of him, and then said that Odran must have been a priest of the Irish goddess before his conversion to Christianity. by which he had hoped to escape her attentions. (She is the Morrigan, mother of all, demons included, and the vengeant queen of love in death). There was no need for me to do more than smile in my turn, though not without a sigh.

Earth, earth, upon the mouth of Laing that he should blab no more about there being no wonder in psychiatry, and that schizophrenia is not as it is reported. But I only learnt the context of this revelation at his funeral, when the Reverend Donald Macdonald mounted the pulpit to give the oration. He told of Laing's visit to Iona, their meeting, their hottempered quarrelling over religious matters, and the fight they got into before Laing submitted himself to the authority of the Church of Scotland - in proof of which he took a blood-stained prayer-book from his pocket, and held it above his head. The gesture was as eloquent as the words the Duke of dark corners spoke to the miserable Claudio in *Measure for Measure*

Be absolute for death - death or life

Shall thereby be the sweeter

- words I am sure Laing would have

approved of when he came to require this unconditionality of himself. He was then trusting his inspiration without second thought, as he had not quite been doing when it had been his wont to say "I don't even trust my own judgment unless I have to".

The being of beings is indeed a wrestling power, and in meeting it Laing had the advantage of being something of a Glaswegian brawler. How he liked fighting and putting himself to physical test, if it was only playing rugby when he was young - this in spite of all his piano teacher said against it, for sure enough someone stepped on his hand and broke some bones - not ruinously (for he was as deft in playing night-club music as that of Bach, where I most admired his talent) but enough to scotch any idea that he could make a career of it.

Instead he took to psychiatry as a profession, and as his shamanic temperament no doubt played a part in this choice, a brief word about its nature is due. He had no quarrel with his father, who was a professional singer, but with his mother, he once told me. Was she perhaps, he wondered, Jewish - that would explain why, when he was a child, she kept his cup, saucer, plate and cutlery apart, with repeated injunctions to his father not to touch. (But touch he would on occasion, with a mocking smile.) She also insisted on giving him his bath till he was of an age to lock the door against her, and for all her hammerings, kicks and screams of rage, she had to own defeat. Much later he heard from someone in the family that she had made a doll in his name and was sticking pins in it. On his next visit he asked her about that. A short silence, and then "We don't talk about such things", she replied.

And there was that further time, quite early on, when his father gave her a present on her birthday. Never before had he known his father to give her anything on any occasion, but there it was - a small box neatly wrapped, tied with a ribbon. She looked at it for a while, then slowly unknotted the ribbon, unwrapped the paper, took the lid off, removed a layer of cotton wool, and what should she see but the clippings of ten finger-nails and ten toe-nails in orderly array. Not a word said she, not a glance she gave to her husband, but rose from her chair and left the room, leaving an ominous silence

behind her.

I heard this story years after I had ventured to give him a Christmas present. He showed me into his study, which I hadn't seen before, and was much impressed by the dark green of its walls in whose shade the most lonely could feel at home with the Alone, even in company. Laing unwrapped the small bronze Buddha hand that I had brought - he was then practising meditation - and when it lay open to his gaze I became acutely aware of the pugnacious wings of his nose and the scorn-lines that ran down from them. Then, after a moment's thought, he got up from his chair, opened a cupboard, reached in and came out with a sword stick, which he negligently handed to me.

It was a dreadful object, ugly, heavy, and unwieldy both as a stick and a sword; the handle was perfunctory, and the wood of the scabbard-stick worm-holed to breaking point. A real old-time blackguard's weapon it was, and I could just see him as a young man buying it in a Glasgow junk shop and keeping it until the telling moment arrived to rid himself of it at another's expense. As I accepted this dubious comment on myself, delivered as it was in the confines of his dark green room, I began to wonder what he thought I had thought I was doing in giving *him* a present.

He told me as much twenty years later, when I came with another gift for his last child, then just born. Again he bridled with distaste, remembering how our mutual friend Joan Westcott, an anthropologist who for a time had been his secretary, had once given him a crucifix made of rifle bullets with a tin Jesus soldered to it, First World War vintage. It wasn't that he didn't appreciate the object, for it was on his mantelpiece for years, but that Joan, noticing his discomfort, lectured him on the anthropology of the gift, of how it created a web of social relationships by putting the recipient under an obligation to give something back. "An obligation" he repeated with horror.

To give is indeed a two-faced operation, for the same word does duty, in its various cognates, for giving, having, receiving and taking; while in German, *das Gift* means *poison*. It may rightly stand, therefore, as epitomising the double bind, such as makes a divided self of its victim. Laing got the term

from Gregory Bateson, who had arrived at it after lengthily wrestling with a ceremony of role reversal, Naven by name, practised by a tribe in New Guinea: a knotty problem involving several forms of two-fold sense. Meanwhile Laing got the idea of a knot from a Sufi poem, and his book of *Knots* shows him at his minimalist best, though it does not include the most heart-rending of these sickest of jokes. This, which in his later years I often heard him repeat with heroic despair, represents - so Jutta Laing has told me - an interchange he had with his mother at an early age. It goes like this

Do you love me?

Yes.

Do you believe me?

Yes.

How can you love me if you believe me?

I am sorry to say that *The Lies of Love*, his last book, is still unpublished, for those who have read it tell me they were much engaged by its disturbing reports of similar interchanges. Laing indeed detested lies above all things, and would go out of his way to demolish liars. Nor did he ever forget his bafflement when a couple came to see him with such contradictory and yet persuasive stories that he was unable to determine which of the two was lying about what, such a mare's nest had they made for themselves to lie in together.

There were also times when Laing found himself in yet deeper and darker waters, which involved not just double binds - spells, an anthropologist might well call them - but curses. One instance, of which he published a brief account, had to do with a woman who cursed her son to the seventh generation so successfully that four generations later his sole descendant realised he would also be the last. He had made every effort to free himself from his fate but, he said, it was like one of those Russian dolls that had smaller ones inside, all of which he could deal with, but the innermost - entirely beyond appeal - was the mother still mouthing her implacable curse.

I have known of curses being removed by vaudouists, as long as the curser was still alive, but not when the curse had renewed itself over successive generations. A Tibetan

exorcist might, from the little I know of such practitioners, have done better, though the wrestling power involved is beyond my comprehension, and by all accounts takes so much out of an exorcist that such men usually die in their thirties. Laing's nearest approach to such a feat that I know of concerned one of the first, most chronic inhabitants of a P.A. household, David by name, who had just returned from hospital in a high state of mania. Laing gave him what I once heard him call his undivided attention ("No thanks" was Andrew Feldmar's response when offered it, ha ha, as a birthday present). He did this silently and without looking at him, so well that David soon fell silent; Laing then told the others present what he had done, whereupon David took flight again. Laing once more set himself to attend, again David fell silent. What he had done, he later told me, was to take David's frenzy and contain it in himself. But the effect on him was so great that, when he left soon after to drive himself home, he collapsed in the car from the strain. David, meanwhile, was back in high-speed mania.

This same David spoke a rapid and advanced form of schizophrenese which, exhausting though it was to attend to, Laing said he sometimes could understand, much as shamans know the language of the birds. Less sophisticated cases gave him no trouble, nor did the wooden dumbness so often met with in divided selves under interrogation. In Haiti, as I have recounted in *The Invisibles*, this affliction is held to be the work of a *loa* called Great Tree, and is dealt with by the usual method of ritual' incubation. Laing needed much less time, as witness a video made during his appearance at a Milton Erickson conference, he having offered to have a normal conversation, in public, with anyone diagnosed as schizophrenic, deemed intractable, and not under medication. Introduced to a homeless woman who fitted this bill, he so engaged her attention that after an hour she agreed to continue the conversation before a large audience, which she did with aplomb. Laing said that he had no technique in achieving this result: it was, he insisted, the result of empathy in the service of copresence - the state "bf mind I have already alluded to by way of my quotations from Coleridge and Coventry Patmore.

