

IMAGE

AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL
ON
PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS and LENS INTERNATIONAL

IMAGE

AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL ON PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The Action Research Journal is written to communicate designs, formats and ideas of transformational processes which promote the human factor in private and public sectors. It is published by the Corporate Services Division of The Institute of Cultural Affairs: India for distribution through the Asia Network of ICA and affiliated organisations. These include ICA: India (Mumbai, Panvel and Pune), LENS Services Pvt. Ltd. (New Delhi), LENS International Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., ICA: Australia, ICA: Taiwan and LENS International Japan.

The Action Research Journal draws on a variety of sources including other ICA worldwide offices and affiliated professional consulting organisations to provide a spectrum of practical tools and constructs that facilitate individual and organisational transformation. We welcome comments and articles from our readers.

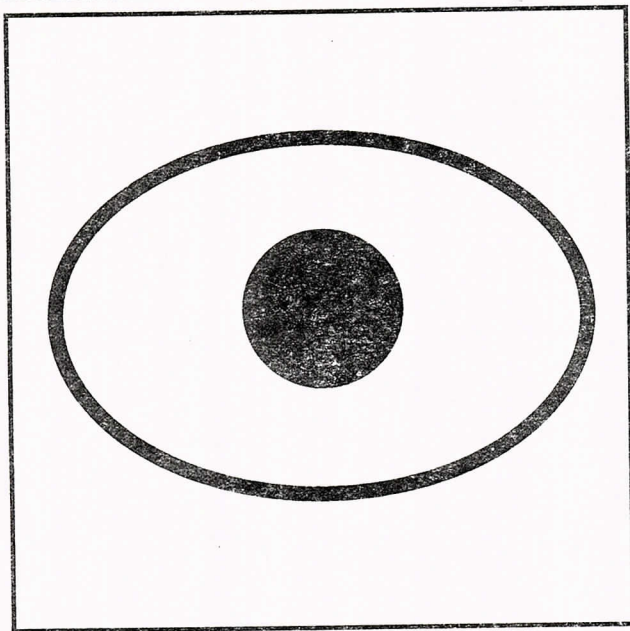
ISSUE THIRTY MARCH 1997

"PARADIGMS AND PERCEPTION"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Journal Overview	An introduction to this issue
4	Creating the Future	Joseph Jaworski summarizes his compelling vision for leadership from , <u>Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership</u>
6	Unconscious Belief	Willis Harman writes about how unconscious beliefs shape our perceptions from the book, <u>Global Mind Change</u>
9	Power in Whole-Minded Shifts	From <u>The Paradigm Conspiracy</u> , Denise Breton and Chris Largent challenge the paradigms which exist and affect large systems like government in the world
12	Organizing As Play	Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers explore emerging science and organization forms and how to think differently about them from <u>A Simpler Way</u>
16	The Affirmative Organization	An essay by David Cooperrider considers the relationship between positive imagery and positive action from the book, <u>Appreciative Management and Leadership</u>
18	Ideals-Belief-Reality Conflict	Robert Fritz, founder of DMA, talks about what happens when personal ideals conflict with reality from his book, <u>Creating</u>
20	The Lens of Perception	Human perception, or adding meaning to every signal coming our way, makes all the difference writes Deepak Chopra, M.D. in a chapter from <u>Unconditional Life</u>

JOURNAL OVERVIEW



The general consensus in almost every discipline is that we are not only in a time of rapid change and complexity, but that we are experiencing a paradigm shift that is calling into question our assumptions of reality. If this is true, it is vitally important that we grasp the nature of this paradigm shift and apply the learnings to our attempts to bring about changes in ourselves and society.

If, however, we do not perceive our situation as one based on assumptions, then we will continue to try and bring about the desired changes based on inadequate mental models. That is why the conscious questioning of our assumptions is so important. As Stephen Covey says, "We see the world not as it is, but as we are."

There is a tendency today to call much of what we see as new perception as a "paradigm shift". But a true paradigm shift is far deeper and far more profound than most "new operating situations". For example, much of what is called for these days in shifting from top down management processes to those of empowerment are often called a paradigm shift. It is not. It may call for a new perception and call into question operating assumptions, but it is not a change of paradigms. The same can be said of the popular term of "learning organisations". Although this is causing much new thinking in organisational behavior and design, it is not a paradigm shift in the true sense of the term.

An example of such a real paradigm shift occurred when the scientific revolution radically altered the two story universe understanding of the mythic world view. A paradigm is what makes "sense" of our world and changing paradigms throws into question our fundamental beliefs in the way things are. Much of the new thinking is a consequence of the paradigm shift going on, but unless we grasp the foundations of that shift, we will fall short of the kind of creative thinking required.

One of the leading thinkers in the paradigm field is Ken Wilber, an American philosopher who has done a masterful job in articulating the scope and nature of paradigm we are now having to operate in.

Although I didn't include an article by him in this issue of the Image Journal, (I couldn't find one that stood alone that was short enough), his thinking greatly influenced the articles that were selected.

Wilber, in his books "A Brief History of Everything" (Shambala Press, 1996) and "Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, The Spirit of Evolution" (Shambala Press 1995), presents a model for the shift that we are undertaking that is the most inclusive yet advanced.

Briefly, Wilber contends that reality needs to be perceived as a series of nested "holons" that progressively evolve as the creative process of evolution unfolds. A holon is a term used to designate that all things are to be seen as both entities in themselves and at the same time as part of something larger. Holons are "whole/parts". All things are holons and he points out that the collective awareness of any given stage of creative evolution is its worldview or paradigm. He further indicates that to completely understand and operate in a given paradigm one needs to see holons in four different dimensions. There are two sets of two perspectives: Individual and Social ("I" and "we") and each of those as either internal or external. The external dimension he refers to as the domain of "it".

Now, his crucial point is that our present scientific paradigm has reduced all perspective to the external dimension only, the world of it. If the world is to move to its next stage (planetary consciousness) it must make the same level shift in the internal dimensions of our individual and cultural perspectives and understanding. This shift is not understood by those who are promoting the emergence of a planetary network, both economically and ecologically. In other words, to live and operate in this new paradigm takes a concerted effort by individuals to live at a higher level of consciousness for their own lives.

The consequences of not doing our interior homework will be to produce a society that will exploit the planetary awareness and not cocreate with it. As he says "The Nazi's would have loved the Internet." Global capacity is not the same as global responsiveness. He points out that even those "New Age" proponents of the Gaia ("we are all part of the biospheric web of life") principle are actually contributing to the Earth's destruction because of this fundamental misunderstanding of the four-fold nature of any paradigm emergence. Because all of life is reduced to its "it" dimension (a worldview he calls "flatland") we lack the transpersonal capacity to develop the ethics that this level of consciousness requires.

This brief explanation does not do justice to Wilber's thought, but it does point out the direction of the task that those of us working on individual and organisational change must be concerned about. It is not enough to "talk" about the new consciousness or planetary culture, we must develop the interior practices and methods that allow us and our organisations to live such an understanding. In other words, it will be only through demonstration that we will produce the new world.

Wilber states the task before us in the following excerpt from his book Sex, Ecology, Spirituality (page 197).

"As for the transformation itself, it is being built, as all past transformations have been, in the hearts and minds of those *individuals* who themselves evolve to centuric-planetary vision. For those individuals create a 'cognitive potential' in the form of *new worldviews* (in this case centuric-planetary) that in turn feed back into the ongoing mainstream of *social institutions*, until the previously 'marginalized' worldview becomes anchored in institutional forms which then catapult a collective consciousness to a new and higher release. The revolution, as always, will come from within and be embedded in the without."

"And, at this point, aside from the inner work that each of us individually can do, I personally see no obvious collective bearers of the new and deeper within."

This work, the inner work and the outer forms has been the principle motivation for this journal. It has been the product of work done by colleagues of the ICA over the last ten years. Recently we have formed a new entity called **ICA CentrePointeS** that is focused on bringing into new form the historic spirit work of the ICA. To this end, this will be the last issue of the Image Journal as part of the Asian Organisational Transformation Network. The future issues will be a publication of ICA CentrePointeS and will stress more on original writing. We will continue to seek articles and books that can be illuminating for this task, but the format will probably change somewhat. I ask your patience as we make this transition. The next issue will be produced in June under this new and exciting focus.

This Issue

The first article is taken from the book Synchronicity, The Inner Path of Leadership, by Joseph Jaworski, Berrett-Koehler, 1996. I had the pleasure of meeting Joe this past January and found him to be a magnificent human being. His call for a shift in the way we think about the world, our understanding of relationship and the nature of our commitment is right on target for the new perspective required of us all. We are printing his chapter called **Creating the Future**. For those interested in acquiring the book and being part of an ongoing discussion of the significance of Joe's experiences contact the ICA CentrePointeS office in Chicago (icaarchives@igc.apc.org) or for those in India contact us ICA CentrePointeS Bombay at the address in the back of the Journal or by email at (icabombay@igc.apc.org).

Willis Harman is the second selection. His book Global Mind Change, Knowledge Systems Inc., 1988 is one of the best sources on the paradigm shift in human consciousness. This excerpt is titled **Unconscious Belief** and outlines the effect of unconscious beliefs and how they so dramatically determine our behaviour and understanding.

I had the good fortune to have met Willis several times over the years and to develop a friendship with him. It is therefore with real sorrow that I found out that he died

early in February 1997 after undergoing brain surgery. His great mind and friendly personality will be missed by all of us.

We live in a society in which our present paradigm has created an addicted worldview that violates our human potential. Denise Breton and Christopher Largent in their new book The Paradigm Conspiracy, Hazelden, 1996, expose the deep roots to our present day crises - from personal to international in which it is not possible to be healthy in a society filled with dysfunctional systems. They offer a twelve step process of change in which we are printing part of the second step, **Power in Whole-Minded Shifts**.

Margaret Wheatley joined hands with Myron Kellner-Rogers in her new book A Simpler Way, Berrett-Koehler, 1996. The chapters **Play** and **Organizing as Play** introduce us to their thesis: how our present paradigm of how the world has evolved blocks us from understanding the true nature of the creative process. Rather than seeing life forms as an "accident" or chance development of random events, they challenge us to reconsider the evidence. The world is really to be seen as a playful experimentation with new forms. The capacity to engage in this playful creativity is what keeps the universe alive. It is also a description of our own stance as we search for new, more meaningful forms for our organisations. There is a new perspective on our task.

The Affirmative Organization is a part of a chapter from David Cooperrider's book Appreciative Management and Leadership: The Power of Positive Thought and Action in Organizations, Jossey-Bass, 1990. Organizations that have a positive view of the future create a field that guides it. This stance of appreciative cognition is a prerequisite for the evolving of structures of society into a planetary consciousness.

Robert Fritz has been a long time proponent of the role of creative positive imagery in our change process. In his first book The Path of Least Resistance, he points out the need to maintain a creative structural tension between our vision and current reality. In his book Creating, Fawcett Columbine, 1990, Fritz helps us understand how this creative principle is available to us all to achieve our dreams. We are printing a part of his chapter **The Ideal-Reality-Belief Conflict**. Like Harman, he points out how our self-perceptions are what are blocking our ability to create what we desire.

Finally, to complete our tour of perspective change we offer an article by Deepak Chopra M.D., to challenge our thoughts about illness and disease. Called the **Lens of Perception**, it shows how our self perceptions affect our ability to combat illness. It is taken from his book Unconditional Life: Discovering the Power to Fulfill Your Dreams, Bantam Books, 1991.

Jack Gilles
Editor

CREATING THE FUTURE - Joseph Jaworski

The Shell system of scenario planning is acknowledged to be one of the best state-of-the-art strategic planning systems used today. It has served the Royal Dutch Shell Group of companies extremely well over the past twenty years. In 1970, Forbes had said that Shell was the weakest of the seven major oil companies, even calling Shell "the ugly sister" of the so-called "seven sisters." Three years later, Shell discovered the power of targeting the mental models of its decision makers through scenario planning. By 1979, Shell and Exxon were seen as operating in a class by themselves, and by 1994, Forbes listed the Royal Dutch Shell Group of companies at the very top of their foreign Super Fifty - the largest companies outside the United States ranked by revenues, net income, assets, and market value.

