

# **PART THREE**

## **THE ART OF WORKING WITH AND TRANSFORMING GROUPS**

### **Setting the Context for Part Three**

#### *Shifting Perspectives on Inner/Outer Connectivity*

The very nature of leadership demands the capacity to influence individuals, groups, and organizations to achieve transformational ends. Part Three explores how the thinking described in Part One and ways of being described in Part Two result in transforming how, and how well, we exercise such leadership. Indeed, leadership becomes easier when we change our stance toward those we lead and let go of the idea of the leader as directing the action from above and causing people to act, as if they are without volition.

The transforming vision of the twenty-first century calls us to understand that we are part of the complex adaptive systems that we are trying to transform. Moreover, because we and the world are forever in a state of flux, we can let go of the heroic illusion that we need to exert incredible effort to compel other people and social systems to change. Indeed, the requisite effort may be more like diverting the course of a ball rolling down a hill than struggling to push a huge boulder up it—or even to get the boulder moving at all.

Furthermore, when we have learned to commit fully to our own callings and vocations, as the essays in Part Two encourage, our entire

relationship to the outer world shifts, moving us beyond an us-versus-the-world point of view to recognizing a mysterious connection between the state of our consciousness and what happens. Drawing on the work of Jung, Peter Senge (1996) explains, “when we are in a state of commitment and surrender, we begin to experience what is sometimes called ‘synchronicity’” (p. 88). This surrender is to the natural processes of life and to the unfolding of our true nature, vocation, and calling. In Senge’s view, when you stop fighting your genuine relationship to the whole and trust its emergent unfolding, meaningful coincidences (i.e., synchronous events) happen.

I have personally experienced the reality of this notion of synchronicity. One example during the course of my own leadership journey particularly grabbed my attention. Over the winter break two years ago, I was journaling about my values, listening for what inner guidance might arise. I found myself writing about how I wanted to support depth psychological perspectives in the world. But I did not share this new commitment with anyone or make an effort to act on it. Shortly afterward, I received a call from a search firm asking if I was interested in being interviewed for the position of executive vice president and provost at Pacifica—a graduate school whose mission is to support depth psychology and mythology scholarship and education. The recognition of the match between my inner desire and a surprising outer opportunity eventually led to my accepting the job. It also enabled me to avoid what, unbeknownst to me, would turn out to be a less supportive situation at the University of Maryland for others who remained where I had been.

I have found that recognizing and acknowledging synchronous occurrences, rather than dismissing them as just luck, can shift one’s perspective from how difficult it is to live in such a complex world to being aware of some of the mysterious and helpful connections that link us to each other, thus making everything seem easier. And you can be assured that, as Senge points out, the fact that synchronicity seems to work in mysterious ways does not mean it is esoteric or mystical. Scientists do not really know how gravity works, either, but they do not discount its reality.

Reflecting on synchronous occurrences, Joseph Jaworski (1996), a former attorney who worked with Shell Oil, among other clients, and more recently as CEO of the American Leadership Forum, concludes that an interesting tension exists between our sense of personal autonomy and being “caught up in vital forces that are larger than ourselves, so that while we may be protagonists of our own lives, we are important participants in a larger drama” (p. 88).

The conscious mind can help to transform our relationship with others, but it is the unconscious mind that is our greatest ally in living in dynamic interaction between the inner and outer worlds. Too many people view the unconscious negatively rather than as a powerful ally. Sigmund Freud, for example, is known for identifying our pathologies as arising from the unconscious. Yet the unconscious mind tracks much more data than the conscious mind can handle and makes emotionally resonant decisions for us all the time, often with great wisdom. As New York Times columnist David Brooks (2011) observes in *The Social Animal*,

We are living in the middle of a revolution in consciousness. Over the past few years, geneticists, neuroscientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, and others have made great strides in understanding the building blocks of human flourishing. And a core finding of their work is that we are not primarily the products of our conscious thinking. We are primarily the products of thinking that happens below the level of awareness. (p. 9)

Brooks (2011) goes on to say that the unconscious is not only the largest part of the mind; it is also the “seedbed of accomplishment.” Indeed, he continues, “mental processes that are inaccessible to consciousness organize our thinking, shape our judgments, form our characters, and provide us with the skills we need in order to thrive” (pp. 9–10). Given the unprecedented fast pace of modern life as well as information overload, the ability of the unconscious to take in great amounts of information and process it quickly is a great asset to any leader whose conscious and unconscious minds are in dialogue.