But an ability to empathise can be perilous. I met him one morning looking ghastly - ghastly was a word frequently on his lips at the time and yes, he said, that's how it was with him, he'd woken up from a dream in which he'd been a rat in a Hong Kong sewer. He was in much the same state at one of the weekly P.A. meetings, which I will give a brief account of, if only in order to give you an idea "of what I mean by a shamanic temperament. Instead of getting on with the agenda, Laing asked if we would help him, for he was in a peculiar state: he felt like exploding and breaking the furniture. As it was, he was filled with this dire impulse down to his feet, which he wiggled for the next hour to free them from cramp.

Knowing something of that state, I offered to give his feet a massage by way of emergency treatment, which he indignantly refused just as well, he might have kicked my teeth in had I tried. Hugh Crawford then offered to put him through a formal inquisition, which Laing accepted by sliding off his chair onto the floor. First question: What brought it on? Laing replied that he'd just returned from Rome (this was the time when he'd refused to meet the Pope) and he and an Israeli doctor who like himself had a consuming interest in (here his voice faltered) fetuses, were sharing a bottle in a hotel bar. The doctor remarked: "Look at that woman, she's a coca-cola woman". Laing looked up, took her in at a glance and went off to vomit.

"Why", he asked of no one in particular, "do! take all this in? It lodges in my throat like a vampire." He was, he said, exsanguinated by it all, it must be because his umbilical cord had been cut as soon as he was born, much too early, his mother having already dissociated herself from his existence.

"That's a condensation," Crawford said. Laing ignored him, and with tears streaming down his cheeks told of the conflict raging between his two hemispheres. "I feel both of them," he said, "they alternate, I've seen them in detail in myself." A heterodyne effect, Crawford remarked. Yes, but what was it about? Laing gave the answer: it had to do with an incorrigible evil in himself, that waited on the incorrigible necessities of life in general.

"Regard the condensation" Crawford continued. Laing obliged, adding that he could

go on like this for months, he knew it all. Crawford persisted until, grateful though I was to have heard what Laing confided to us while under this interrogation, I lost patience and attacked Crawford *ad rem*. Leaving the fetal issue to look after itself, I asked if he didn't recognise a mild case of shamanic disorder when he saw it - the moment when the gear-box is seized up, and one can't shift either up or down - or know how to restimulate the works without further recourse to analytic procedure?

Crawford feigned not to understand - "You speak air," he told me. Laing broke in: "I breathe with my brain," he said, "I learnt to do that in order not to die during an asthma attack." * Crawford: "That's a metaphor. You breathe with your lungs." This scientific remark infuriated me: I got on his case once more, and so we slanged each other for a time. Energised by this brawl, Laing soon joined in to slang Crawford on his own terms. He was now back in his chair with his gear-box unjammed, his hemispheres having found a common axis with his witness and spinning like a top. But what was his incorrigible evil, then asked Leon Redler. "Callousness", he replied, after a brief pause, and enlarged on that topic for a while. He was himself again.

[* One of Laing's party pieces was a choke-by-choke rendition of this nightmarish malady, from which St Odran preserve us. Since Laing was sometimes accused of being schizophrenic, it is of interest that Dr Humphry Osmond, coiner of the word *psychedelic*, long ago observed that asthmatics find their breathing restored should they develop symptoms of schizophrenia, though when relieved of those symptoms they revert to the asthmatic mode. What is known of the physiology here involved suggests that those who wrestle with these and other double binds can indeed save their day by learning to breathe with their brains, a meditative practice of long standing.]

Yes, Laing could be callous, and often was. It was, at best, part of his armamentarium against coca-cola women and the like; at worst, brutal - but then, we all have our little problems, do we not, complete with their own thick skins. Better to return to this account of a mild shamanic disorder by saying how much my contribution owed to that Brazilian I spoke

of earlier, whose ability to shift gear caught my attention when I first met him. This was just before one of his shamanic performances, when he was so self-absorbed I thought him autistic - an opinion that what he later told me of his childhood did something to confirm, as did his successful treatment of autistic children. (Here then may be another diagnostic category by which to understand the shamanic crisis.) But he had discovered how to move in and out of this self-preoccupation: he went into first gear, if somewhat reluctantly, when I introduced myself to him, then into second when an attractive woman joined in, and into third when it was time for him to start his act. Then the spirit of the late emperor Nero (one of many that attended him) came into him and up he rose, like a spring, his face transformed, to work the audience and attend to his victim-patient - and he had a fourth gear ready for those moments when, having gone as far as he knew by himself, Messalina would animate his place of self-witness at his expense, to do the necessary in a flash. But the great difference between him and Laing was that I never saw Laing lose self-witness let alone indulge in such histrionics, even though he did acknowledge that some of his best moments were inspired by a clearheaded Kali-esque furor. But that was later, when he had abandoned the Philadelphia Association.

I have so far spoken but indirectly of shamanic healing. This is a subject difficult to do justice to in a few words, since it deals with spells, curses, breaches of tabu, underhand intentions, social dysfunction, soul-loss and other anthropological commonplaces, many of which have escaped psychiatric attention. The methods used to free the victim of such complaints are much the same the world over: shamans must establish a reflexive world animated by personifications of the forces active in this one, and employ their empathic sense to discern which personifications of spirit are involved in a particular disorder. This done, various arts of conjuration are employed to so fascinate the attention that the patient is freed from self-preoccupation and can re-establish normal relations with the world at large. The methods are not always gentle, and some shamans are notable for their intimate knowledge of sado-masochistic necessities.

Practices of this kind, along with religions,

can be distinguished according to whether they follow the affirmative or the negative way, and traditional shamanism largely favours the affirmative one. Laing's method, as practised in the households of the Philadelphia Association, favoured the negative way, as befitted his minimalist and existential bent. His guiding line was the Hippocratic oath with its major injunction, to do no harm to those who consult you, to which he added his own gloss, that a human being should be treated as a human being and not suffer the consequences of being pathologised whatever the problem. Hence his refusal to set up a conventional regimen by which sufferers can be restrained and manipulated, and his horror of the unconvivial nature of psychiatric wards - a horror so large that, as I have mentioned, he constantly extolled conviviality as the eminent need for those in mental shipwreck.

His view of the households set up by the Philadelphia Association was that they provided asylum, and *asylums* was often his name for them. They had no resident therapists, the task of running a household being taken up by the residents themselves, who sometimes included apprentices; there was no prescription of drugs, and if someone should' freak out, the residents were expected to form a safety-net on their own, and call on other households to help if necessary, with those who had oversight of these concerns also lending a hand.

There were no rules, in the formal sense of the word: the asylum was °also a crucible in which, Laing used to say, rough edges were smoothed out little by little. An odd kind of crucible, I once remarked, with no cross marked on its bottom - at which pedantry he pshawed in reproof.. No cross and no apparent limits either. Instead he appealed to the Golden Rule, to do nothing to others you would not like done to yourself, along with two others I once heard him appeal to, to make up for the lack of formal limits. One went:

What is not forbidden is allowed

What is not allowed is forbidden

whose rigour was mercifully put into question by the second rule: It's all up for grabs.

These rules generally kept things in order, and it was in this inchoate theatre, with no

director, no script, no prompter, no stage props or effects, no drums or rattles, no invocations, prayers, chants, no mindaltering brews, that the Laingian mode of spontaneous self-becoming could achieve the same general effects that are produced by shamanic initiation - of regression into nightmare, of its incubation, with a frenzy or two before the novice comes back into his senses - or hers, of course with reintegrated faculties. The particular effects, however, were different, for no shamans were produced by this set-up. That was not the aim of the venture, which was to allow a mental disorder to be fully experienced as it ran its course, this being enough to ensure its happy outcome - no policing required. He was not interested in curing a disorder, I once heard him say, but in ,healing those distressed by disorder: in other words, he gave them their natural due, the chance to wise up to themselves by themselves.