When I arrived in London in 1990 to begin my work with the Shell Group, I had read everything I could find about its process of scenario planning. I thought I saw how the Shell scenario process fit right into the center of the quantum view of the universe that Bohm had described to me over a decade earlier. At that time, I also thought the Shell scenario process helped people to somehow sense and actualize new realities *prior* to their emerging, but I was mistaken. In fact, the process pointed to realities that were just manifesting in the world. Scenarios were being used in Shell to help their managers react almost instantly to new realities as they were emerging. This approach to scenarios is grounded in the deepest assumption that we human beings hold - that we cannot change things, so we must live our lives reacting to forces outside our control.

A central purpose of writing this book is to propose an alternative: if individuals and organizations operate from the generative orientation, from possibility rather than resignation, we can *create* the future into which we are living, as opposed to merely reacting to it when we get there.

At a level we cannot see, there is unbroken wholeness - an implicate order out of which seemingly discrete events arise, like the ink droplet in the glycerin that gradually manifests from its implicate state. All human beings are a part of that unbroken whole which is continually unfolding from the implicate and making itself manifest in our explicate world. One of the most important roles we can play individually and collectively is to create an opening, or to "listen" to the implicate order unfolding, and then to create dreams, visions, and stories that we sense at our center want to happen - that, as Buber said, "want to be actualized . . . with human spirit and human deed." Using scenarios in this way can be an extraordinarily powerful process - helping people to sense and actualize emerging new realities by providing a story for our time that, as historian Thomas Berry says, "answers the questions of our children."

The conventional view of leadership emphasized positional power and conspicuous accomplishment. But true leadership is about creating a domain in which we continually learn and become more capable of participating in our unfolding future. A true leader thus sets the

stage on which predictable miracles, synchronistic in nature, can - and do - occur.

The capacity to discover and participate in our unfolding future has more to do with our being - our total orientation of character and consciousness - than with what we do. Leadership is about creating, day by day, a domain in which we and those around us continually deepen our understanding of reality and are able to participate in shaping the future. This, then, is the deeper territory of leadership - collectively "listening" to what is wanting to emerge in the world, and then having the courage to do what is required.

As a result of the experiences recounted in this book, I began seriously studying the dynamics of predictable miracles. How was it that so many doors opened after I crossed the threshold by leaving my law firm? How was it that I "lost" the capacity to create the future I envisioned, and how did I regain that capacity? What principles can be discerned from these experiences and from connecting them to the profound new ideas that David Bohm, Francisco Varela, and others along the way shared with me? If this dynamic occurs in individuals, why can't it occur collectively in organizations and even societies as well? And, if so, what qualities of leadership will inspire this dynamic to occur?

I am the first to acknowledge that in trying to address these questions, we are exploring the frontiers of human knowledge and that whatever is said here is just a beginning. It is in this spirit I have set forward three fundamental shifts of mind necessary to the creative leadership I believe is so crucial for our future.

A Fundamental Shift In The Way We Think About The World

First, our mental model of the way the world works must shift from images of a clockwork, machinelike universe that is fixed and determined, to the model of a universe that is open, dynamic, interconnected, and full of living qualities. When Bohm talked to me about life in the bubble chamber, I had expected him to describe something similar to the schoolboy model of things, with particles, like tiny billiard balls, careening off one another. Instead, he described matter as sometimes particles, sometimes waves, sometimes mass, sometimes energy, all interconnected and constantly in motion. Once we see this fundamentally open quality of the universe, it immediately opens us up to the potential for change; we see that the future is not fixed, and we shift from resignation to a sense of possibility. We are creating the future every moment.

A Fundamental Shift In Our Understanding of Relationship

When Bohm explained the discovery of Bell's theorem and how it was confirmed experimentally eight years later, it simply affirmed for me all that I had been experiencing during my trip to Europe, in my encounter

with the ermine, and later in Cairo. I saw the world as fundamentally connected. Everything that I have studied since that time has confirmed to me that *relationship* is the organizing principle of the universe. The physicist Henry Stapp describes elementary particles as "in essence, a set of relationships that reach outward to other things." The management theorist Margaret Wheatley writes that particles come into being ephemerally, through interaction with other energy sources. We give names to each of these sources - neutrons, electrons, and so on - but they are "intermediate states in a network of interactions." Once we see relationship as the organizing principle of the universe, we begin to accept one another as legitimate human beings. This is when, as Martin Buber said, we begin to see ourselves and others in an *I and Thou* relationship.

A Shift In the Nature of Our Commitment

In my old way of operating, I was very clear about my capacity to commit to something. Commitment meant being highly disciplined in sticking with something. I had been taught early on that "the way you win lawsuits is to make it happen - outwork the other person, stick with it, and stay deeply committed to what you are doing." This is the kind of commitment where you seize fate by the throat and do whatever it takes to succeed.

When we stand in this fundamental open and interconnected state of being, we are like the Samuri warrior...waiting expectantly with acute awareness for that cubic centimeter of chance to present itself. When it does, we act with lightning speed and almost without conscious reasoning. It is at this point that our freedom and destiny emerge, and we create the future into which we are living.

It was only later that I began to understand another, deeper aspect of commitment. This kind of commitment begins not with will, but with willingness. We begin to listen to the inner voice that helps guide us as our journey unfolds. The underlying component of this kind of commitment is our trust in the playing out of our destiny. We have the integrity to stand in a "state of surrender," as Varela put it, knowing that whatever we need at the moment to meet our destiny will be available to us. It is at this point that we alter our relationship with the future.

When we operate in this state of commitment, we see ourselves as an essential part of the unfolding of the universe. In this state of being, our life is naturally infused with meaning, and as Buber says, we sacrifice our "puny, unfree will" to our "grand will, which quits defined for

destined being."

At the moment of my greatest challenge during the building of the American Leadership Forum, I completely lost sight of this principle. Once I saw what it meant to *surrender* in Buber's sense, I gave up my effort and striving, and gradually regained my balance. During this time, I began to understand, for the first time, the power of commitment.

People Gather

Out of this commitment, a certain flow of meaning begins. People gather around you, and a larger conversation begins to form. When you are in this state of surrender, this state of wonder, you exert an enormous attractiveness - not because you are special, but because people are attracted to authentic presence and to the unfolding of a future that is full of possibilities. This is what occurred when I gathered the trustees, founders, and others who were so important to the success of the Forum.

Synchronicity

Arthur Koestler, paraphrasing Jung, defines "synchronicity" as "the seemingly accidental meeting of two unrelated causal chains in a coincidental event which appears both highly improbable and highly significant." The people who come to you are the very people you need in relation to your commitment. Doors open, a sense of flow develops, and you find you are acting in a coherent field of people who may not even be aware of one another. You are not acting individually any longer, but out of the unfolding generative order. This is the unbroken wholeness of the implicate order out of which seemingly discrete events take place. At this point, your life becomes a series of predictable miracles.

Out of all these experiences and my meetings with the remarkable people mentioned throughout this book, I have concluded that the leadership that can bring forth such predictable miracles is more about *being* than *doing*. It is about our orientation of character, our state of inner activity.

When we stand in this fundamentally open and interconnected state of being, we are like the Samurai warrior Varela mentioned, waiting expectantly with acute awareness for that cubic centimeter of chance to present itself. When it does, we must act with lightning speed and almost without conscious reasoning. It is at this point that our freedom and destiny emerge, and we create the future into which we are living.

UNCONSCIOUS BELIEF - Willis Harman PhD

This concept of unconscious beliefs and the extent to which they are capable of shaping and distorting our perceptions of everything around us - and within us - is so central to understanding the global mind change that we shall make a temporary digression to look into it more deeply.

Each of us holds some set of beliefs with which we conceptualize our experience - beliefs about history, beliefs about things, beliefs about the future, about what is to be valued, or about what one ought to do. What may be less obvious is that we have unconscious beliefs as well as conscious ones. (There are many ways in which people have attempted to talk about the processes and contents of the conscious and unconscious minds. In the following discussion we will use a way that is adequately powerful, yet as free as possible of psychological jargon. It employs the concept of the conscious and unconscious *belief system* as introduced by psychologist Milton Rokeach in The Open and Closed Mind (1960).)

Persons may not realize they have these unconscious beliefs, but the beliefs can be inferred from behavior - from slips of the tongue, compulsive acts, "body language", and so on. A familiar example from psychotherapy is an unconscious belief in one's inadequacy or inferiority. Individuals may consciously feel adequate and equal, at least most of the time, but under certain circumstances the behavior, body posture, etc. may betray that they unconsciously believe something else to be the case.

Thus we cannot take at face value what a person says he believes. He may be deceiving us deliberately, or he may be rationalizing, not knowing what he deeply believes. We have to infer a person's unconscious beliefs from everything he says and does. That is as true of ourselves as it is of others. We *do not know* what we believe unconsciously, but it is almost certainly not what we consciously believe we believe.

The person's *total belief system* is an organization of beliefs and expectancies that the person accepts as true of the world he or she lives in - verbal and nonverbal, implicit and explicit, conscious and unconscious.

The belief system does not have to be logically consistent; indeed, it probably never is. It may be compartmentalized, containing logically contradictory beliefs which typically do not come into conscious awareness at the same times. The person unconsciously wards off evidence that might reveal such an inner contradiction. Notice that this decision to *not* become consciously aware of something is unconscious. We *choose* as well as believe unconsciously.

The belief system can be conceived of as comprising "concentric" regions or shells. The outermost region contains beliefs that are relatively accessible to conscious awareness and relatively easy to change (as by education). Somewhat more deeply embedded in the system are intermediate-level beliefs, less accessible and more resistant to change. Some of these intermediate-level unconscious beliefs are worked with in psychotherapy (such as the judgments of the "internalized parent"). This intermediate region contains beliefs about the nature of

authority (for example, whether I trust my own experience or accept the interpretation of some external authority). In the innermost core of the belief system are basic unconscious assumptions about the nature of the self and its relationship to others, and about the nature of the universe. Typically a person may go through most of life with these core beliefs essentially unchanged. When they do change, the shift is likely to be accompanied by a rather stressful period in the person's life.

Belief systems serve two powerful and conflicting sets of motives at the same time. One is the need for a cognitive framework to interpret new experience - to know and understand and act responsively. The other is the need to ward off threatening aspects of reality. Our belief systems are our way of making sense out of raw experience. However, they may also distort if necessary to preserve the illusion of order - as, for instance, when we "forget" an incident that doesn't "fit in", (Repression of early childhood memories of traumatic experiences is a familiar example.)

A belief system may be defined as *open* to the extent that new data can enter and affect existing beliefs. A person will be open to information insofar as possible, but will unconsciously reject it, screen it out, or alter it insofar as is necessary to ward off threat and anxiety. The closed mind can distort the world and narrow it down to whatever extent is needed to serve these protective goals, and still preserve the illusion of understanding it. The more closed the belief system, the more it can be understood as a tightly woven network of cognitive defenses against anxiety, designed to shield a vulnerable mind.

As was just suggested, we not only believe unconsciously, we also choose unconsciously. This shows up with particular clarity in the case of subliminal perception. In one form of this well-known phenomenon an image is flashed on a screen for a very brief interval - so brief that the person is not consciously aware of having seen anything. However, physiological response (such as a change in the electrical conductivity of the skin indicating an emotional reaction, or an "event-related potential" in the brain indicating surprise) or a psychological response (for example, influenced free-association) may make it clear that at an unconscious level the person indeed did perceive the image, analyze its meaning, and "choose" an appropriate response.

We need not have gone to the laboratory for an example, of course. Unconscious choosing is evident from everyday life. For instance, I may consciously choose to carry out a certain action which contradicts an unconscious belief (possibly implanted very early in childhood) that the action is *bad*. As a result of an unconscious choice, then, a feeling is telegraphed to the conscious mind - a feeling which we call *guilt*. From still another part of the mind, the deep intuition, may come another choice: to reconcile the conflict and get rid of the guilt feelings.

This is but one example of a more general observation, namely that the typical individual is psychologically fragmented. While the conscious mind is making one set of choices, other fragments of the mind, outside the

conscious awareness, are choosing other things. (A rather old-fashioned term describes the individual who had more or less integrated these various fragments into a whole, capable of conflict-free decision: a person of integrity.)

Few findings in the social sciences are as well established as the fact that the greater portion of our total mental activity goes on outside of conscious awareness: *We believe, value, choose, and know unconsciously as well as consciously.* Furthermore, our perceptions, values, attitudes, and behavior are influenced far more by what is going on in the unconscious mind than by what is easily accessible to the conscious mind. Although this fact is quite well publicized in our day, we typically live, think, and behave without taking seriously its many implications. (Think, for example, how differently education would be viewed if this fact were taken seriously.)