The essays in this section suggest ways of leading for those who not only want to be the change but also are able to trust in a positive relationship with the outer world, including their relationship with the people and systems that they lead. This trust allows them to learn from others as well as promote their own vision and values.

### **Harvesting the Wisdom of Groups and Promoting Group Effectiveness**

Such leaders do not just sell others on their vision; they share their vision as they also harvest the vision of others, within and outside of their group. Anyone who has done work with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator™ or other typology systems, or who has seriously studied cultural differences, recognizes that no one of us and no group has all the answers. What we are able to see and understand depends on our type, our socialization (including the imprint of our cultures), and our individual experiences. We inevitably will see only a part of the reality in front of us (as in the famous Sufi parable of the blind men describing an elephant, each one holding a different part of its body). The complexity of modern life requires that we piece together various parts of the puzzle in order to gain an adequate perspective.

However, you can put those pieces together only if people are speaking their authentic truths. Unfortunately, many people match what they say to what they believe their leaders and other group members are open to hearing, saving their true and often more accurate reflections for quiet sharing in hallways and behind closed doors. Others simply posture, saying what they think will get them ahead.

We all pick up verbal and nonverbal cues, consciously and unconsciously, as to what the leader wants to hear or what it takes to fit into a group. This means that if we as leaders want to get the real information, we need to show enthusiasm for hearing divergent voices and surfacing conflict. What is tricky is how sensitive most people are to nonverbal communication. For example, I may say honestly that I want to hear divergent views, but if I look disquieted at hearing something new, or if

someone heatedly shares their disagreement with my opinion and my eyes show I'm feeling defensive, they pick it up.

Brooks (2011) explains how it is that we track social cues and accommodate so unconsciously:

If the conscious mind is like a general atop a platform, who sees the world from a distance and analyzes things linearly and linguistically, the unconscious mind is like a million little scouts. The scouts careen across the landscape, sending back a constant flow of signals and generating instant responses. They maintain no distance from the environment around them, but are immersed in it. They scurry about, interpreting other minds, landscapes, and ideas. (p. 11)

This would be complicated enough, but most of the time these "scouts" are not reporting to the general. Indeed, they make decisions on grounds that may be very different from the general's. Brooks (2011) explains that our unconscious minds are emotionally quite intelligent, and in response to stimuli they shape "our interpretation of the world" and serve as guides for us "as we chart our courses. If the general thinks in data and speaks in prose, the scouts crystallize with emotion, and their work is best expressed in stories, poetry, music, image, prayer, and myth" (p. 12).

In this respect, different parts of us are called forth by different environments. When we go to church, synagogue, or mosque, our more pious (or religiously oppositional) self shows up quite unconsciously. If we go to a party or a bar or the beach, our gregarious, fun-loving part shows up—or if it does not, we may have trouble enjoying our time there. We take a class and our intellectual, studious sides emerge, and so on. Our behavior shifts when our spouse is there, our boss comes into the room, our oldest best friend shows up, or we suddenly feel watched (or private and alone). All this can happen on automatic pilot because those unconscious scouts are doing their job. In *The Tipping Point* and in *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell (2000, 2005) identified the public policy implications of this phenomenon, recounting how not allowing people to jump turnstiles or write on the walls of the trains decreased crime overall in the New York City subways.

In the introduction, I shared insights from my students at the University of Maryland and the Fetzer Institute dialogue participants. The students were in a graduate program in public policy that emphasized critical thinking and pragmatic practice. The classes were held in typical business conference-style rooms on campus and in a downtown Washington, DC office building. Might this have influenced their tendency to argue from reason and demonstrate critical thinking in their remarks, sounding very much like corporate managers, government bureaucrats, or policy wonks, albeit very smart ones?

The Fetzer participants were invited to share their knowledge of transformational leadership by a foundation whose mission is to promote love and forgiveness in the world. They sat in a circle in a beautiful building made of natural materials with large windows connecting us to a lovely natural landscape, every session beginning with poetry and music. Might this have enhanced their readiness to share such deep and soulful insights?

Setting the stage for what we want to unfold is essential to leadership. We do this by creating visual and verbal cues appropriate to the kind of responses we want to draw from group members. However, we need to remember that these cues skew the information we get, so we also must look for divergent thinking in other settings.