I have but some further stories to tell you, to show him in action. The first concerns myself when I had a painful choice to make and could not see my way. I telephoned him one evening, asking for his help. All right, he said wearily, come over, and soon I was in that dark green room of his, telling him all about it.. He bore with me patiently for quite a while, then got up and began walking to and fro in front of the curtains, back stooped, gesturing with his hands, eyes staring at nothing, silently jawing away non-stop. Alarmed by this parody of myself, my mind then cleared and I burst out laughing; whereupon he sat at his piano, opened a book of Noel Coward's songs, and so we passed the rest of a now convivial evening. I reminded him of the occasion years later, and he said - a little reproachfully I thought - that there were times he wished someone had done as much for him.

Next, that unusual occasion in which I first saw him publicly engage in his speciality, which he later called psychic aikido. In contrast to usual shamanic and vaudouistic practice, in which the practioner uses his left hand alternately with his right - the right for white magic, in aid of a client, the left for black, to deal with the client's enemies - psychic aikido takes the client as his own worst enemy and launches the telling blow - by which hand makes no odds - at the solar plexus of the

situation. In this case, however, Laing was dealing, not with a client, but with an established member of his own profession. This was Carl Rogers, who had invited Laing to put on a double act in London. Laing had accepted and in return had offered Rogers his hospitality for the duration. He had meanwhile summoned the members and associates of the P.A. on the evening of his guest's arrival - who had come, I was surprised to find, with his own band. As surprising was the silence that reigned over the room when I entered it, which continued until Rogers took it as his duty Laing showing no such willingness - to introduce himself and his doings, after which his followers did likewise. There was another silence which, thinking that Laing needed a Mutt to his Jeff. I broke by following suit, to be followed in turn by the others of Laing's equipe. Silence once more, long but not too long. And then Laing launched his opening gambit: 'I see that we can work together, but I don't think we can ever be friends.'

Gasps. Rogers paled beneath his tan, and sat speechless. Not so his band, who were loud in outrage. When the clamour uneasily subsided Laing proposed that, the meeting being over, we should all adjourn to the Chinese restaurant around the corner. He was there first, and seeing him installed with two others at a corner table already supplied with bottles, I took a seat elsewhere. Rogers came in next, and took the chair next to me ("Serve you right for acting the gentleman," Laing sneered afterwards). We engaged in small talk and he was recovering his spirits when, as we were eating our noodles, two drunken Scotsmen lurched through the door. Laing shouted a welcome to them in broad Glaswegian, adding: "If you want to see a pairson, he's sitting over there -" stabbing a finger in Rogers' direction.

Another hubbub arose, and the restaurant soon emptied,. On my more leisurely return to Laing's house, I saw Rogers and his folk in anxious discussion on the other side of the street. Leaving them to it, I found Laing and some others at the window, looking down upon the scene with the relish St Augustine described as one of the chief pleasures of the blessed, namely, to observe the torments of the damned - a passage Laing had by heart. However, when he judged that enough was

enough, he supposed he should go over and rescue Rogers from himself, which he did.

Next morning, the double act did very well. Laing was impeccable when introducing Rogers as the founder of non-directive, client-centered therapy, and in asking many an interesting question - for instance, 'How was it, do you think, that your psychology caught on so quickly in the United States?' to which Rogers replied, I thought without guile: 'I suppose I came along at the right time as a kind of a person or something.'

You may wonder what all this was about. If so, you should read the account of Martin Buber's public I-Thou encounter with Rogers, in Buber's *The Knowledge of Man*. Buber talked of such things as 'imagining the real', which Rogers failed to appreciate, and of a therapeutic dialogue being bounded by tragedy because of which "Humanity, human will, human understanding, are not everything. There is some reality confronting us. We cannot forget it for a moment". Rogers agreed that "there is an objective situation there, one that could be measured", which will give you some idea of the difference between the two men. Buber's final comment (with which Laing would have concurred) was that Rogers' concept of persons was little better than one of individuals, and that he was *against* individuals and *for* persons. On the other hand he later said that he had never before attempted an I-Thou encounter in public, and found it to be not as impossible as he had supposed.

If only it had been Laing talking with Buber - Laing, for whom such public encounters came to be meat and drink! He would have known just how it was with Buber when he smashed a bible on the table, crying "What is the use of a book like *that* to us *now?*" - the time being the Nazi era, the event a rabbinical convention. And Buber would have appreciated Laing's remark that there were many people who, though worthy, he could not educate even if he wished to, because they did not entertain him.

I would be going beyond my assignment were I to speak of Laing's activities as a master of psychic aikido at the time he was preaching unconditional love, and being so unconditional in his treatment of others that, though they were at first appalled, they were

soon effusive in their gratitude. Long before, I had occasion to bring up this unconditionality of his with Peter Mezan, and found myself saying that Laing was impossible; to which he replied "Obstinately impossible" and then retailed me this anecdote, whose tragic condensation brings me to a close. That morning he had paid Laing a visit, and found him entertaining a tall, thin Spaniard who, dressed in black complete with cape and a slouch hat, was armed with an invitation to visit Madrid. There Laing would be given the keys of the city and meet the King. "You are as good to us," said he. "No-one has read your books, but we all want to meet you. We think of you as Jesus Christ, because you attempted the impossible and failed."

I don't know how Laing dealt with this challenge to his honour. What would you say, were you Odan *redivivus* and your works available, to an admirer who excused his failure to do the possible by making you that gift of gifts, a crown of thorns?

ENGAGING THE NATURAL TENDENCY OF SELF-ORGANIZATION

Richard N. Knowles, Ph.D. @ 2005



RICHARD KNOWLES - SYSTEMATICS GATHERING 2005

There is a natural, pervasive tendency for living systems to selforganize. This is seen throughout nature at all levels of scale from tiny bacteria to large ecosystems.

People experience this phenomenon in gathering together to talk, work and play. This tendency is so pervasive and subtle that it's often not noticed or paid much attention to. Yet

it is happening all the time.

This natural tendency is powerful, yet subtle; it is like the current in a flowing river. Sometimes people join the flow and positively engage with this tendency in their myriad of conversations, as in informal gatherings like some family reunions or in some high performance work teams.

But at other times, a common experience many of us have often had when we have a specific task to do or a goal to reach, is trying to impose our will on people through a command and control approach. While striving to get the job done, we bump up against this tendency of self-organization as we strive to complete the task or reach the goal. This is like trying to take the twists and turns out of the river and make it flow the way we want it to. It exists in organizations of all sorts.

Most of the vast literature on management and leading is directed at ways one's will can be imposed on this tendency of self-organization to accomplish the tasks at hand. Many managers crave stability, reliability, predictability and control in their organizations. While imposing conditions like these is fine for machines like an airplane, this approach suppresses purposeful vitality, energy and creativity of people in organizations. Imposing one's will can become command and control management when it is pushed too far. In this imposing-mode of managing and leading, people in the organizations become lethargic, unresponsive and resistant to change. The organization behaves as if it is a mechanical thing having to be pushed and shoved to make the things happen that management wants to actually happen. The organization behaves as if it is an *unhealthy living system*.

There is a growing frustration with this way of leading because of the less than-hoped-for results and negative behavior that it generates in people in organizations.

Since the early 1960's more and more is being written about teams and how some of them can accomplish so much. In reading between the lines, it seems that those teams that do best are ones who have learned to engage with the natural tendency for people to self-organize. They are often called "high performing work teams" because they accomplish so much.

As leaders and managers, we have a *choice* to make regarding this natural tendency for people to self-organize. We can find ways to purposefully engage this tendency or we can fight and resist it. There are times when the situation is such that one of these choices may be more appropriate than the other one. This is not about "good" or "bad" but rather choosing the most effective way to lead in a particular situation in the present moment.

While most people have learned how to use command and control management and leadership processes, only a few have learned how to use management and leadership processes that purposefully engage with the tendency to self-organize. ¹ Some of this is based on the intuitiveness or intuitive senses of leaders who know that the command and control processes aren't very effective for the long term.

As our thinking develops, we are finding a language and models that are extremely useful in working purposefully with this natural tendency of self-organization (Knowles, *ibid.*). Combining these with our intuitive insights provides a powerful way to purposefully engage with the tendency of self-organization.