...our perceptions, values, attitudes and behaviour are influenced far more by what is going on in the unconscious mind than by what is easily accessible to the conscious mind.

The way we perceive reality is strongly influenced by unconsciously held beliefs. The phenomena of denial and resistance in psychotherapy illustrate how thoroughly one tends not to see things threatening to deeply held images conflicting with deeply held beliefs. Research on hypnosis, self- and experimenter-expectations, authoritarianism and prejudice, subliminal perception, and selective attention has demonstrated over and over that our perceptions and "reality checks" are influenced, far more than is ordinarily assumed, by beliefs, attitudes, and other mental processes of which a large portion is unconscious. We perceive what we expect, what it has been suggested to us we should perceive, what we "need" to perceive - to an extent that we might be shocked if we realized it consciously.

This influence of beliefs on perception is intensified when a large number of people believe the same thing. Cultural anthropologists have thoroughly documented how persons who grow up in different cultures perceive literally different realities.

The Lesson of Hypnosis

The phenomena of hypnosis, in particular, emphasize dramatically how changes in unconscious beliefs, brought about in this case by suggestion, can alter perception and experience. The suggestion of the hypnotist, for example, can lead the subject to perceive an object or a person that, as far as any onlooker is concerned, really isn't there. Or the subject can be led to fail to perceive something that is there. The suggestion of a solid wall can become so real to

the subject that his fist is bruised upon "striking" it. The suggestion that a pencil is a hot soldering iron causes it, when laid on the back of the hand, to raise the physical signs of a burn. Acceptance of the hypnotic suggestion that one cannot lift a light object produces a complete inability to do so. On the other hand, a more positive suggestion may lead to the body being able to perform feats it could not otherwise do - form a rigid bridge between two chairs, for example, or lift a heavy weight.

One of the most persuasive yet easily accessible experiences to emphasize this point is the firewalking seminar. Since these seminars were introduced into the United States and Europe in the early 1980s, many thousands of persons have performed this feat, which defies all ordinary expectations about the effect of having flesh come in contact with fire. The essence of the experience is that a smooth bed of burning coals is prepared from a wood fire, and participants, having internalized the suggestion that no harm will ensue, walk barefoot over the coals. The seminars have been carried out with groups ranging in size from a few individuals to several hundred. It is not uncommon for practically everyone to walk, and for practically everyone to be unharmed. Yet the coals are hot (1200 to 1400 degrees Fahrenheit), hot enough to burn the soles of the feet badly in the absence of the protecting belief. Skeptics have claimed that there is a "physical" explanation such as low heat conductivity of charcoal, insulating layer of ash, "leidenfrost effect" of a thin layer of evaporated perspiration. But whatever the intermediating mechanism, the fact remains when people change the unconscious belief that burning coals will barbecue the feet, they are insulated from harm; change the belief back again and severe third-degree burns can result. The experience is powerful because any doubter can experiment by changing the belief and suffering the painful result.

The conclusion we are aiming at does not depend upon any single bit of evidence, so there is no need to strain at explaining away the firewalking phenomenon. (Some skeptics have insisted that it is not necessary to believe that the fire will not harm; it is sufficient to believe strongly that it is not necessary to believe! The suggested "explanations" which appear regularly in the media and scientific literature are much like adding epicycles to the Ptolemaic model - they give comfort to the explainer but add little to our real understanding.) The fundamental fact, powerful and empowering in its implications, is that our experiencing of reality is strongly affected by our internalized beliefs. Our beliefs, in turn, are affected by our experiencing of what we perceive as reality - which most of the time reinforces the beliefs. When it doesn't, we generally feel very uncomfortable - and may be on the way to learning something valuable.

Now each of us, from infancy onward, is subjected to a complex set of suggestions from our social environment, which in effect teaches us how to perceive the world. We may from time to time, especially in early childhood, have experiences that do not conform to this cultural norm - but we eventually "correct" these perceptions and cease experiencing the anomalies, through the power of the

socializing process. And so each of us is literally *hypnotized* from infancy to perceive the world the way people in our culture perceive it.

In the modern world this "cultural hypnosis" extends to experiencing a world in which "scientific laws" are always obeyed - whereas in other, more "primitive" cultures, "violations" of these laws may be relatively commonplace. For example, the phenomenon of changing inner beliefs to such an extent that one can with impunity walk barefoot over burning coals, just mentioned, is one which has for centuries been observable in a variety of pre-modern societies. In some cases persons would stand in the fire for half an hour or more, or ladle handfuls of burning coals over their heads in a fiery shower.

In some "primitive" societies remote perception (of the whereabouts of cattle that may have strayed out of sight, or of the well-being of distant relatives for example) is regularly employed. In modern society the phenomenon of "remote viewing" was generally assumed to be physically impossible. How could one possibly "see" what was happening at distances of, perhaps, hundreds or thousands of miles? Yet in recent years, as interest developed in the possible utility of this phenomenon for purposes of military intelligence, there has been research with positive results in both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Reports from the Indian subcontinent of extraordinary capabilities of yogis to mentally control bodily processes were treated with considerable skepticism until the advent of biofeedback training showed that we all have the potential ability, to a far greater extent than had earlier been recognized, to control brain waves, blood flow, heartbeat, and the like.

These several examples emphasize the difficulty of distinguishing the extent to which the "reality" we perceive is peculiar to our cultural hypnosis. We tend to find it curious that other "primitive" or "traditional" cultures should perceive reality in the way they do - so obviously discrepant with the modern scientific worldview. It is harder to entertain the thought that we in modern Western society might have our own cultural peculiarities in the way we perceive the world - that our reality might be as parochial in its way as that of the Middle Ages appears to us now. Since Western science is the "best" knowledge system yet devised, it seems reasonable to consider our values "normal", our predilections "natural", and our perceived and measured world "real".

We now begin to see that comparing our times with the Copernican revolution is not as far-fetched as it may have seemed at first. It was not a comfortable matter, in the early seventeenth century, for an individual to admit into his personal belief system data that challenged the traditional beliefs - even granting that those beliefs had a few difficulties that would have to be patched up. It was hard to "see" challenging information precisely because the old belief system provided a coherent picture of the world which *worked*. Likewise it is not comfortable for some of us, in the late twentieth century, to recognize the parochial nature of our prevailing belief system (even though it may seem to be based on the best science

available). It is hard for us to "see" evidence that doesn't fit in, and that suggests the conventional worldview may be in a state of fundamental change. Despite our discomfort, it is essential to consider that possibility.

Fritz- (continued from page 19)

these feedback systems only serve to obscure an undesired belief further; the undesired belief doesn't change in light of the feedback.

Although the undesired belief is obscured, it is possible for a person within this structure to discover his true opinion by asking questions about the purpose of his actions and the nature of this thinking.

I have to do good deeds.

Why?

Because I have to contribute.

Why?

Because if I don't, I will have wasted my life.

How would you have wasted your life?

I would have been selfish.

What kind of people are selfish?

Bad people.

So, if you did not do good deeds, you would have been selfish. If this were the case what kind of person would you be?

A bad person.

In our example, doing good deeds becomes linked to an ideal of a useful and selfless life, but the motivation is driven by avoidance of an unwanted selfishness that defines the person as bad. In other words, this is not true selflessness in which good deeds are offered simply for the sake of a contribution. *Rather, this is an ideal of goodness that must be adhered to because of sense of obligation.*

The implication is that you must contribute if you are to be a good person, and if you do not contribute, you are a selfish, bad person. The further implication is that, left to your own devices, you would *not* contribute, so you need a sense of obligation to force yourself into "selfless" acts. The still further implication is that you are a bad person who must be forced into being a good person.

In the ideal-belief conflict many of the actions a person takes have an ulterior motive - that of confirming the desired ideal. Unfortunately, the person will not be able to recognize an undesired belief about himself simply through an examination of direct experience.

The more experiences you have that seem to confirm that you are living up to your ideal, the less likely you are to consider your belief. While what you believe about yourself is actually driving the actions that produce the experiences of the ideal, you would have difficulty if you were attempting to view what you think through the lens of your experiences. Why? Many of the experiences would be inconsistent with your unwanted belief. Ironically, the very techniques that attempt to focus on experience as a method for self-discovery will lead a person away from the causal structure of the ideal-belief conflict because the belief will be hidden by experiences of the ideal.

POWER IN WHOLE-MINDED SHIFTS - D. Breton

Once we're aware that we need to shift the assumptions behind our social systems, how do we set the process in motion? We're lugging around an army of assumptions that aren't doing us or our systems any good, yet for some reason we can't get the army to budge. Why? What's keeping us from changing on the deep, paradigm levels that have the greatest power to turn us in new directions?

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH US

Assuming a force for wholeness. It's not because reality forbids the change. If anything, reality manifests a force for evolution. Otherwise, why would there be evolution at all? Even the most die-hard Darwinians, for instance, admit that it's statistically impossible for a brain such as ours to evolve by random mutation within a few million years. The odds are phenomenal against that degree of complexity appearing by chance in such an evolutionarily short period of time.

When it comes to our psyches, we experience a similar force for evolving wholeness. Why, for example, do we receive dreams that spur our inner growth? Why does happiness consistently elude us, if our self-esteem has been zapped? The fact that we become self-destructive both personally and culturally when our inner lives are fractured suggests that our souls want wholeness or they want out. Soulless living appears not to be an option, not a tolerable one anyway.

Those in the healing professions depend on this force for wholeness. It's innate to living beings, though it eludes science. Medicine can make the conditions right for healing, but it can't make healing happen. Doctors can't make bones knit, for instance, nor can therapists make emotional wounds mend. That's something our bodies and psyches do on their own.

The wholeness principle. This has led many healers, transformers, and change agents to assume a force for wholeness that operates on all levels - personal to cultural, cellular to global. They call it the "wholeness principle," a power that moves us toward unity. As Anna Lemkow explores in her book *The Wholeness Principle*, something causes our physical, mental, emotional, and social systems to strive for unity and to work to restore wholeness when it's been violated.

What is that something? The wholeness principle seems to be a dynamic in our lives that urges us to integrate all aspects of who we are and what we do. Whereas the control paradigm fragments, the wholeness principle unifies (one reason that the control paradigm can't ultimately work). Transpersonal psychologist Frances Vaughan writes, "wholeness implies a harmonious integration of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of well-being as well as social responsibility."

This unification or integration seems to be the force behind healing. Deepak Chopra writes: "Healing is nothing other than the restoration of the memory of wholeness." Integration and unity live in our bones, as Chopra says, "literally." Why shouldn't this force operate to bring about psychological and social healing as well? After all,

we're talking about wholeness. If wholeness is a universal principle, pieces of our lives can't opt out.

The "holomovement": Unfolding and enfolding. Why is there a force for wholeness? Presumably because wholeness is the nature of reality. Reality, as physicist and holistic philosopher David Bohm suggested, is "an undivided, unbroken wholeness" that isn't static but has its own dynamics. Bohm called it the "holomovement." In *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, he wrote: "In my scientific and philosophical work, my main concern has been with understanding the nature of reality in general and of consciousness in particular as a coherent whole, which is never static or complete, but which is in an unending process of movement and unfoldment." What we experience as the world of incredible diversity is actually the holomovement unfolding in time and space, both as consciousness and as matter, with wholeness embedded in each part. Wholeness is written in our bones. It's our cosmic DNA, the universal life code.

As a result, we can't cut and carve this wholeness without running into trouble. Our essence is to be whole and to move with the holomovement. Split us into pieces, and we start trying to rediscover our wholeness - the first step of which is to acknowledge how painful it is to be broken. That's the force for wholeness at work.

This view of reality as fundamentally whole was pioneered by Jan Christiaan Smuts in his 1926 book *Holism and Evolution* (yes, the same General Smuts who, as field marshal and prime minister of South Africa, faced off against Gandhi, and who later became his good friend). Smuts conceived "a Holistic Universe," which gave wholeness to everything from matter to human personality to evolution. In fact, he referred to evolution as "the gradual development and stratification of progressive series of wholes, stretching from the inorganic beginnings to the highest levels of spiritual creation."

It's behind our spiritual journey. But this hierarchy of wholes - what the late comprehensive thinker Arthur Koestler called the "holarchy" - isn't static. It's the integrating force which, on consciousness levels, urges our spiritual growth. In Bohm's terms, the holomovement not only unfolds its order into time-space diversity but also enfolds diversity back into its original wholeness. We experience that enfolding as our inner evolution.