Dialogue is an important complement to discussion and debate, committed as it is to extracting the wisdom of the entire group. Our ability to engage in genuine dialogue with one another at an unconscious as well as a conscious level augments our ease in working together to achieve results. During the Fetzer dialogues, Deborah Meehan, the founder and head of the Leadership Learning Community, astounded us by a simple exercise that brought home the power of a deeper level of group cohesion, even in accomplishing a simple task. Twenty of us stood in a circle out in the fresh air at twilight. She gave us the task of counting to twenty, in any order, but with only one person speaking at a time—or we were to start over. We all looked earnestly at one another, trying hard and repeatedly failing. Then she had us do some deep breathing, consciously connect with one another, close our eyes, and try again. Inward panic ensued, at least in me, but, to my amazement, we succeeded easily on

the first attempt. And the sense of group communion arising out of this exercise nourished a powerful sharing in the next session, where participants disclosed very revealing (and confidential) stories about their own leadership experience.

Because it is not yet common in the corporate or political worlds to reveal insights from the unconscious, such as dreams or somatic feelings, leaders often operate as if they had one hand tied behind them, functioning explicitly from only one part of the mind. Moreover, when the messages we consciously and unconsciously send out discourage members of the group from communicating anything beyond what their conscious minds know or can rationally defend, we should not be surprised to receive reductive groupthink rather than the collective wisdom of the enterprise.

For these reasons, transformational leaders access their own unconscious knowledge and help others to become aware of what external influences on them are evoking, align energies and connections within the group, and encourage group members to share the wisdom they have, whatever its source: rational analysis, fact finding, intuition, hunches, dreams, and listening to a still small inner voice within them (or the voice of conscience).

The essays in Part Three provide a series of lessons about utilizing the inner work we continue to do in interaction with groups we lead and of which we are a part. By doing this work, we can bring out the transformational capacities not only in ourselves but also in our organizations, communities, and the larger world. The bridging sections highlight capacities that support our overall ability to transform groups.

## **Depth Entrepreneurship**

### Creating an Organization Out of Dream Space

*Stephen Aizenstat*

The first essay in this section, by Stephen Aizenstat, describes the process he followed in founding and developing Pacifica Graduate Institute, employing both inner intuitive guidance and sound management practices. At Pacifica we now host Pacifica in Depth dialogues with the faculty and staff where we discuss a range of topics, including dreams we believe to be about the school as well as the impact of archetypes we see as being active in the institution. Discussing dreams and archetypes provides a means to enter into a conversation about what the soul of Pacifica wants from us (as well as some exploration of its shadow). Aizenstat's essay models how you can utilize the fruits of your inner work in creating transformational organizations.

Organizational leadership and dream work seem like contradictory practices. But are they? In practice, I have found that success in entrepreneurial leadership requires the capacity to access intelligence from both the rational and dreaming mind. Imagination, intuition, and the resources of the unconscious bring as much to entrepreneurial achievement as does the skill set of a well-earned MBA. Developing a business model animated by the "capital" of both dream and coin inspires devotion to mission and profit.

Thirty-five years ago I cofounded an educational institution and business rooted in these dual ideas. Pacifica Graduate Institute began with a vision and just enough capital to provide instruction to one cohort of

counseling psychology students. Today we operate on two ample campuses offering advanced degrees in psychology, mythological studies, and the humanities. Our continuing success speaks to the value of listening to the multiple voices of good management practice and psyche alive within the corporate body. I believe that in the marketplace of the twenty-first century, enlightened leadership can gain from our experience. "Depth entrepreneurship" has as its originating intention a more broadly conceived bottom line: an end game that values the synergy of profit, dream, and informed intuition. None other than the corporate soul, an expression of the world soul, is making this request.

### **The Corporate Space Is the Dream Space—or Is It?**

It is common practice in founding an enterprise to start with a dream. When we develop a business plan, pitch a start-up, or raise capital for virtually any new corporation (profit or not-for-profit), we begin with a dream. Of course, along the way there are countless market studies, financial models, product tests, and the like. Yet the central idea, the essential impulse, the "juice" that inspires the inception and implementation of an organization originates in the imagination.

Virtually all entrepreneurial enterprises begin with a dream, and often a dreamer. The core idea, the new concept, bubbles up from the deep psyche, from the dream space, not from the intricate calculations of the analysts. How curious that the generative force that begins it all, the intelligence of the dreaming psyche, is so quickly left behind, virtually abandoned, like unwanted leftovers, ready for disposal. Oh, what a loss. When the dream dies, so too does the extraordinary intelligence that incubated the idea. The corporate space is robbed of its inheritance, split off from its origination.