Management and leadership processes that purposefully engage with the natural tendency to self-organize are called "Self-Organizing Leadership ©." Where there is purposeful engagement with the tendency of self-organization, vitality, energy and creativity are seen and felt; the organization behaves as if it is a *healthy living system*.

This way of leading centers around the way managers and leaders choose to engage with, to be in relationship with, the people in organizations. The fundamental idea lies in the nature of the relationships in their conversations. Ralph Stacey is leading explorations into the importance of conversations in organizations in his work on complex responsive processes. ² Much of the vast work on complex adaptive systems relates to how things unfold and develop out of the self-organizing way people interact in organizations. Much good work is being done to help us understand the deeper principles behind the way self-organization unfolds. These theoretical foundations are important in building a solid ground for this important work

for leaders.

Interestingly, to purposefully engage with the natural tendency of self-organization, all we need to do is to simply start having the important conversations. Three conversational pathways into purposeful engagement with the process of self-organization are through:

- . abundantly sharing important, relevant information,

- . building interdependent relationships and trust, and in

- . helping people find how they and their work fit into the whole picture - discovering meaning in their work.

Authentic conversation, one person at a time, begins to open up the connections.

These authentic conversations need to be about the questions and issues that are truly important and critical for the success of the work and the goals of the organization. It requires courage, concern, commitment and care. We have to be open, honest and transparent as we do this together. We are *engaged within the organization* and *not acting on it* as if it was some external thing.

There are a number of ways to open up the conversations. We can just start to share important, relevant information and build trust and meaning as we talk together. We can engage in dialogue processes like those used by Meg Wheatley and Peter Senge. We can use story-telling as a way for people to find meaning in what is happening. We can use the Open Space Technology of Harrison Owen to explore people's interests in a particular subject. We can use the Future Search approach of Sandra Janoff and Marvin Weisbord to find out what is important to people and who cares enough to carry it forward. The approach of David Cooperrider with Appreciative Inquiry is also a great way to open up the conversation in a positive way. Sometimes it is about having the hard conversations like Susan Scott talks about in *Fierce Conversations*.³ Sometimes it is using Glenda Eoyang's approach to explore the difference that makes the difference. The challenge is to keep the conversations open, flowing and authentic over time.

Most people find these ways of coming into

relationship in these conversations together, quite stimulating and exciting. For many, it is the first time they may have been heard or taken seriously. New ideas are shared, exciting possibilities discovered and opportunities may open up for significant improvement. Yet the ways to easily document the conversation, to keep the conversational space open, to keep the conversation alive and to carry it forward to others who need to be engaged are limited.

It is important to easily and effectively document the critical questions and issues raised in the conversation so that the space can be held open to carry these conversations forward with those who may not have been initially involved.

One way to effectively and easily address and document the critical questions and issues is through a cyclical progression of conversations that develop successively deeper and more coherent insights. In our experience in working in organizations, we have found that almost all the information that an organization needs to accomplish its work is already scattered among the various individuals within the organization. This open, honest progression of conversations provides a way to develop a shared understanding and awareness of all we know for everyone to see and experience. A path of transformation opens up as we move forward in the journey towards completeness.

This cyclical progression of conversations is mapped onto a Process Enneagram[®] map (Knowles, *ibid*) to capture the ideas, to keep open the space for future conversations and to develop a living strategic plan.

The progression begins with a conversation to get clear about the question we are facing. Then we move on to a conversation about who we are as we have come together, our Identity. We then move on to the Intention so that we develop a shared, co-created picture of just what we are trying to do to address in the opening question before us. The progression then moves on to conversations about the Issues and Tensions facing us, the dynamics of how our co-created Principles and Standards of behavior will enable us to more effectively work together, to identifying specific tasks and Work we'll do, to

how we will continue to Learn and Grow, discovering our future together, and how to best Structure and organize ourselves to accomplish the tasks needed to address the opening question. As we carry forward and widen the conversation, other insights will emerge which can be added to the map we are creating. In this cyclical process we move up a spiral of learning and growth. This cyclical progression of conversations enables the development of a very high level of coherence, purposefulness, will for action and sustainability.

Control shifts from management edicts and pronouncements to the co-creation of the Bowl (Knowles, *ibid*). The Bowl consists of the mission, vision, expectations, principles and standards of performance. The Bowl provides both order and focus for the organization and within the Bowl people can work with a high level of freedom to accomplish the tasks before them.

As we purposefully engage with the natural tendency of self-organization in this way, the energy and creativity of people flows forth and the effectiveness of the organization goes way up - often over 30-40%. Resistance to change almost disappears.

Conclusion

As leaders, we have a choice to make about how we engage with the natural tendency to self-organize. While historically we have resisted this tendency (and there will still be a few occasions when we still need to do this), we are finding that purposefully engaging with the natural tendency to self-organize produces vital, coherent, highly effective organizations. SelfOrganizing Leadership © provides pathways for leaders to effectively engage with the natural tendency of self-organization.

1 Richard N. Knowles. *The Leadership Dance, Pathways to Extraordinary Organizational Effectiveness*. Niagara Falls, NY, USA. The Center for Self-Organizing Leadership. 2002.

2 Ralph D. Stacey. *Complex Responsive Processes in Organizations*. London: Routledge, 2000.

3 Susan Scott, *Fierce Conversations, Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time*. New York. The Berkley Publishing Group. 2002, 2004.

EXERCISE IN LVT AS A DYNAMIC EMERGENT PROCESS

This exercise was part of our last Psyche Integration programme at Delaware in February. LVT is being developed by CMC management centre in the UK, for which Anthony Blake is Director of Research. The exercise illustrates the principles of self-organization of conversations, which is becoming a hot topic in organizational theory as Richard Knowles points out in his article above.

Introduction

LVT is a methodology that supports explorative enquiry. It makes use of the device of condensing the meaning developed in conversation into 'molecules of meaning' (MMs) and proceeds in various stages. The MMs are statements made on suitable objects and exist in a shared physical space such that they can be manipulated by participants as an *explicit gestural language*. There are two main forms of the method:

1. In a series of separate defined steps. There is an initial stage of gathering MMs which are generated by members of the group. Next is a stage of grouping together in sub-totalities or clusters and identifying these as new meanings. Finally, there is a stage of integrating the preceding into a 'whole system' at a third level of meaning.

2. In an emergent process. What are three stages in the previous mode are brought into play together. The process begins with one MM and goes on through the addition of other MMs, one by one. As the number of MMs increases then the equivalent of grouping and integration takes place in arranging and re-arranging them on display.

Agreement and argument are more intense in the second case because the presentation of any MM or its movement to another place is subject to discussion. It is likely that the *content* of the MMs at least partially reflects what becomes conscious of the *form* of them taken as a whole at any stage, which significantly includes how the group agrees *rules* of conducting itself in evolving the process.

Though the method is described for a group, the same considerations apply for single persons working on their own. What is called 'thinking' is treated as an interiorised 'silent' conversation (see Stacey et al). We have reported on an experiment for a single person (see 'Unfolding of Meaning') and here report on an experiment for a small group (six people).

In both cases we have evidence of a *self-organising* process. Ralph Stacey and Ronnie Lessem say about conversation in general:

Although people may have themes they want to discuss, no one can predict at the outset how the conversation will unfold. One person says something which evokes a response from another which provokes a further response. The conversation is 'self-organising'. It shifts around in a way that no one is controlling but all are participating in. Afterwards you could see a pattern in the conversation and you could see a coherent order in what was discussed but you could not plan it.

In using LVT, this complex and emergent process can be made more conscious and visible. In particular, 'seeing a pattern' in the conversation is being done as it takes place. What is ordinarily a retrospective move of reflection is incorporated into the conversation itself. This makes it possible to remember the conversation better without fixing it. The MMs and their structure can serve as a basis for further conversations. This is exemplified in the following account made some weeks after the exercise.

The Exercise

The exercise was done in a small mixed group containing managers, educators, psychotherapists and a onetime lobbyist. It began by opening up the question of 'bullet points'.

Bullet points are widely used in management. Three ideas are relevant here.