As we enfold back into the holomovement, we find we've never left it. We and the whole of reality exist in an unbroken relationship. That's another way of expressing what many spiritual traditions teach: that the soul, inner self, or "Atman" (the Hindu term) is one with the Whole, God, the Tao, Brahman, or Being, just as a wave exists in an unbroken relationship with the ocean (an ancient metaphysical image).

Because of this unbroken relationship, our inner whole-connectedness is always there to help us reclaim our wholeness. Psychosynthesis counselor Molly Young Brown writes that our soul or "Higher Self" "transcends our personality, our situation in life, our roles, our gender." But this doesn't make our souls remote or above our everyday needs:

"Self is present no matter how confused, in pain, lost, or broken we may feel. Its energy is available for guidance and support as we make our way through our lives, in these bodies, with these personalities, within whatever situations we find ourselves. I believe 'Self' is akin to the 'Higher Power' that is the source of healing for recovering alcoholics and others in Twelve Step programs of recovery."

Real Incentives to Shift

Shifting assumptions as our response to reality.

Given these assumptions about wholeness and our relation to it, shifting paradigms is actually our response to something deeper. We confront paradigms that violate our wholeness because on some level reality pushes us to do so.

In the end, the holomovement is greater than our control-paradigm systems. Trying to reduce us and our worlds to something compartmentalized and controllable isn't all that successful. Or, in biblical terms, "God is bigger than the rule of tyrants" - the gist of Isaiah's famous fortieth chapter.

Philosopher Danah Zohar and psychiatrist Ian Marshall put this in practical terms. In the really real world, doing everything for power, influence, or control doesn't work as well as we're supposed to think it does. Being sensitive to our environment and listening to what it's telling us may be much more effective. In *The Quantum Society*, they write: "Quantum holism may be telling us that power relations are not the only, or perhaps even the most effective, way that people and events can be linked in society. The politician or the manager who tried to 'influence' or 'control' events may be less effective than one who can be sensitive to the spontaneous emergence of social or political 'trends.'"

If one set of assumptions cuts us off from our wholeness and another doesn't, it makes sense to shift. Our innate link to wholeness requires it. Shifting assumptions doesn't depend, therefore, on our strength of will, or even on our wanting or not wanting to buck the established control-order. A power beyond us makes us react against systems that wage war on our reality. It's not being rebellious or willful to resent assaults on who we are. It's being moved by the wholeness principle to seek paradigms that honor our inner lives.

The wholeness principle won't be denied by us.

Learning the truth by admitting pain brings the change process into the open. But the wholeness principle was operating long before.

The force for wholeness was already at work, for example, when addictive habits started ruining our health and relationships. Our innate wholeness wouldn't let us be both soul-traumatized and okay. Before that, the wholeness principle was at work to expose soul-fracturing assumptions by giving us addictions. Addictions express our pain when systems say to our face or to our wallets: "You're nobody, you're not worth beans, and until you conform and move up in the system, you don't exist except as an object of exploitation and abuse."

It's hard not to warm up to such an endearing message. But as much as we try to get along with control-paradigm systems, we couldn't have them abuse us repeatedly and not react. When we tried to squelch our rage and "do our duty," the wholeness principle made sure it all came out in addictions.

The wholeness principle even made our system-induced diseases progressive. We had to face our situation, or we'd die. Wholeness wouldn't be denied.

It won't be denied by society either. But the same assumption that holds for personal change holds for social change as well. The same force for wholeness that operates on us individually operates on society.

And it can be as much of a nuisance. As in personal life, the wholeness principle can put our social structures through hell if that's what it takes to expose pain-making assumptions. The realization that we either shift paradigms or go belly up doesn't come easily.

For example, the wholeness principle operates when corporate raiders bring down entire industries. Seeing this, we're not so quick to buy the assumption that economies need greed to be healthy. Greed is a win/lose, I-have/you-don't premise - the opposite of wholeness in economic exchange. Because greed is compulsive, insatiable, and destructive, it's not good business sense; it's addiction. To recover our business systems, we have to understand that greed is addiction and that it'll wipe us out if we don't give it up. One compelling way to learn

The wholeness principle seems to be a dynamic in our lives that urges us to integrate all aspects of who we are and what we do.

this is to live through greed's fury.

The robber barons: Discovering what we don't want.

The force for wholeness operates, therefore, when bottom-line thinking destroys communities and the earth. Making decisions only to maximize profits is addict-think, born directly from the control paradigm. It's fear driven, blind to wider consequences, designed to concentrate wealth and power, and definitely mood altering.

Since the post-Civil War rise of corporations, power-and-money-addicted men drove themselves to control markets and multiply their wealth far beyond what they could ever spend, even at cost to their own health and happiness. Their fear-driven and ruthlessly competitive mentalities have been widely documented. Matthew Josephson's *The Robber Barons* and the countless biographies of the turn of the century "wealthy and powerful" show how these people thought and where it took them.

But money and power addiction didn't stop with the old robber barons. Profit addiction achieves new levels in corporations, where blindness to consequences is an art form. Russell Mokhiber in *Corporate Crime and Violence*

writes that "corporations kill 28,000 people and seriously injure 130,000 every year by selling dangerous and defective products. On the job, over 100,000 employees die annually owing to workplace exposure to toxins and other hazards." As Paul Hawken notes, that doesn't count "the Ford Pinto, Bhopal, and Dalkon Shield, Exxon Valdez, Love Canal, et al."

The fact that economic textbooks teach bottom-lining doesn't change the results. Appealing to the sanctity of the bottom line doesn't make the air and water less polluted, for instance, nor does it stop Washington Beltway consultants and lobbyists from using public taxes to multiply private profits. The pervasiveness of bottom-line thinking doesn't make it less of an addiction either. If something is an addiction, it's destructive, and the wholeness principle exposes it as such.

"Let all the poisons hatch out." In the televised version of Robert Graves' *I Claudius*, the aged emperor Claudius, surrounded by those plotting against his life, says, "Let all the poisons that lurk in the mud hatch out." In paradigm-shift terms: "Let soul-violating assumptions - and the addictions we get from them - expose themselves for what they are, so that we can name them as destructive and rid ourselves of them." The wholeness principle makes poison assumptions hatch out.

What else could we expect? Wholeness-violating premises don't work. They fragment and isolate, which means they offer no sustainability. Further, control-paradigm assumptions lack the coordinating intelligence of whole systems, which means they create systems that function as cancers: they don't know when to stop, even when they're killing their host.

By assuming that it's okay for a part to dominate the whole - for a few people to control the lives of millions - control systems shut out whole system information, which means they're blind to the toll they take of the people and systems around them. But their blindness doesn't save them. One way or another, a power beyond us makes us face this toll, even when we'd rather not rock the boat. Either we change our premises or we suffer.

Prophecies for this age. That's more or less the choice that seers have prophesied for the present age. Heavy-duty prophecies about our current period exist in many religions - prophecies that make sense in a paradigm-shift context. No matter what calendar ancient peoples used (Native American, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Hindu, Christian, or Jewish) prophets saw the next few decades as bringing massive, planetwide upheaval.

But the predictions aren't only ancient or made by the visionary few. In the seventies and eighties, psychologist Helen Wambach and her colleague Chet Snow, who documented their research in *Mass Dreams of the Future*, discovered similar predictions of global trauma emerging from the everyday folks they hypno-progressed into the future.

What did these college students, truck drivers, lawyers, and doctors see? From a paradigm-shift perspective, they foresaw destructive models reaching their zenith in personal, social, and earth crises. To put it another way,

they saw the wholeness principle spurring transformation by exposing abusive systems for what they are. Just as the body brings dead cells to the surface to expel them, the force for wholeness brings deadening patterns to the surface so we can shake them off and come alive again.

The downside is that the enlivening process can be traumatic. Like a limb that's gone to sleep, the waking up can hurt. The upside is that the wholeness principle intervenes on mass addictions as well as personal ones. Our systems can't deny the mandate for wholeness any more than we can. The longer they try, the worse things get.

In fact, how quickly we respond - how bad crises get before we act - is the question. Here prophecies stop. That control systems culminate in crises is predictable. How we respond isn't.

The good news is that the Native Americans who have begun to talk publicly about their sacred prophecies say that the consciousness on earth is changing so quickly that the worst-case scenarios probably won't happen. The wholeness principle has our attention, we're acknowledging pain, and we're tracing pain to its system and paradigm sources. That's enough for global healing to begin.

The force for wholeness. The first assumption, then, concerning how we shift paradigms is that we're brought to a shift-or-suffer crisis because of a power greater than us but central to reality.

It's the same assumption expressed in the second of AA's Twelve Steps, which summarizes the reflections of AA's founders on their own change experiences: we "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." As with doctors, AA's founders realized they couldn't make recovery happen; they had to assume a force for wholeness that urges recovery in spite of the insanity of addiction.

True, the wholeness force can shake us up. Because of it, we can't harbor assumptions that violate our innate wholeness and not have trouble. Our assumptions and those of our systems will surface. Either we evolve beyond them, or we go through hell.

If there were no wholeness principle, we'd take hell in stride. Soul-fracturing assumptions would create a norm we'd be happy to accept. No voice in us would object. The fact that whole-violating assumptions create micro and macro system collapse, however, suggests that something's amiss. We can't fly in the face of the integrity of individuals, communities, societies, and the planet and expect everyone to thrive.

We can't, for example, have schools where students aren't allowed to think, businesses where employees can't be creative, governments where public servants can't serve the public, or churches where people aren't free spiritually - and be healthy. Fracturing assumptions - as the control, power-over, and competition assumptions are - don't create worlds that work; they create worlds in pain.

The wholeness principle makes this awareness inescapable.

ORGANIZING AS PLAY - Margaret Wheatley and

Life is creative. It plays itself into existence, seeking out new relationships, new capacities, new traits. Life is an experiment to discover what's possible. As it tinkers with discovery, it creates more and more possibilities. With so much freedom for discovery, how can life be anything but playful?

What has kept us from seeing life as creative, even playful? At least since Darwin, Western culture has harbored some great errors. We have believed that the world is hostile, that we are in a constant struggle for survival, that the consequence of error is death, that the environment seeks our destruction. In such a world, there is no safety. Who wouldn't be afraid?

Darwinistic thought solidified the belief that life was not supposed to happen. Life was an accident, just one of many random events. Because the world had never intended for life to appear, the world had no obligation to sustain it. Life had to fight for every breath, tested constantly by an unwelcoming and unforgiving environment. Species appeared by chance. Individuals that stumbled on lucky genetic errors survived. The environment loomed over every living thing, ready to challenge, ready to destroy. It was an awesome responsibility life faced: Get it right, or die.

These errors of thought have guided most of our decisions. They have kept us from seeing a world which is continuously exploring and creating. Life is about invention, not survival. We are here to create, not to defend. Out beyond the shadows of Darwinistic thought, a wholly different world appears. A world that delights in its explorations. A world that makes it up as it goes along. A world that welcomes us into the exploration as good partners.

Images of life as creative and playful have been with us for thousands of years in many spiritual traditions, but modern Western thought makes it difficult to approach life as play. As writers inviting you to think about what human life could be if we all saw the world as playful and creative, we have chosen to weave one poem through our work. This is not just because we love poetry but also because, in a creative and playful world, all of us are, all the time, poets.

Out beyond the shadows of Darwinistic thought, a wholly different world appears. A world that delights in its explorations. A world that makes it up as it goes along. A world that welcomes us into the exploration as good partners.

All of us are always engaged in trying to convey our experience of life in images that can connect it with other experiences. Even the most analytic science, the most careful construction of models, is always poetry, the creation of images that evoke experience, linking things together for new ways of comprehending. We cannot

know the world in an objective way. We can never get outside our senses to determine if reality exists in some sphere beyond us. We can never gain a true picture of how it really is. We can never observe what's "right."

We peer out through our senses, describing our experience of what we think reality to be. We choose images to convey our experience. We create metaphors to connect what we see. We explore new ways of understanding what seems to be happening and what we think it means.

Ezra Pound called poetry "the language of exploration." The place to begin our exploration of a creative, playful world is with the acknowledgment that we are all poets, exploring possibilities of meaning in a world which is also all the time exploring possibilities.

"I believe I experience creativity at every moment of my life," said French philosopher Henri Bergson. Can our own lives be such joyous experiences? Perhaps we can move into this experience by understanding how life creates itself. Life's process of creating is quite different from what we had thought. There are enough underlying principles to this process that we could call it a logic, a logic of play. In fact, we would like to call it the logic of life. The key elements of this logic are evident in recent work by scientists that explore how life comes into being.