- According to ex-Dupont managers present, 25 years ago bullet points were called 'burger dots' after Burger who pointed out that numbering points led us to think of them in order and not take them on an equal basis.

- How do we decide what a 'point' is? People just do this by rote, probably repeating what others have done before with small changes. We have no explicit method of determining how 'large' a point is, or in what way it is relevant to the matter in hand, or how we discriminate one from another. Different people can lump points together or split them according to their fancy or to some criteria that are rarely if ever made explicit.

- The bullet technique makes no provision for *order* or *meaning*. The sequence of points may have no significance. There is no provision for any systematics or arrangement of the points to provide intelligence about what they mean *in relation to each other*.

We then went on to consider what is entailed in *thinking together*, which was contrasted with the use of bullet points and allied techniques, where there is no conversation. This was understood to necessitate having 'points' displayed in some form so that such points could be referred to and made use of by several people.

- 'Referred to' means that they can be read and pointed to and discussed and modified in expression (form of words)

- 'Made use of' means that they can be *made into something new*. This seems to entail that we find a meaning in *combinations* of them over and above their summed contribution.

- The two ideas combine when we consider putting the points *into a form*, such as in allocating items to different points in a meaning diagram. This was exemplified in the group by one member's consulting use of the enneagram of nine points, which has many built-in connections between them as well as specified types of meaning for each point.

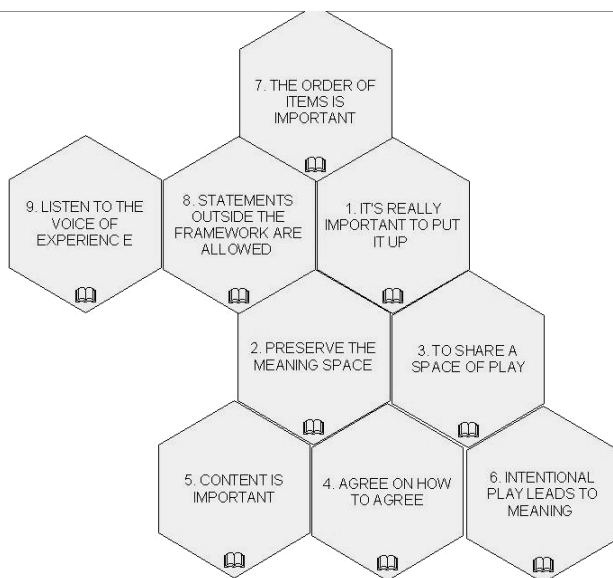
We then went on to use LVT. We began with the point (MM) of 'putting it up', that is on displaying a meaningful item as a statement in words in a public space such as a whiteboard. The item is written on a magnetic hexagon, which type of object takes the place of a 'bullet' and allows it to be *moved around*.

From this starting point, other items of meaning (MMs) were constructed and displayed. They therefore acted to some

degree as comments or *reflections* on what had gone before. They were not, as is more usually the case in use of LVT, all generated more or less at the same time and later subject to processing into meaningful groups and patterns.

The total number of MMs used was 9, a relatively small number in LVT. There was, concomitantly, a lot of discussion for every placement. Every new placement was in the context of what had been placed before and, therefore, constituted a comment or reflection. From time to time, the MMs were rearranged as part of the exercise.

The slowness of placing MMs meant that there was time to reflect on the process. This meant becoming aware of possible *rules* of operation. The resultant complex is given in a



VCM (Visual Concept Model), in which every MM has an extensive note field.

NOTES

1. IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO PUT IT UP

This was the first item.

It declares that the primary act is to make a public statement. This (a) separates the idea from any individual (b) fixes it as a point of reference. (a) is about having a *public space* and is the essential thing if the group is to think together - the putting up not only makes it visible and referable to but also (b) *fixes* it in a way that conversation does not. The group has to learn *how* to make use of fixed points of

reference. Though fixed in a set of words, its meaning still changes for the group in time.

In this guise, it is a depository or *container* for the experience, feelings, and associations of members of the group. But, again, there is a need for the people to be *conscious* of how they are investing in the MM.

2. PRESERVE THE MEANING SPACE

This was one of the earlier ideas after 1.

The idea of *meaning space* is that the display surface supports an understanding not otherwise supported. It symbolises an agreed shared space of meaning. A technical problem is that it is not at present possible to preserve the sequence of changes that take place. We need another device to capture the moves so that any intelligence governing the changes can be recorded and later made use of.

3. TO SHARE A SPACE OF PLAY

This MM amplifies 2.

It implies but does not spell out the operation of RULES of participation. Do people take turns in making a move? What counts as a move? Is there an explicit means of deciding to put up an item? Who decides how it is expressed?

The idea of *play* entails both spontaneity and following rules. People have to learn how to *share* in making associations, which is not a common experience.

The most critical area concerns how we move from dialogue-conversation to explicit moves on the plane of the 'game'. Most groups do not make this translation explicit. Formulating rules of procedure can carry in it a great deal of meaning.

4. AGREE ON HOW TO AGREE

This is an amplification of 3.

If there are moves, then there are rules - conscious or otherwise - of making moves and these rules need to be agreed.

This leads to a model in which there are two planes of reference.

1. Content as in the MMs put up on the board

2. Rules as they come into play in playing together

The rules may change or evolve as the game progresses. WHY these change is important. Games centred on changing the rules are called *nomic* games. Usually, the two planes are not connected consciously.

Referencing rules of play speaks to *how* we are thinking, or method, or paradigm. It can be more important than *what* we are thinking.

5. CONTENT IS IMPORTANT

This item speaks to the relation between content and rules of processing content. It implies that the content should have precedence.

Most people in most groups want to deal with content rather than how they are processing it. However, in fact, they are intimately connected.

The way MMs are arranged in relation to each other can be seen as an aspect of the content as much as a way of processing them (for convenience, say). Speaking roughly, there are three levels of content:

1. that of the MMs

2. that of their arrangement

3. that of making moves in relation to 1 and 2

6. INTENTIONAL PLAY LEADS TO MEANING

This MM brings in the idea of *intention* and this implies becoming conscious of rules. The idea of rules differentiates from simply having a personal agenda since rules have to be agreed.

Here is also the idea that putting ideas together in some way generates new ideas. Hence the *meaning equation*

Meaning (3) = Meaning (1) + Meaning (2)

7. THE ORDER OF ITEMS IS IMPORTANT

There are two meanings of *order*

1. the order in which the MMs put on the board arise

2. the order in which they are *arranged* through the game

Arrangement can go on after the game in a period of *reflection* such as is the case in the arrangement shown here, generated after the exercise was done. *order* as both sequence of generation and as arrangement is rich in

meaning. The numbers given to the MMs represent my best attempt to recall their sequence but is heavily influenced by my reflections on the method.

This aspect raises the question of the value and means of recording more than one kind of order. What use could we make of it?

Implicit in this discussion is the idea that by going very deeply into one thinking task all others are illuminated automatically.

Putting this MM back at the top next to 1 marks it as a different phase of the thinking. It is a move in *metacognition*

8. STATEMENTS OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK ARE ALLOWED

This MM plays the role of a new corrective to the preceding sequence. The 'framework' is the field of collective meaning that becomes established simply by building on what has come before. Hence, this item allows for an intervention from a new perspective.

There is a new possible technique in view here. It is to use more than one starting point or question or frame of reference and then seek to integrate these diverse elements together.

The word 'framework' as implied before can mean the unconscious agreement, consensus or even collusion of the group mind. A FACILITATOR can take the role of introducing 'wild cards' into the game, making use of the generic rule that we use ALL of the MMs in any ensuing operations.

The positioning of this MM next to 1 and 7 indicates it is a meta-thought.

9. LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Another intervention, which crudely indicates the need to access new meaning from experience (allied to item 8) that is, in some way not determined by association form what has been stated before in the MMs.

In standard group work (especially exemplified but not exclusive to, psychotherapy) some attention can be paid for example to how people are feeling 'here and now' and this would entail a very different kind of language from the more 'objective' type impersonal statements.

Illustrating the problems of fixed expression of MMs, one member of the group in this case argued that this item associated with 'appealing to experience' in the way of looking to the past authority! So it is needed to emphasize that this MM must refer to experience here and now, or live present experience. As such, it is an appeal to make a fresh start.

FINAL ARRANGEMENT OF MMs

These MMs and their sequence were then mapped onto an enneagram. If one knows this model then the arrangement is meaningful. In particular it is relatively easy to see there are three phases (0-3, 3-6, 6-9) of the total operation.

0-3: the basic process of putting up MMs

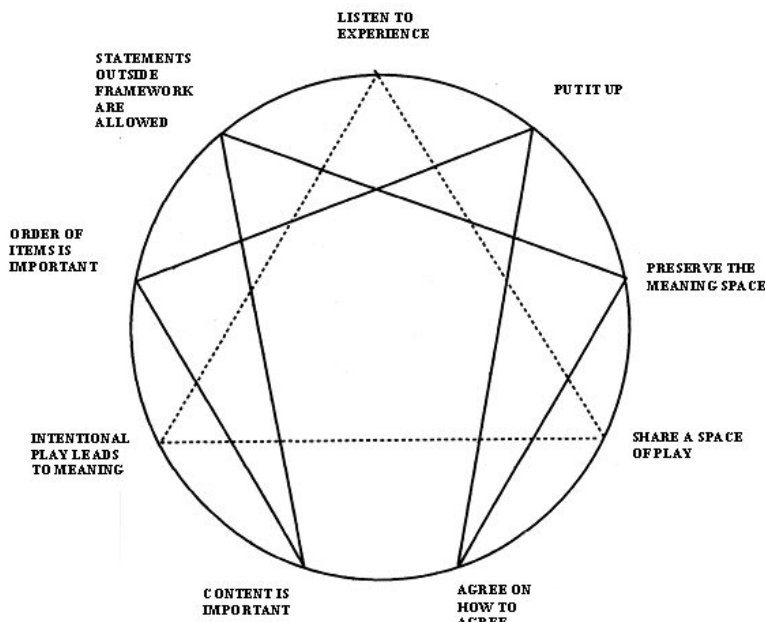
3-6: introducing reflection on the rules of play

6-9: allowing for meta-games of cognition

Item 5 – *content is important* – is a reference to the depth items can accrue through the work and conversation. It may be that in identifying and clarifying just one of the MMs the most significant result is obtained.

In the figure below, the temporal sequence is given by the clockwise direction. Though a geometric design, it reflects the nature of *narrative*. It would be useful to run the exercise again with another group to see whether the two results correspond. Though such conversations are unpredictable it is likely that the same patterns and dynamics emerge. The fixed form of the enneagram is used here only for reflection and was not the basis of the conversation. In general, self-organising processes take recognisable forms but cannot be *directed* according to any such known or knowable form.

The first MM was 'put it up' and the last 'listen to experience' so that they can be numbered 1 to 9 around the circle. By displaying results in such a fashion, any existing arrangement or order of MMs can be brought into question. For example, items 5 and 7 might be interchanged to make the representation 'read better' in relation to the cyclic figure within the circle that suggests a flow of adjustment. This cycle sits mid-way between the 'timeless' triad and the temporal circle. It represents the self-regulative aspect



of self-organisation, an ongoing reflection of the process that influences the process.

QUASI-PHYSICAL MODELS OF SYSTEMATICS - Anthony Blake

This is the main bulk of an article recently published on www.systematics.org where it can be found complete. It is reproduced here to make a link with our editorial theme of implications of 'thinking outside the box'.

Going from one system to another.

The situation of going from one system to another involves us in thinking through what might be 'happening' though only in a quasi-physical or even fictional sense. There are two main representations of going from one system to the next: the Emergent and the Additative.

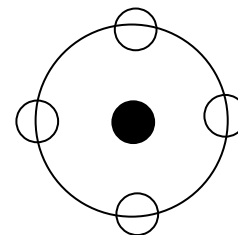
In the Emergent, the set of terms co-create a new unity. Immediately we have here an ambiguity: if there is a system it is already a unity and yet we talk of its terms co-creating a new 'one'. It must be remembered that the word 'universe' literally means a 'turning into the one' and not a given state of affairs. It is a tendency towards unity and not an established one. In other words, unity is always *provisional*. This is inherent in the property of number in the realm of meaning exemplified by $3 = 4$ and other strange equalities.

The emergence of a new unity becomes a new *term*. Hence, a new system is born. We know about this sort of thing in concrete terms as in a man and a woman procreating. This should remind us that biological unity is different in quality from inanimate unity, as Bortoft discussed at length in his *Wholeness of Nature*. This thinking is also to be found treated as fundamental in Whitehead's *Process and Reality*.

The new system may prove to be, in the concrete instance, a temporary state of affairs. The child leaves home, for example. This sort of thing indicates that there are limits to the stability of any new system. At the same time, this does not mean that the new system is not real or that it cannot play an important role. We

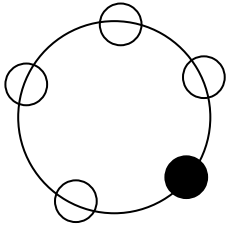
have in physics innumerable examples of 'systems' that form for very small periods of time and yet are crucial to the workings of the whole complex of physical nature. A prime example is that of 'virtual particles' that form themselves out of the quantum vacuum for fleeting instants and are said to transmit 'forces' between other particles.

However, we will model the situation in a simple way. Here is a four term system giving rise to a fifth element. The original four terms are shown around a circle and this circle indicates that they are co-equal in status. The new fifth element arises with a different status. It is possible but not certain. In tradition, such an element was considered as either *the underlying common ground* of the terms or as *the transcendental unity* of them. The term 'ether' was seen in both roles in relation to the basic four elements. Once accepted into the scheme, it has to become co-equal to the other four. In this guise, it appears as *the critical transitional element* between the two systems.



What we do next is to follow *the constraints of our representation*. We have built in the property of being co-equal as being on the same circle. We can now look at what can happen *in these terms*. First of all, we see that the new element must be placed *somewhere* on the circle and there will be, in

fact, *four* possibilities for this move, one of which is shown. Next, we can see that placing the new element on the circle means that the others have to adjust to make way for it. It is also clear that *one* of the old terms can remain in its same position but the other three have to shift somewhat.



So far we have (a) the new term takes up one of four places, and (b) only one of the four old terms can retain its position. We next take account of the fact that the five terms of

the new system now *divide the circle* into new segments. And we postulate that this means that their 'value' or meaning is different from before. This is rather like dividing the musical octave into various numbers of notes to make different scales. The *meanings of the old terms* changes into new ones. If we revert to our scheme of three realms then we are here associating the different position of the terms with different meanings, the two connected by (a) the transpositions of the terms, as changes in location of things and (b) their mutual adjustments, as changes in states of energy. This interpretation endows the circle per se with immense significance as the 'theatre of all possibilities'.

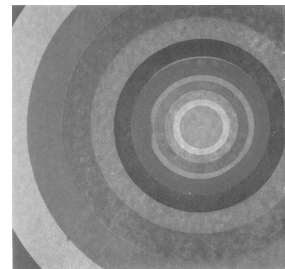
In the Additive view, the new element so to say comes into the picture 'from outside' instead of 'from inside' as was the case in the Emergent picture. In this view, the stability of the previous has to be broken to allow for an insertion. We might relate this to the example of a couple adopting a baby. The concrete process whereby a new element is allowed into a previously stable group can be complex and difficult. The pictorial model again suggests that we will have four options as to the 'region of insertion'. But let us take this case further and imagine a new person being brought into a group. In concrete physical terms we can think of this person choosing where to sit in the group (assuming that they are in a 'circle' of some kind) or being assigned a seat. Such a move can have deep implications. Or, we can imagine that the new person is put in the middle and 'examined' by the other four before being allowed into the circle. We would also have to allow for such cases as when the membership of the group is

in flux with one member leaving and another coming in.