Everything is in a constant process of discovery and creating. Everything is changing all the time: individuals, systems, environments, the rules, the processes of evolution. Even change changes. Every organism reinterprets the rules, creates exceptions for itself, creates new rules.

Life uses messes to get to well-ordered solutions. Life doesn't seem to share our desires for efficiency or neatness. It uses redundancy, fuzziness, dense webs of relationships, and unending trials and errors to find what works.

Life is intent on finding what works, not what's "right." It is the ability to keep finding solutions that is important; any one solution is temporary. There are no permanently right answers. The capacity to keep changing, to find what works now, is what keeps any organism alive.

Life creates more possibilities as it engages with opportunities. There are no "windows of opportunity," narrow openings in the fabric of space-time that soon disappear forever. Possibilities beget more possibilities; they are infinite.

Life is attracted to order. It experiments until it discovers how to form a system that can support diverse members. Individuals search out a wide range of possible relationships to discover whether they can organize into a life-sustaining system. These explorations continue until a system is discovered. This system then provides stability for its members, so that individuals are less buffeted by change.

Life organizes around identity. Every living thing acts to develop and preserve itself. Identity is the filter that every organism or system uses to make sense of the world. New information, new relationships, changing environments - all are interpreted through a sense of self. This tendency toward self-creation is so strong that it

Myron Kellner-Rogers

creates a seeming paradox. An organism will change to maintain its identity.

Everything participates in the creation and evolution of its neighbors. There are no unaffected outsiders. No one system dictates conditions to another. All participate together in creating the conditions of their interdependence.

Life is creative. It makes it up as it goes along, changing the rules even. This behavior flies in the face of the logic we inherited about how the world works. Most of us grew up in a world where we believed things existed in a fixed and independent state. Things could be understood by analysis. Laws and principles could be extracted from observations of their behavior. Predictions could be made for similar situations. Right answers would be hard won by bright minds. Safety would be earned by assiduous analysis.

We have focused for a long time on trying to discover what's right. We have taken things apart, sifting through our analysis for the right answer, creating more and more debris, surrounded by numbers that overwhelm us with dissatisfactions.

These activities are cloaked in terror. What if we don't find it? What if we get it wrong? What if someone else finds it before we do? Extinction will follow swiftly on the heels of any mistake. This fear of error seems the darkest of Darwinian shadows. When errors hold so much peril, play disappears. Creativity ceases. Only fear and struggle persist. Paradoxically, we make greater errors.

We say to one another, "Get it right the first time." How can we live with so much fear?

There is no such thing as survival of the fittest, only survival of the fit. This means that there is no one answer that is right, but many answers that might work. Life explores all sorts of combinations, content to find anything that works.

The puzzle in biology is not how natural selection forces an organism into one right solution. The puzzle is how so much diversity, such rampant profligacy, can be tamed sufficiently to develop organisms that are similar enough to reproduce. Why are there so many different plants and animals? Perhaps it is because life has only these simple criteria: Whatever you become, make sure you can survive and reproduce. These are very broad constraints, not strict rules. Given so much freedom, organisms take off in all directions, exploring what's possible.

Nature encourages wild self-expression as long as it doesn't threaten the survival of the organism. The world supports incredible levels of diversity, playful additions to one's physical appearance, unique excursions into color and flair. There is no ideal design for anything, just interesting combinations that arise as a living thing explores its space of possibilities.

Yet we have terrorized ourselves as a species by the thought of evolution, driving ourselves into positions of paralyzing conformity for fear of getting things wrong.

This world of wild exploration is one which tinkers

itself into existence. A French biologist describes the process of creating living things as *bricolage* - assembling parts and items in complicated arrangements, not because they fit some ideal design, but just because they are possible.

Tinkerers have skills but no clear plans. They make do with the materials at hand. Does such tinkering make life appear indifferent, relativistic, crassly opportunistic? Or does it reveal life's delight in exploration, in discovering what's possible? Tinkering opens us to what's possible in the moment. Analytic plans drive us only toward what we think we already know.

But life's tinkering has direction. It tinkers toward order - toward systems that are more complex and more effective. The process used is exploratory and messy, but the movement is toward order. In human attempts to construct functioning ecosystems, scientists cannot predict what will work. But they do know that the system will seek stability. Almost always, what begins in randomness ends in stability. Life seeks solutions, tends toward support and stability, generates systems that sustain diverse individuals. Life is attracted to order.

But how it gets there violates all of our rules of good process: Life is not neat, parsimonious, logical, nor elegant. Life seeks order in a disorderly way. Life uses processes we find hard to tolerate and hard to believe in - mess upon mess until something workable emerges. In trying to recreate self-sustaining ecosystems, biologist Stuart Pimm says: "But keep on adding species, keep on letting them fall apart and, surprisingly, they eventually reach a mix that will not fall apart....It takes a lot of repeated messes to get it right."

All this messy playfulness creates relationships that make available more: more expressions, more variety, more stability, more support. In our exploration of what's possible, we are led to search for new and different partners. Who we become together will always be different than who we were alone. Our range of creative expression increases as we join with others. New relationships create new capacities.

This creative world is playful even in its processes. None of us struggles to create ourselves in isolation, fighting to survive in a world of fixed rules and unyielding circumstances. Every change we make in ourselves, every exploratory path we follow, changes many others. Our explorations even change the rules by which we change. We are not contestants pitted against one another in a game with all the rules set ahead of time. The world is more playful than this, more relational. Life invites us to create not only the forms but even the processes of discovery.

The environment is invented by our presence in it. We do not parachute into a sea of turbulence, to sink or swim. We and our environments become one system, each influencing the other, each co-determining the other. Geneticist R.C. Lewontin explains that environments are best thought of as sets of relationships organized by living beings. "Organisms do not experience environments. They create them."

This codetermination is evident in the evolution of our planet. In its nearly four billion years of experimentation, life has created Earth as a set of relationships that are hospitable to life. It has discovered both new forms and new processes. Science writer Louise B. Young describes this process beautifully:

Life altered the atmosphere and gentled the sun-light. It turned the naked rocks of the continents into friable soil and clothed them with a richly variegated mantle of green which captured the energy of our own star for the use of living things on earth, and it softened the force of the winds. In the seas life built great reefs that broke the impact of storm-driven waves. It sifted and piled up shining beaches along the shores. Working with amazing strength and endurance life transformed an ugly and barren landscape into a benign and beautiful place.

In a universe where the desire to experiment and to create is so inescapable, it seems important to ask why. Why are novelty and experimentation so encouraged? Why does life seek to organize with other life?

When living beings link together, they form systems that create more possibilities, more freedom for individuals.

This is why life organizes, why life seeks systems - so that more may flourish.

ORGANIZING AS PLAY

Life is creative. It explores itself through play, intent on discovering what's possible. Can we bring this creative play of the world into our lives in organizations?

Life often feels like a series of tests presented to us by hostile teachers. But this isn't true. Life isn't concealing solutions to problems; we're not being tested to see if we get the right answer. Instead, life is exploring to see what works, to experience the pleasure of the unexpected and the unique.

When did opportunities begin to feel so limited? How did we come to believe in "windows of opportunity," rare openings that suddenly snap shut? When did we become so unforgiving and so punishing of one another's explorations? Experimentation doesn't use up possibilities; it creates more. More information, more experiences, more insights. We have limited the world, but it remains wide open to us.

Many of us have created lives and organizations that give very little support for experimentation. We believe that answers already exist out there, independent for us. We don't need to experiment to find what works; we just need to find the answer. So we look to other organizations, or to experts, or to reports. We are dedicated detectives, tracking down solutions, attempting to pin them on ourselves and our organizations.

Could we stop these searches? What if we gave up so much striving to discover what others were doing? What if we invested more time and attention in our own experimentation? We could focus our efforts on discovering solutions that worked uniquely for us. We could realize that solutions that are not perfect - only pretty good - can

work for us. We could focus on what's viable, rather than what's right.

Observing others' successes can show us new possibilities, expand our thinking, trigger our creativity. But their experience can never provide models that will work the same for us. It is good to be inquisitive; it is hopeless to believe that they have discovered our answers.

We could give more support to our experimentation if we focused on discovering pretty good solutions that worked for now. With more to choose from, with none bidding for support as the ultimate right answer, we might feel less attached to them. If these solutions did not require such enormous investments of resources, egos, and certainties, we could abandon them sooner when they stopped working. People could feel freer to respond creatively to the flow of events and demands, rather than feel locked in loyalty to some world-class but failing solution. Agility and the freedom to be creative are more likely when we focus on what works rather than what's right.

Discovering what works in the particular universe of any organization is the task of everyone in that organization. Most people want to dedicate their intelligence to discovering solutions that help their system work better. Life is attracted to order. People are attracted to figuring out how to make something happen. We want to be engaged in the creation of unique, daring, colorful, and surprising adaptations. We want to create for the good of our enterprises.

Playful and creative enterprises are messy and redundant. Human thinking is accomplished by processes that are messy and redundant. When computer scientists first tried to mimic the lavish parallelism found in human thinking and all of nature, they had to link together more than 64,000 computers working on the same problem at the same time. Parallel systems are dedicated to finding what works, not by careful stepwise analysis in the hands of a few experts, but by large numbers of a population messing about in the task of solution-creation. They come up with better solutions, but they are based on a different kind of logic: trying thousands of things simultaneously to find what works.

Science writer Kevin Kelly describes these systems as a "messy cascade of interdependent events. . . What emerges from the collective is not a series of critical individual actions but a multitude of simultaneous actions whose collective pattern is far more important."

Parallel systems are not afraid of error. Errors are expected, explored, welcomed. More errors create more information that results in a greater capacity to solve problems. Any one error counts for less because, while there are more of them, they are not linked together. This is not the case in the more familiar serial system, where activities build on one another in lockstep sequences and our work depends entirely on what others have done. In a serial system, one small error has the potential to crash the whole system. In the summer of 1990, America's long-distance phone service experienced frequent failures. It had taken two million lines of code to run this serial

system. It took only three lines of code to bring it down.

Simultaneity reduces the impact of any one error. More errors matter less if the actors are not linked together sequentially. The space for experimentation increases as we involve more minds in the experiment, as long as they can operate independently. What links people together is their focus on a needed solution. But in discovering what works, they are not waiting for one another to act.

When living beings link together, they form systems that create more possibilities, more freedom for individuals.

The simultaneity of parallel processing may look like wasteful redundancy. Yet our fears about redundancy developed from the belief that organizations work best when they mimic machine efficiencies. What is efficient for a machine - simple, stepwise operations, maximum outputs from minimum inputs, nonrepetitive parts and processes - has little correlation to the way the world explores itself. Bacterial colonies successfully locate food by sending out "random walkers." Each walker is a cluster of a thousand bacteria. Exorbitant numbers of these walkers - about ten thousand per colony - go off simultaneously, searching in all directions. Billions of years ago, bacteria discovered the real efficiency of random and redundant behaviors.

Life behaves in messy ways. It succeeds in creating, responding, and adapting by using processes that have no connection to our machine-led ways of thinking. In a living system, what is redundant? How can anyone know? Life doesn't pursue parsimony.

Fuzzy, messy, continuously exploring systems bent on discovering what works are far more practical and successful than our attempts at efficiency. Such systems are not trying to reduce inputs in order to maximize outputs. They slosh around in the mess, involve many individuals, encourage discoveries, and move quickly past mistakes. They are learning all the time, engaging everyone in finding what works. The system succeeds because it involves many tinkerers focused on figuring out what's possible.

Could we begin to appreciate that this kind of tinkering is efficient? Tinkerers make do with what is available, most often acting with fewer resources than desired. In this sense, they are extremely efficient. They experiment with what is at hand until they discover a workable solution. The solution is discovered through the doing, by noticing "the shape things will take to come forth in."

Playful tinkering requires consciousness. If we are not mindful, if our attention slips, then we can't notice what's available or discover what's possible. Staying present is the discipline of play. Great focus and concentration are required. We need to stay aware of everything that's happening as it is happening, and to respond with minimal hesitation.

Playful enterprises are alert. They are open to

information, always seeking more, yearning for surprises.

The more present and aware we are as individuals and as organizations, the more choices we create. As awareness increases, we can engage with more possibilities. We are no longer held prisoner by habits, unexamined thoughts, or information we refuse to look at.