The simple geometrical picture maps onto the more concrete one and this in turn maps onto some sense of *integral wholeness* that we associate with the member elements being co-equal though distinct. In quasi-physical terms, this is to say that there is a set of possible 'states' each of which can be filled by some 'particle'. In the physical world, it may be possible for more than one particle to occupy the same state, and this can be found also in the realm of human groupings. Energy states and particles are not in one to one correspondence.

The Different Meanings of Different Numbers

Besides treating the increase in number of terms as resulting in a different *partition of the whole*, where we consider the 'whole' to remain 'the same' we might also look at it as entailing an *increase in the size of the whole*. In this model, the 'distance' between neighbouring terms remains the same. Our choice of what remains the same is critical. For the sake of a line of coherent meaning we need something that is invariant. Either this is the size of the whole or it is the separation between (neighbouring) terms. In the latter case, we view a set of concentric circles. This picture strongly evokes a sense of expansion that can associate with such ideas as progress or evolution. One of the strong 'thought-impressions' Bennett



reported he had was of an expanding sphere with a 'sensitive' surface of transformation. The inner spheres represented the old regime while the realm not yet formed represented the creative future. What Bennett saw as higher intelligences were moving in and out of the surface of the expanding sphere. It was as if these intelligences could carry in new elements to disturb the old order and guide it into a new one. His image could be interpreted to express the way in which all of us are engaged in some such process if we take on in some measure a role of higher intelligence with respect to some existing system.

The picture of concentric circles can be taken as meaning more than a simple quantitative expansion, because it can also be read in terms of an increasing number of *dimensions*. The term 'dimension' simply means some autonomous order of measure and does not have to be particularly spatial or temporal. However, the common duality of space and time might lead us to suspect that distinguishing time and space is only the tip of the iceberg. Just as modern physics speculates about more dimensions than three of space so Bennett speculated about three dimensions of time; but there might be a case for saying that each new dimension brings in a *different order of meaning*. Adding, then, a different order of meaning entails that our view of the previous systems must change. We do not simply add on something new but transform the whole set of systems. Each new sphere changes our understanding, and this need not be an entirely 'subjective' thing.

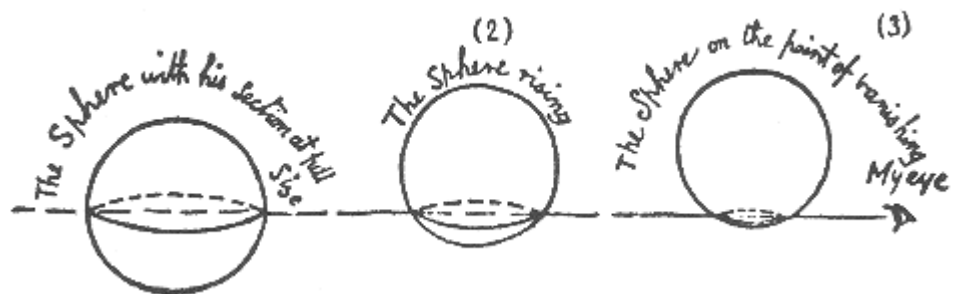
The idea of dimensions helps us to see how 'equi-value' might be realised. In two dimensions, three terms can be equi-distant. In three dimensions, four terms can be equi-distant, and so on. For N terms to be equi-distant, we need $N - 1$ dimensions. What proximity means changes with an increase in dimensionality. If we take – even though barely knowing what it means – the principle of co-equality seriously, then it leads us willy-nilly towards thinking in terms of increasing number of dimensions. Many things change with such an increase. For example, if we increase the number of dimensions in certain ways, there is no need to think about forces, or what appears as a motion in a given set of dimensions is seen as a configuration in higher dimensions. An example of this in physics is the proposal that gravitation could emerge out of a fifth dimension instead of being simply a contingent 'fact' in four.

This then leads to an important insight into why Bennett could claim that each system contained *different types of terms* and, as a consequence, different types of relations

between them. For example, the terms of the triad are called 'impulses' while the terms of the tetrad are called 'sources'; and there is 'force' in the dyad but 'reciprocity' in the tetrad, and so on. In other words, the 'framework' established by a given systems entails a different meaning to what it contains to the framework established by another system. The idea of framework or dimensionality proves a crucial way of linking systematics with our knowledge of physical systems. We are used to thinking in terms of objects (matter terms) and not so used to thinking in terms of how we 'measure' objects (and their dynamic relations associated with energy). Measure is closely linked to meaning.

Terms are not Parts

The idea of dimensions enables us to think about the terms of systems in a quite different way from regarding them as parts of something. The idea of parts obviously relates to objects (matter particles). This already breaks down in quantum wholeness, which deals with the energy of systems. An important aspect of dimensional thinking is that it introduces the idea of *degrees of freedom*. 'Freedom' is a qualitative idea. It is used here in a sense that enables us to think about how conditions of constraint can be opened up by introducing more kinds of variation. This concept was immortalised by Abbott in his seminal work *Flatland*. He depicts a world of two dimensions that, one day is intersected by



a spherical being. The inhabitants of Flatland observe a circle that enlarges and then contracts and they are mystified by this phenomenon which they have no means of explaining.

What one has to get hold of is that introducing another degree of freedom alters the 'whole picture', in particular how one can

explain what happens, as we indicated by mentioning the introduction of a fifth dimension to explain gravity. What does not make sense in one system may be seen to make sense in another higher one. In speaking of 'making sense', we appeal to the realm of meaning. Scientists find themselves drawing on ideas of 'elegance' and even 'beauty' to justify their attraction to higher perspectives, as is exemplified by the theory of relativity and Maxwell's equations of electromagnetism (which was in fact the main stimulus for relativity theory).

The perspective in which the terms of a system are seen more as degrees of freedom than as 'things', is not commonly adopted. Our minds appear to want to collapse into thinking in terms of objects. This renders it very difficult to think holistically. When we begin to do so, working against the stream as it were, we find the following sort of process. First we become aware of a multiplex of things and then strive to see how they are connected. But we can then make a jump to see how we are seeing these things and we connect with the framework within which they exist. Once we have glimpsed this framework we can then begin to consider other orders of framework. By doing so, the original things we first observed get transformed into something else.

This may appear mysterious. It links how we *see* things to what they *are*. It can be appreciated as a radical extension of quantum mechanical thinking. It also entails that this is not merely an imposition of our point of view but a form of *discovery*. How we see things is always from within a framework, but what they are and how they exist is also derivative from framework in a physical sense.

However, something remains the same in going from one system, or one set of degrees of freedom, to another. We can find transforms. Or we can treat a lesser system as an approximation of a higher one. This ability to find what is the same, or making a transformation from one system to another, or in working out various approximations, can all be related to the meaning of *intelligence*. In a way, working within any framework is always *mechanical* and what is truly intelligent is being able to move from one to another. This relates to Bennett's vision. It also relates to such views as we can find in Hindu systems of

thought about the mind as being mechanical, freedom being ascribed to the 'witness consciousness' that belongs to a higher system. In this guise, every system is mechanical from the standpoint of a higher one. This in its turn relates to the experience we can have of seeing that removing one set of assumptions (equivalent to constraints in physical systems) leads us into another one and never entirely sets us free.

Of course, the thought of higher degrees of freedom can be treated as 'imagination' which, as Gurdjieff pointed out, is a two-edged sword. It both deludes us and frees us. We can set in front of us a view of the terms of systems as first kinds of object, second states of energy (including movement, level and so on) and third as 'imaginary' or purely meanings. There is no obvious constraint to the number of degrees of freedom we can adopt. We must, however, be clear that the degrees of freedom entailed in the number-term systems are not to be treated as 'more of the same' but as distinctive qualities. Here is a major divorce from physical systems and we should remember our brief discussion of going beyond the assumed dual categories of space and time. Why are space and time so different in our experience? Why should there not be more distinctions than this dyadic one?