Yet we often tend to limit our explorations of what's possible by surrounding ourselves with large amounts of information that tell us nothing new. We collect information from measures that tell us how we are doing - whether we're up to standard, whether we're meeting our goals. But these measures lock us into learning only about a predetermined world. They keep us distracted from questioning our experience in a way that could create greater possibilities. They don't ask us to question why we're doing what we're doing. They don't ask us to notice what learning is available from all those things we decided not to measure.

There is an important humility associated with trying to direct our activities by setting goals or measures. Every act of observation loses more information than it gains. Whatever we decide to notice blinds us to other possibilities. In directing our attention to certain things, we lose awareness of everything else. We collapse the world of possibilities into a narrow band of observation.

In a creative organization, everyone in the organization feels compelled to be alert, seeking out new measures, new events to observe. Everyone questions whether there is more to notice. As we measure our measures, we create the conditions for much great creativity. Our consciousness expands as we become willing to question even our processes of observation. Consciousness and creativity are inextricably linked in this always discovering world.

Living in this discovery-focused, messy, parallel-processing world can't help but engage us with the world's choice for diversity. Parallel processes require both diversity and freedom. There is more than one workable solution, and these solutions arise from many different forms of self-expression. Everyone tinkers in a unique way. No one is limited to a particular method. Everyone is free to use his or her own best thinking to discover what works.

Life is not driving us toward one solution. The world is interested in pluralism. Only in this way can it discover more about itself. As we explore our organizations' opportunities, life is calling us to experiment and change. We might discover some bold, as-yet-undreamed-of solution, some unique quirk of design or expression. When we do, we can feel pleased. But not for long. The world moves on. The world does not stay attached to a particular way of being or to a particular invention. It seeks diversity. It wants to move on to more inventing, to more possibilities. The world's desire for diversity compels us to change.

THE AFFIRMATIVE ORGANIZATION -

"We are some time truly going to see our life as positive, not negative, as made up continuous willing, not of constraints and prohibition."

-- Mary Parker Follett

That was a judgment of one of the great management prophets of the early 1940s who, in moving out of step with her time, prefigured virtually every new development in organizational thought and practice. Today, her ideas do not seem quite as strange as they once must have been. Scholars are recognizing that the power of positive imagery is not just some popular illusion or wish but an expression of the mind's capacity for shaping reality. A theory of affirmation is emerging from many quarters. Admittedly its findings are still limited; unifying frameworks are lacking, and generalization across levels of analysis and disciplines makes for unintelligible and often confusing logic. Nevertheless that knowledge - limited though it is - has important practical implications for organizations and management. In the rest of this discussion, I hope to push the current perspective onward by offering an exploratory set of propositions concerning what might be called the *affirmative basis* of organizing. When translated from the various disciplines into organizationally relevant terms, the emerging "theory of affirmation" looks something like this:

1. *Organizations as made and imagined are artifacts of the affirmative mind. An understanding of organizational life requires an understanding of the dynamic of the positive image as well as of the processes through which isolated images become interlocked images and of how nascent affirmations become guiding affirmations.* The starting point for a theory of affirmation is simply this: When it comes to understanding organizational existence from the perspective of human action, there is no better clue to a system's overall well-being than its guiding image of the future. In the last analysis, organizations exist because stakeholders who govern and maintain them carry in their minds some sort of shared positive projection about what the organization is, how it will function, and what it might become. Although positive imagery (in the form of positive thinking, utopian visions, affirmation, and the like) has not been paraded as a central concept in organizational and management thought, it can be usefully argued that virtually every organizational act is based on some positive projection on the part of the individual or group. Organizational birth itself, to take just one example, is impossible in the absence of some affirmative projection. But positive or negative, enabling or limiting, conscious or unconscious - all action is conditioned by the fact that we live in an anticipatory world of images. These guiding images are not detailed objectives but are paintings created with a larger brush stroke. They encompass many aspects of organizational life that mission statements, corporate strategies, or plans alone do not reveal. Just as it has been observed that the rise and fall of images of the future precede or accompany the rise and fall of societies, it can be argued that as long as an organization's image is positive and flourishing, the

flower of organizational life will be in full bloom.

2. *No matter what its previous history is, virtually any pattern of organizational action is open to alteration and reconfiguration. Patterns of organizational action are not automatically fixed by nature in any blind microdeterminist way - whether biological, behavioral, technological, or environmental.* There is no such thing as an inevitable form of organization. There are no "iron laws." While affected by microdeterminist factors, existing regularities that are perceived are controlled by mentalist or "macro" factors exerting downward control. Just as in the Pygmalion dynamic reviewed earlier, organizations are genetically constituted socially in and through the images born in transaction among all participants. In this sense, existing regularities that are observed depend not on some dictate of nature but on the historically and contextually embedded continuities in what we might call (1) the prophetic image - expectancies and beliefs about the future; (2) the poetic image - imagined possibilities or alternatives of what might be; and (3) the normative image - ideological or value-based images of what should be. When organizations continue to hold the same expectations and beliefs; when they continue to envision the same possibilities or alternatives; or when they continue to project the same conventional values, norms, or ideologies - it is under these macrodeterminist conditions that continuities in structures and practices will in fact be found.

3. *To the extent that organizations' imaginative projections are the key to their current conduct, organizations are free to seek transformations in conventional practice by replacing conventional images with images of a new and better future.* To a far greater extent than is normally assumed, organizational evolution is isomorphic with the mental evolution of images. In many respects, it can usefully be argued that organizations are limited primarily or even only by (1) their affirmative capacities of mind, imagination, and reason, and (2) their collective or *coaffirmative capacity* for developing a commanding set of shared projections among a critical segment of stakeholders.

In regard to the latter point, it can be argued further that the guiding image of the future exists deep within the internal dialogue of the organization. The image is not, therefore, either a person-centered or a position-centered phenomenon; it is a situational and interactional tapestry that is a public "property" of the whole rather than of any single element or part. While such things as executive vision and charismatic leadership may be understood as parallels to what I am talking about, their emphasis on the "Great Man" leads them to seriously understate and miscast the complex cooperative aspect of a nation's guiding image of the future. When it comes to collective entities like groups, organizations, or even whole societies, we must emphatically argue that the guiding image of the future does not, even metaphorically, exist within some individual or collective mass of brain. It exists in a very observable and tangible way in the living dialogue that flows through every institution, expressing itself anew at

David Cooperrider

every moment.

4. *Organizations are heliotropic in character in the sense that organizational actions have an observable and largely automatic tendency to evolve in the direction of positive imagery. Positive imagery and hence heliotropic movement is endemic to organizational life, which means that organizations create their own realities to a far greater extent than is normally assumed.* The positive image carries out its heliotropic task by generating and provoking image-consistent affirmative cognition, image-consistent emotion, and self-validating action. Hence, it can be argued that positive images of the future generate in organizations (1) an affirmative cognitive ecology that strengthens peoples' readiness and capacity to recall the positive aspects of the past, to selectively see the positive in the present, and to envision new potentials in the future; (2) it catalyzes an affirmative emotional climate, for example, of heightened optimism, hope, care, joy, altruism, and passion; and (3) it provokes confident and energized action.

Another aspect of the heliotropic hypothesis is that it predicts the following: When presented with the option, organizations will move more rapidly and effectively in the direction of affirmative imagery (moving toward light) than in the opposite direction of negative imagery (moving against light or toward "overpowering darkness"). Existing in a dynamic field of images, it can be argued that organizations move along the path of least resistance (Fritz, 1984) toward those images that are judged to represent the organization's highest possibilities - those images that are the brightest, most purposeful, or most highly valued. Positive images whose prophetic, poetic, and normative aspects are congruent will show the greatest self-fulfilling potential.

5. *Conscious evolution of positive imagery is a viable option for organized systems as large as global society or as small as the dyad or group. Also, the more an organization experiments with the conscious evolution of positive imagery the better it will become; there is an observable self-reinforcing, educative effect of affirmation. Affirmative competence is the key to the self-organizing system.* Through both formal and informal learning processes, organizations, like individuals, can develop their metacognitive competence - the capacity to rise above the present and assess their own imaginative processes as they are operating. This enhances their ability to distinguish between affirmative and negative ways of construing the world. The healthiest organizations will exhibit a 2:1 or better ratio of positive-to-negative imagery (as measured through inner dialogue), while less healthy systems will tend toward a 1:1 balanced ratio. Similarly, it can usefully be argued that positively *biased* organizational monitoring (with selective monitoring and feedback of the positive) will contribute more to heliotropic movement than either neutral (characterized by inattention) or negative organizational monitoring (with a focus on problems or deficiencies). This effect, we would expect based on studies in athletics, will be more pronounced in situations where the affirmative projection is of a novel or complex future and where the tasks or actions required to enact the images are not yet fully tested or mastered.

The more an organization experiments with the affirmative mode, the more its affirmative and heliotropic competence will grow. This is why, in many organizations that have experimented with it, people have come to believe that organizationwide affirmation of the positive future is the single most important act that a system can engage in if its real aim is to bring to fruition a new and better future. An image that asserts that the future is worth living for will, as William James argued, provoke those actions that help create the fact. While not every future can be created as locally envisioned, there is always a margin within which the future can be affected by positive affirmation. The size of this margin can never be known a priori. Put another way, an organization will rarely rise above the dominant images of its members and stakeholders; or as Willis Harman hypothesizes, "perhaps the only limits to the human mind are those we believe in."

6. *To understand organizations in affirmative terms is also to understand that the greatest obstacle in the way of group and organizational well-being is the positive image, the affirmative projection that guides the group or the organization.* Theorist Henry Wieman gave a clear description of the seeming paradox involved here many years ago in his comparative analysis of Religious Experience and Scientific Method: "We are very sure that the greatest obstacle in the way of individual growth and social progress is the ideal (affirmative projection) which dominates the individual or group. The greatest instrument of achievement and improvement is the ideal, and therefore our constant failures, miseries, and wickedness are precisely due to the inadequacy of our highest ideals. Our ideals have in them all the error, all the impracticability, all the perversity and confusion that human beings that themselves erring, impractical, perverse and confused, can put into them. Our ideals are no doubt the best we have in the way of our constructions. But the best we have is pitifully inadequate. Our hope and full assurance . . . (are) that we can improve our ideals. If we could not be saved from our ideals, we would be lost indeed."

One of the ironies of affirmation is that it partially cripples itself in order to function. By definition, to affirm means to "hold firm." As we have seen, it is precisely the strength of affirmation, the degree of belief or faith invested, that allows the image to carry out its heliotropic task. So when our institutions are confronted with repetitive failure and amplifying cycles of distress; when time and energies are expended on such issues as compliance, discipline, obedience, motivation, and the like; or when almost every "new" surefire problem-solving technique does little but add a plethora of new problems - in every one of these cases the system is being given a clear signal of the inadequacy of its "firm" affirmative projections. To repeat, our positive images are no doubt the best we have, but the best is often not responsive to changing needs and opportunities. The real challenge, therefore, is to discover the processes through which a system's best affirmations can be left behind and better ones developed. For if we could not be saved from our best affirmative projections, "we would be lost indeed."

IDEAL-BELIEF-REALITY CONFLICT - Robert Fritz

People often have an ideal for themselves to which they hope to aspire: how smart they should be; how correct they should be; how good looking they should be; how they should behave; how they should appear to others; how successful they should be; how fair and reasonable they should be; how warm and caring they should be; how strong they should be; how loving they should be.

Personal ideals are extremely easy to form, given the abundance of notions in the world about how to be a perfect or proper human being. You may pick up your ideals about "how you should be" from many different sources ranging from parental influences to movie heroes, cultural agreement to peer group standards. A personal ideal dictates standards by which to live. But when you compare your ideal with reality, discrepancies arise.

If you have an ideal that you should be pretty, and one day you look in the mirror and do not deem yourself to be pretty, you have an ideal-reality conflict. Reality contradicts the ideal. What is to be done about it? You take actions to end the discrepancy in favor of the ideal: a trip to the beauty parlor, a new mirror, a pep talk about inner beauty.

Why do you have to be pretty?

If, according to your ideal, you need to be smart, and you make a stupid mistake, the result will be an ideal-reality conflict, where again, reality contradicts the ideal. You may react by launching into self-admonishment, by feeling as if you have let yourself down, or by drowning your sorrows in food, drink, or drugs.

Why do you have to be smart?

If an ideal-reality conflict is governing your life, what you want and how well you accomplish anything will be measured against your ideal of yourself. Symbolism may well burden many of your activities. If you succeed, your success is not merely the creation of a desired result, it is also a symbol of the ideal of success. On the other hand, if you fail, you have not merely attempted to create a result and been unable to reach your goal: instead, the failure symbolizes that *you* are a failure because you have not lived up to your ideal.

These ideal-reality conflicts mostly arise from personal concerns: they are laden with concerns about *identity*. In most cases, what is at issue is *you*, in that you have not lived up to an ideal *you* have set for yourself.

In fact, the ideal you form actually may be in opposition to many of your real opinions of yourself. Seldom do people form ideals for themselves that are consistent with how they currently are, or what they think they are. If you doubt your own intelligence, it is likely that you will include *intelligent* as part of your ideal. If you suspect you are weak, you might include *strong* as an aspect of your ideal. The ideal will not be a conscious choice, but rather a natural automatic compensation for inadequacies you suspect you may have.

If your ideal of yourself is pitted against actual or suspected inadequacies, and you take actions to rid yourself of these unwanted qualities, then the driving force and real motivation behind your actions is *the*

elimination of inadequacies.

Most people are unaware that this is their true motivation when they form an ideal for themselves. They may think that through creating their perfect ideal, they are engaging in the creative process, but they are not. The ideal they construct is not a true result - an end unto itself - as in the creative process. Rather, the ideal is meant to be a "solution" to what they assume to be a problem - their current inadequacies.

When you impose desirable qualities, admirable attributes, and high standards of accomplishment on yourself, then attempt to force yourself into living up to these characteristics, you are implying through the act of forcing yourself that you are not fine just the way you are. The further implication is that there is something wrong with how you are.

What is wrong with you the way you are?

Invisible Beliefs

You may not know what you believe about yourself. In fact, many of the undesired beliefs that people hold about themselves are "invisible" to them - hidden from view by the ideal they construct. *Part of the function of the ideal is designed to obscure less-welcomed beliefs and opinions.*

When I use the word *designed*, I do not mean to imply that people, with cold and calculating precision, deliberately choose to hide what they believe about themselves from their conscious minds. They do not. People with an ideal-reality conflict most often have no idea what they truly believe about themselves. Quite often they have convinced themselves that they embody many qualities of their ideals, such as warmth, goodness, fairness, and happiness, and that they are loving, accomplished, valuable, worthy, powerful, successful, and so on. Often, however, what lurks just below the surface of conscious awareness is the suspicion that they are lying to themselves. Yet what they *really* think about themselves becomes invisible because there is a force at work that attempts to outlaw any unacceptable beliefs.

The Ideal-Belief Conflict

The ideal-reality conflict is often generated by an ideal-belief conflict, a discrepancy between the ideal you hold for yourself and an opposite and unwanted belief you may have about yourself. This conflict generates compensating behaviors, which are used as a means of contradicting the unwanted belief. For example, if a person believes he is somehow bad, he might compensate by constructing an ideal of a "good" person. He may then attempt to fulfill the ideal by doing good deeds over his lifetime.

In effect, then, the person's actions would be motivated by avoiding the undesired belief. In our example, this would be done by supporting the ideal of a "good" person. The more good deeds, the more tangible evidence there is to contradict the belief about being bad. If such a person were to look to his experience, there would be

strong indications that he is a "good" person and live up to the ideal. Any contradictory belief would be hard to observe in light of the prevailing experiences of goodness. *Yet the belief about being bad does not dissolve in light of countless experiences of goodness.* Ironically, it is reinforced. Who, but a person who thinks he is bad, would use good deeds to prove the opposite? The person who has such a belief will continue to think that he is bad, whether he is, in fact, bad and whether or not his reality is filled with generating wonderfully good deeds. The ideal-belief conflict is still in place, and the compensation has only served to reinforce the discrepancy between the ideal and the belief. Good deeds are motivated by an avoidance of

being bad. The motivation tells the whole story - here is a person who thinks he is bad attempting to prove he is not.

No matter how much such a person has accomplished, it will not be enough. While he might be telling himself that he is really good, he still will feel that he is not good enough.

What is happening here is that this person is thinking in terms of what an accomplishment says about him. He develops feedback systems in which good deeds equal goodness, or intelligent work equals intelligence, or the accolades of others equal personal significance, or involvement in worthy causes equals personal worth. But

(continued on page 9)

The New Reality - by Pat Webb

Earth, once sedately traditional,
Turning upon an eternal axis,
Spinning silently in space,
Mysterious, but motionless,

What an electrifying moment it must have been
When from some vantage point in the void
The common vision beamed to 4 billion brains,
The vision of the Earth Rising.

Hearts quickening, 4 billion souls ignited,
Necks craning to see, minds yearning to grasp
The New Reality - One Earth -
Clearly at hand, almost within reach.

What an awesome moment it must have been
When 4 billion souls leaned forward -
Their weight forcing the planet off its axis,
Sending it rolling forward like a giant wheel.

Hearts pounding, strong men struggling for a foothold,
Lurching and groaning, yet captured by this new rotation,
Captured by the strange and potent image of Earth Moving -
A vehicle, capable not only of holding but of transporting souls.

What a destinal moment it must have been
When the notion took hold -
If we lean together, shoulder to shoulder
We can move this stationary orb and launch a planet!

Hearts struggling, maneuvering the new advantage,
Discovering how the divided races, the unknown tongues
Push forward with one thrust from every stronghold on the globe,
And with superhuman effort, agonize the clumsy wheel into a turn,

a Turn, a Turn!

What a wondrous time it must have been
When mankind moved upon a vision
Not certain but hopeful
Of the day that is now upon us.

Earth, now sailing majestically through the void,
Charting the unknown reaches of the universe,
Altering every image of stagnation
Embodying its vision.

THE LENS OF PERCEPTION - Deepak Chopra, M.D.

One time a man died because of something I said to him. He was an emergency patient I'll call Arthur Elliott, a lawyer in his thirties who showed up at the emergency room outside Boston after midnight, alone and dressed in rumpled pajamas. Visibly frightened, Mr. Elliott announced at the nurses' station that he had just been waked up from a sound sleep by a sudden, excruciating pain in the middle of his chest. He had waited, hardly daring to breathe. After a few minutes the pain receded, but he leapt out of bed and headed for the nearest hospital.

The young ER doctor on duty that night quickly performed an examination but found nothing amiss. Having ascertained that Mr. Elliott had no prior history of heart disease, he told him that the pain might have been caused by a cramp in his chest muscles.

"But it was like being stabbed," Mr. Elliott protested.

The ER doctor reassured him that a heart attack typically begins with a dull, squeezing pain, not a sharp stab. Nor did Mr. Elliott have any dizziness, nausea, sudden weakness, or loss of breath - signs that a heart attack might be in progress. Mr. Elliott was advised to return in the morning when a complete battery of tests could be run.

He reluctantly went home, but within an hour the stabbing chest pain struck again. He frantically rushed back to the ER, and as the senior physician on call, I was waked up and asked to see him. In passing, the ER doctor mentioned that Mr. Elliott was "sort of belligerent."

The man I confronted in the examining room appeared pale and anxious. He jumped back as soon as I laid my stethoscope against his chest.

"Relax, now," I said gently. "This is probably nothing we have to worry about."

"We?" he shot back, nailing me with a glare. "I'm the one who could die here."

Without replying, I bent down to listen to his heart. It sounded a little fast but otherwise normal. To make sure, I had Mr. Elliott hooked up for an EKG reading; it too showed no evident abnormalities. Nevertheless, I decided to admit him to the hospital for observation, largely because he was displaying so much emotional agitation.

The next morning, after a new EKG was run, I had ambiguous news. "I asked some of our cardiologists to take a look at both of your EKGs, and there is a very slight change since last night. It could indicate that your heart muscle suffered minor damage during your two episodes of pain."

I was about to say that Mr. Elliott did not appear to be in imminent danger. A healthy heart is quite capable of compensating for such small injuries. Some would simply heal, others are sealed off and the heart operates around them. But before I could inform him of this, he exploded. His eyes popped with rage, and he lashed out violently.

"This is outrageous! You don't give a damn about me. For all you care I could have dropped dead, but you're not getting away with it. I'll take you for everything you've got!" He was practically incoherent with fury, but it was clear enough that he intended to slap me with a massive malpractice suit on the spot, and the entire ER staff in the

bargain. To make good on his threat, he grabbed the bedside telephone and began calling up his legal colleagues, growing more and more agitated in the process. I pleaded with him to try to calm down. As his blood pressure skyrocketed, we administered the strongest antihypertensives and tranquilizers on hand. Nothing helped. He had spun out of control into a world of his own.

An hour later, still ranting on the phone, he felt the stabbing chest pains return again, this time with such violence that he collapsed. The nurse who found him detected no pulse. In two minutes a cardiac unit arrived on the scene with a crash cart and electric paddles, but all attempts at resuscitation were fruitless.

My immediate reaction, once I knew that we had lost him, was total bewilderment. Of course, it is upsetting for any patient to hear that he had a possible heart attack. Yet a phrase that seemed gentle to me - "minor damage to your heart" - became catastrophic when Mr. Elliott took it in. It set off a chain reaction that nobody could control, least of all he.

Whenever a sudden death occurs inside a hospital, a detailed autopsy is performed. In this case the cause of death was pronounced as myocardial rupture - a necrotic, or dead, part of the heart muscle had torn open, presumably as the result of a violent spasm of the coronary arteries, with fatal results.

The necrotic tissue was not scarred over, which implied that the damage to the heart had occurred recently. However, there was no way of determining if his two bouts of pain had created any of this injury. According to the autopsy, Mr. Elliott's coronary arteries were clean. We already knew that he did not smoke or have high blood pressure, two primary risks for a heart attack. The heart muscle exhibited no intrinsic defect, such as a damaged valve, and there were no signs of an infection.

In other words, he was as safe as one could reasonably hope to be - until his heart decided to rip itself apart.

It had never occurred to me that a word could kill. Physically, a word is just a faint sound, so to call it the cause of heart failure is absurd, unless you are willing to radically expand your belief system. I have read that New Guinea islanders can fell a tree by standing in a ring and shouting at it at the top of their voices. They depart, and when they return in a few weeks, the tree has toppled of its own accord. The Old Testament records that Joshua won the battle of Jericho by commanding his troops to blast their rams' horns until the city's walls tumbled down. Thinking about Mr. Elliott, I began to believe that a similar wonder had overtaken him.

One reason that a very faint stimulus might kill someone is that the human heart already harnesses more than enough power to destroy itself. Although no larger than a man's clenched fist, the heart does enough work in a day to raise a one-ton weight to the height of a five-story office building. Ordinarily, this enormous power is disciplined for good. Yet seen at close range, the gentlest beat of the heart is poised on the very edge of violence - the

heart literally tries to jump out of the chest cavity with every beat it takes, being stopped only when its pointed end, or apex, strikes abruptly against the inside of the chest wall.

Fortunately, built into everyone's body is a formidable array of safety features. Nature safeguards our hearts against self-destruction particularly well, beginning in the tiny region of the brain called the hypothalamus. Though barely bigger than the top of one's little finger, the hypothalamus carefully regulates dozens of bodily functions, including blood pressure and heartbeat. In addition, one of the ten cranial nerves, the vagus, is responsible for slowing down a racing heart and bringing it back to normal. The heart is protected internally by its own independent pacemaker cells and a built-in electrical system, just in case the brain becomes incapacitated by disease or trauma. Yet, elaborate as it is, in Mr. Elliott's case this fail-safe machinery did break down, battered by the nothing of a thought.

Seeing Yourself in the World

The coroner's precise and objective phrase, "Cause of death: myocardial rupture," did not even begin to hint at how this disaster happened. It only put a conventional label on the outcome. If the report had read, "Cause of death: distorted perception of the situation," we would have come closer to the truth.

A camera records an event by taking in light signals and turning them into a literal image, but this is not at all how our senses operate - we *perceive*, which means that we add meaning to every signal coming our way. It does not matter to a camera if a bus is painted yellow, but when we see it, we know children are aboard and certain precautions must be taken. Perception is the first and most important step in turning raw data of the universe into reality. Seeing the world is far from the passive act it appears to be, for when we look at something, we see it colored by our own set of unique experiences.

Holding negative feelings back, as most of us do, causes inner reality to become warped, because no matter how hard the mind pushes down, its presence is constantly felt.

If I am looking at the dawn and feel depressed, my mood seeps into the dawn, making it look sad and lonely. If I am joyful, the same dawn reflects my joy back at me. This fusing of "me" and things "out there" is what makes the lens of perception magical. Just by listening, looking, smelling, tasting, and feeling, I turn the world into *my* world.