One argument for restricting the view of dimensions is the assumption that the universe is a closed and finite system and that there are in-built ultimate constraints. This view has led of course to the prevalent idea that our 'imaginary' views have no reality. Alternatively, we can turn this on its head and say that our imagination in the realm of meaning is leading us into a realm of continuing emergence that is then being reflected into thinking about the physical realm in the reverse direction of speculating on the origin of our universe amidst an infinity of universes or superuniverses. Science is the realm where imagination has to marry with fact, with the worlds of objects and energies.

Time Spheres or Epochs

In terms of history, we can see the spheres of meaning as representing the nested set of *epochs* as outlined by Bennett and others. Of course, we tend to 'read' the series of epochs along a line from past to future and this is a

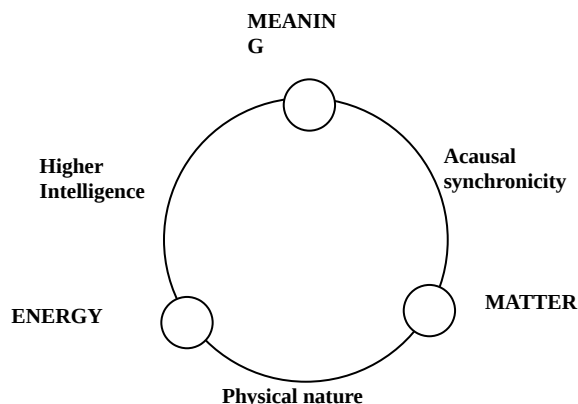
severe limitation. What does come to the fore is the aspect of transition between epochs which has always been taken as a time of turmoil and breakdown as much as one of emergence and order.

In the view of epochs written about in *Hamlet's Mill* by Santillana and Dechend, the periods are related to the precession of the equinox, due to the tilt of the earth's axis 'wobbling' around the galactic north over just under 26,000 years and traditionally divided into twelve (sometimes ten) periods. The book explains traditions of the Flood as transitions between the epochal periods, when the order of things in the one period gives way to a new one, involving the dissolution of the previous. In the Arthurian myth, the land becomes desolate and the Knights of the Round Table wander desperately in search of the Grail. This is just as we feel when we are entering a transition in ourselves.

The association of time periods with epochs supposes there is a structure to historical time that most people would deny. What would be the reason for such a partition of time? If there is some mechanism such as the precession then this is simply a mechanism and should determine nothing about the human or meaning world. If there is some higher intelligence then why should it be constrained by a physical pattern? Contemplating this paradox has led some people such as Carl Jung to propose that there can be a link between physical events and psychological ones, a link called *a-causal synchronicity*. The concept is rooted in antiquity and surfaced in Europe at the beginning of the scientific revolution in such philosophers as Leibniz though in a cosmological sense and perhaps as a complement to the new physical science as discussed in my article *A Critical Essay on the History of Science*. It is reflected in recent times by discussions of meaningful correspondence between the various planetary cycles of the solar system, as in Richard Heath's *Matrix of Creation*. The diagram here is an attempt to hold the various perspectives together in terms of our model of three realms. By placing the term 'meaning' at the top we are deciding to make this realm the organizing principle of the others. This in its turn entails that we are proposing some kind of

correspondence between this image and reality.

To return to our picture of a nested set of epochs we should add that our access to the 'primordial' or initial periods is somewhat



obscured by the successive spheres that bring us to the present day. The very centre becomes buried in history and we must make considerable efforts to remove the layers in order to understand it. That is why we might always say that reaching the *monad* is as problematic as reaching a higher system. This associates with the Christian religious idea of *kenosis* or privation. It also associates with psychoanalytic practice in which it seems to prove necessary to 'go down' into the relatively primordial in order to tap into the creative stream of intelligence.

In this light, *history* becomes the story of progressive harmonization, and *history becomes the ultimate physical reality*. This was no more and no less than the narrative Bennett unfolded in his *The Dramatic Universe*.



DUVERSITY

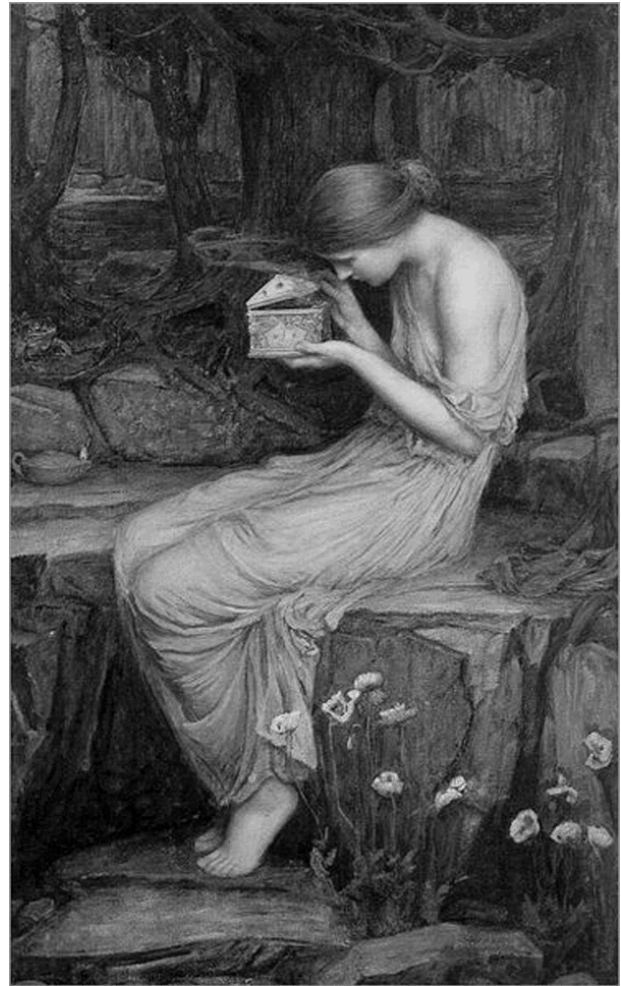
In case you have not received it, this is the main body of the membership letter written by Anthony Blake and revised by Ben Hitchner.

The DuVersity is a leading light of the emergent culture. DuVersity is not a spiritual movement nor specifically religious or non-religious. It is neither left wing nor right wing, materialistic or mystical. These labels have ceased to have any real meaning in our emerging culture. There is no point in bolstering our beliefs or trying to persuade others. We don't understand what we believe. We can be sure that we acquired our habits of thought by chance and circumstances, and our images and explanations of them have no virtue above those of others.

DuVersity presents an opportunity to literally change our mental structure without reference to a cult, a guru, or some type of external shock. We learn by talking with others through the medium of meaning. And, we learn to communicate with ourselves through intuition and accessing deeper levels of mind. We ordinarily live in the basement of mind. However, we can move to a level of mind that is a window on the universe. We are in charge of creating our own enlightenment; it is already within us.

There is no isolation for us. Each of us is a fractal of the world condition experiencing blessings, benefits, impoverishment, suffering and terror. We seek to know our desires and needs and appropriate them rightly. In our emerging culture this appropriation should not necessarily be within old structures such as conventional history, religion, art, and science. If we can take the steps of appropriation without relying on authority, we may move into the reality of making our quests real for ourselves.

We hold that becoming human is a process that requires opening to higher guidance. This guidance includes learning from anyone and everything, a prerequisite of any true democracy. DuVersity is an instrument for the process to become human.



PSYCHE OPENING THE GOLDEN BOX

References for articles

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Richard Heath www.matrixofcreation.co.uk
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www.changeandinnovation.com

Higher Intelligence

An extract from Anthony Blake's coming book can be found on our web site, in the section 'Publications'.

RECENT AND COMING EVENTS

Systematics Gathering VII

Charles Town, WV

April 7-9th

Higher Intelligence (talk)

Rimini, Italy

May 13th

Psyche Integration UK

Braziers Park, nr Reading

June 26-29th

Psyche Integration USA

St Francis Retreat Center, Delaware

June 22-25

Psyche Integration (presentation)

IAGP, San Paulo, Brazil

Playshop (tissue paper collage)

Santa Fe, New Mexico

August 4-9

Psyche Integration USA

St Francis Retreat Center, Delaware

November 2-5

We are also planning a Psyche Integration event in Mexico.