Nor is there any limit to how much sense we can read into the data we are interpreting. It is entirely possible to have a love-hate relationship with a string of random

numbers, as a Harvard psychology team once proved. They asked students to play a gambling game with a partner. The rules of the game were simple: "You and your partner will be given two buttons to push, marked 1 and 0," the experimenters said. "If you both press 0, you will both be given nothing. If you both press 1, you will both be given one dollar. However, if you press 0 while your partner presses 1, you will win two dollars, and he will get nothing."

The point of the game, they said, was to see if people will cooperate to gain a small reward rather than trying to outwit each other in hopes of getting more. The students were told they would be in separate rooms so that they could not see their partners - this was to prevent them from signaling or showing their feelings as the game went on. The game commenced, and after the allotted time each student emerged. "On the basis of this game," they were asked, "can you tell what kind of person your partner is?"

"He's very devious!" came the typical reply. "At first I pressed 1 all the time so we both could benefit, but he got greedy, and after only a few moves he would press 0, just when I least expected it. So I started pressing 0, too."

"But then you both got nothing," the experimenters pointed out.

"What could I do?" the students said. "He was trying to cheat me. I had to teach him a lesson."

Every subject had a tale to tell, of treachery and greed, of brief lapses back into cooperation, followed by a streak of vengeful behavior or sheer irrationality. You may have guessed by now that there was in fact no partner. Each student was playing against a sequence of random 0s and 1s spouted by a computer. No one caught on to the trick, however; instead, each player emerged with a full-blown psychological portrait of a partner whose behavior was everything from "sadistic" to "brilliantly manipulative."

This raises a disturbing question: if my perception is just a bundle of random experiences in response to a basically random world, how real am I? Perhaps my full-blown personality has no fixed core at all. I may just be a collection of accumulated habits and tastes, a walking interpretation that likes spinach, dislikes okra, feels attracted to jazz, repelled by Wagnerian opera, and so on.

There is no doubt that we all have built ourselves up from the merest wisps of experience that come our way. Mr. Elliott was given no more than a wisp and he died of it. What I said to him was not earthshaking, but it didn't have to be. It only had to be one wisp too many. The words "minor damage to your heart" seemed to propel him into a chaotic private reality. In truth he was already in it chin-deep. The violence of his reaction depended on the pent-up violence that was seething in his self.

The self's hidden anger and pain often escape notice even when they are building up enormous pressure to be expressed. Holding negative feelings back, as most of us do, causes inner reality to become warped, because no matter how hard the mind pushes this energy down, its presence is constantly felt.

I was in the midst of examining a young woman who had been diagnosed a few months earlier as having lung

cancer. I was asking her about her childhood illnesses when she suddenly blurted out, quite defiantly, "Whatever you tell me to do, don't tell me to give up smoking."

"Why not?" I asked, taken aback.

The woman replied, "Because the type of lung cancer I have isn't related to smoking."

Since she had oat-cell carcinoma, her statement was technically correct; this disease is not the squamous-cell carcinoma linked to cigarettes. Before I could tell her that I didn't care whether she smoked or not - under the circumstances, this was the least of her problems - she added, "Life's not worth living if you can't enjoy it, and smoking is what I enjoy."

Something snapped in me that is not supposed to snap when a doctor talks to a seriously ill patient. "You enjoy not tasting your food?" I asked, "not being able to smell the flowers anymore, having a constant reek on your breath, half-numbed fingertips, and blood pressure climbing so high that it is potentially as dangerous as cancer?" As soon as my outburst ended I felt ashamed, but I was deeply frustrated at the same time. How do people "enjoy" things that they know perfectly well are bad for them?

The map is not the territory.

On the verge of tears, she had an answer: "Don't dictate to me. I know what I like." She was throwing her self, her indisputable right to be "I," in my face. Just the way an appeal to a court of last resort. This lost self had suffered so much, had made such bad mistakes, and was going to enter into an inescapably grim future. Yet what else could she cling to? "I" was her anchor to reality, and no one willingly surrenders that, unless he is so desperate that his mind must unmoor itself and undertake what Freud called "the perilous journey of psychosis."

The self has a troubling way of acting against its own interests, of twisting good into bad and bad into good. It seems to be human nature for the mind to divide itself into one region that is conscious and another that is unconscious, to subdivide both regions into many smaller layers, and finally to create thousands of compartments within each layer. Like an ambitious king who builds his palace too fast to actually enter each room, our minds have lost track of their own labyrinths, secret chambers, and ghost-filled attics.

Certain compartments, moreover, hold things that are clearly too painful to express or even confront. We seal them off in order to avoid conflicts that would be unbearable. Like a baby smothered in swaddling clothes, our perception of reality gets covered by layers of experience, until "I" becomes quite confused about who "me" really is.

No Light Without the Eye

Up to this point I have done everything I can to make perception seem highly personal, changeable, illusory, arbitrary, and untrustworthy. To a researcher in the field, this is a strange stance, for the overwhelming trend in recent years has been to "explain" perception in terms of the senses, to make it much less psychological and much more mechanical. Thus, for the sense of sight we learn that a human eye has about 125 million rods and 7 million cones implanted on the surface of the retina. Rods are responsible for night vision, cones for day vision. No one knows why we have nearly twenty times more receptors for moonlight than for sunlight, but that is the case.

These specialized receptors are direct extensions of the brain, and each reacts to only a narrow wavelength of light. When a photon strikes a retinal cell, it creates a chemical change that in turn sparks an electrical spike that is sent to the visual cortex in the back of the head via the optic nerve, a bundle of 800,000 neural fibers wrapped into a single cable. During the early stages of visual processing, the brain keeps the images from each eye separate; only at the very end are they merged to create a three-dimensional object. Even then, there is no picture of the world in your brain. The image of a tree, for example, is decoded purely into electrical data. However, the visual cortex is definitely a map that marks certain aspects of the tree. The parts of the visual image that run from top to bottom and left to right are registered by brain cells that also are arranged top to bottom and left to right.

The mechanics of eyesight are so well understood by now that they can be imitated artificially: robot eyes have been developed that can detect light and send it to be stored and decoded by computer. In some cases, robot vision is sophisticated enough to interpret color, texture, and shape, follow moving objects, and distinguish near-far perspective much as our own eyes do. The only problem with this impressive cracking of the visual code is that the *experience* of seeing has been entirely missed. Robot eyes are never bored by what they look at, or enthralled by beauty. They do not prefer crimson to scarlet, or vice versa. They do not relish the softness of the shadows in Titian's paintings or the stark melodrama in Caravaggio's. None of the qualities of light that really matter, in a human, personal sense, can be translated into mechanical terms.

The mother of a friend of mine has grown old, and as sometimes happens, she is becoming bald. The wispy blue hair on top of her head distresses this once-beautiful woman, and when she was nearly eighty, she finally resigned herself to wearing a wig. My friend wanted to cheer his mother up, so he invited her to a party where many distinguished guests would be present. The company was sparkling, and his mother seemed greatly impressed.

"Weren't those people fascinating?" he asked afterward.

"Remarkable," she murmured, "and did you see how much hair they had?"

All of us see the world just this subjectively. When we walk into a room, we see what is important to us, screening out what is indifferent. We also see much that is invisible - that person over there is an old lover, another a renowned bore; that vase is worth a fortune (where did they get the money?), that painting looks like a fake. A map of the brain's visual cortex can never tell you the first thing about the subtle connotations that light reveals to the eye, just as the diagram of a piano can tell you nothing about how music enchants the ear.

The only reason a robot eye can even pretend to "see" is that it was built by humans. Every part was designed to approximate what a person knows to look for. If we could not see backgrounds as different from foregrounds, for example, no robot eye would be built to sense such a distinction, and no software would take it into account. Even if a robot eye could perfectly duplicate a human eye, including the visual cortex, it would still be blind. The light filling the world is *my* light.

This truth struck home while I was reading *The Magic Lantern*, the autobiography of the great Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman. Bergman gave up filmmaking before he was seventy year old, a situation he has made peace with, despite many moments of intense regret. "Most of all," he says, "I miss working with Sven Nyquist (his longtime cameraman), perhaps because we are both utterly captivated by the problems of light, the gentle, dangerous, dreamlike, living, dead, clear, misty, hot, violent, bare, sudden, dark, springlike, falling, straight, slanting, sensual, subdued, limited, poisonous, calming, pale light. Light."

Following the curve of this singing, elegiac sentence, I can see all those qualities in light as well. All of us can, because without us, light would not have them. It would have no brightness, no color, no tone whatsoever. Without *my* eye (or yours), there is nothing to see, not even blackness. Photons would bounce randomly, unintelligibly through the void, never defining anything, never becoming light. In interstellar space, light is invisible; when it strikes an object, it bounces back on a new track, but it does not become any more visible. The sun is not radiant, nor the stars. At best, they would be "hot spots" of energy emission, but even that term depends on our sense of temperature.

By itself, nothing "out there" has any definition without a perceiver. When scientists claim to have deciphered the mechanics of vision, all they have done is found a map, which must not be mistaken for reality. A map of Tahiti is meaningless until you realize that it is supposed to match a certain island whose mountains, coasts, and rivers have been experienced by humans. We do not put on the map the air currents or prime nesting sites that would be noticed by birds, even though these belong to the real Tahiti as much as the features we look for.

The map is not the territory. Everyone has seen photographs of what the world looks like through the multiple eye of a bee, spider, or fly. Each of these insects sees through more than one lens, and the photographs

therefore present a cluster of eight or ten or twenty images, generally of a flower, and we are to suppose that the insect brain sees the flower that way.

These composites, however, do not really capture the actual experience of insect eyesight - they only indicate what a human being might see if he looked through several camera lenses at the same time. In reality, the eye of a horsefly is divided into 20,000 separate eye-cell clusters. Each one responds either to a very specific wavelength of light or to certain chemicals floating in the air. As a result, the picture of the world processed by a horsefly's nervous system is inconceivable to us (what does it mean to "see" a chemical in the air, anyway?).

A porpoise's brain is almost as large as a human one, but 80 percent of it is devoted to processing sounds.

A porpoise's brain is almost as large as a human one, but 80 percent of it is devoted to processing sounds. Porpoises, whales, and dolphins have remarkable hearing; some species are able to detect one another's "songs" through miles of water. The map of a porpoise's ear will tell me what kind of eardrum it has, and if I look at the minute hair cells inside the ear, I will see relatives of the cells in my inner ear. All this similarity of structure is misleading, however, because the porpoise's experience is not understandable by the human mind, no matter how good the map.

Even to use the word "hearing" is suspect. Hearing to a porpoise is a kind of sonar, like a bat's, that brings back three-dimensional images closer to sights than sounds. A porpoise can "hear" how large a shark is and in what direction it is moving. Actually, I shouldn't even venture this crude guess; for all I know, a porpoise can "hear" that it is summer, that the sun is low on the horizon, that a grouper is gray, or that Mars is tilted on its axis.

THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS and LENS INTERNATIONAL
ASIAN NETWORK

ICA India

Mumbai: 13, Sankli St., 2nd Floor, Byculla, Mumbai 400 008 INDIA

Panvel: Plot 10-14, Road 1, Sector 19, New Panvel, 410 217 Raigad District INDIA

Pune: A5/1 Meera Nagar, Koregaon Park, Pune 411 011 INDIA

LENS Services Pvt. Ltd.

New Delhi: 25 Navjivan Vihar, New Delhi 110 017 INDIA

LENS International Malaysia Sdn. Bhd.

Kuala Lumpur: P.O. Box 10564, 50718, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

ICA Australia

Sydney: G.P.O. Box 1792, Sydney, NSW 2001 AUSTRALIA

ICA Taiwan

Taipei: 3F, No. 12, Lane 5, Tien Mou W. Road, Taipei, TAIWAN, R.O.C.

LENS International

Tokyo: Seijo 9-1-5-102, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, 157, JAPAN

Image: An Action Research Journal on Personal and Organisational Transformation
Subscription Form

Rates (4 issues):	<u>India</u>	<u>International</u>
Individual	Rs. 250	\$ 25.00 (\$5.00 for the ICA Archives) USD
Corporation/Organisation	Rs. 1,000	\$ 85.00 USD (4 copies)

Name _____

Phone _____

Company or Organisation _____

Position _____

Address _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Make Check Payable to: The Institute of Cultural Affairs: India and send to: ICA: India, 13 Sankli St.,
2nd Fl., Byculla Bombay, 400 008 INDIA

Printed by Kaygee Enterprises: Bombay Phone: 832-8442