Keeping the dream space alive in corporate space opens the doors to untold resources. With dream consciousness comes access to intuition, innovation, curiosity, and a kind of animation that enlivens a company, and, yes, it also feeds the bottom line. Imagine for a moment the excitement that fills the room when a "new idea" emerges. "We could connect people through the Internet, a kind of social networking, a Face Book."

For weeks, months, perhaps even years, the creativity of the dreaming powers the entrepreneurial initiative, forever adding new dimensions, complexity, and out-of-the-box possibilities. Taken a step further, some might say that in dreamtime consciousness, a connection exists with the dreaming of others inside and outside the company, further informing and shaping the business. From product lines to distribution networks, the business model responds to the energetic vivacity of the originating dream and the corporate space continues as a dream space.

When the dream space is cultivated, imagination is ignited. Employees are encouraged to offer new perspectives, imagine into business options, and contribute their voices (even their dream images) to the ongoing evolution of the corporate enterprise. An imaginative attitude is sustained in the organization, and the intelligence flowing from the fountain of inspiration continues to be valued and heard. With this vast potential, one wonders, how hard would it be to open an hour or two a week where the wisdom of dreams could be heard? The answer is a simple one: very hard.

In the manic rush to bring more efficient management systems into the workplace, little room is left for dream space. The science of doing business often replaces the art of conducting business. And when the generative intention fades, the potential for stagnation, low morale, and loss of competitive edge become real problems. Keeping the dream alive is vital to a healthy and prosperous business. Like a magnet with its own energy field, when the deeper psyche of corporate space is enlivened, the abundance that comes with generativity activates. It is what every successful entrepreneur knows in the gut. When the business of doing business in the corporate space complements the ongoing spirit of the dream space, a company or school thrives and has the viability to meet the challenges of an ever-changing marketplace. Keeping the dream alive can be encouraged by paying attention to the dreams we have at night and what they might be telling us. We who are in positions of leadership often have dreams of the workplace. On other occasions the dream may come from an employee other than the leader. If only we made time to listen, to hear their guidance, act upon their urgings, heed their warnings.

Recently I was dealing with a foundational academic program at the institute that was suffering very hard times. This created angst institute-wide. One night this dream came forward: I witnessed a bull that had become lost in the streets of a city, floundering about without direction, and becoming weakened and emaciated, its bones beginning to stick through its decomposing flesh, its eyes bulging as hunger threatened its life. Then the bull made a sudden turn and charged in another direction, back into the high mountains, away from the city, and to a meadow. There it looked more at home, and began to eat the natural grasses it had fed on as a calf. Then the dream came to an end. I woke up and reflected on this image as I prepared for my workday and a meeting about that particular troubled program.

Knowing something about the way of dreams, I appreciate that their language is metaphoric, and that they often pick up situations in awake-life circumstances and make comments on them from the deeper places of psychic life. When dreams speak, I have learned to listen. They pull together events from the day, personal tendencies, messages from the collective, and even knowledge rooted in something named the world soul. In addition, dreams respond to the pull of the future, offering hints of what is to come. Then in the "poetry" of the dream they combine all of this information and present a response in images. I sometimes like to imagine dreams as theatrical productions, complete with settings, characters, feelings, and actions. Almost always there is a "dramatic moment." In this dream, the bull was suffering starvation in the cityscape, not a usual place for a bull to be roaming about. This typically potent, strong-bodied animal was disoriented, starving, and near death, with bones showing through his flaccid hide. Then, the dramatic moment: the bull turned and broke away from the confines of the civilized, constructed world. Suddenly, he galloped. He made his way back to his native grasslands. He had returned to his place of birth, to his origins.

Knowing that dreams are about the dreamer as well as situations he or she is facing, I first looked at the way I might need to go back to the meadow of my youth, renewing myself through eating the grass that first motivated me in this endeavor. I then felt a deeply resonant connection between the dream and what was happening in that beleaguered program.

This perspective from the dreamtime proved to be very helpful later that afternoon at a meeting regarding the “disorientation” of the program that was experiencing difficulties. It became clear to me that the program we had for years felt most “bullish” about (dreams love to speak in puns) was being so overregulated that it was losing touch with its origins, its homeland—a loss of body and soul. This program, because of newly adopted (one-size-fits-all) national assessment standards, had found itself in the urban world of “city,” split off from the “natural” world of its animating impulse, its mission, its dream. What was so in the dream seemed so for the program as well. In entrepreneurial terms, if we wanted to return to success, to recover the “bull market,” then we had best find ways to combine the technology of modern practices required by the city with the animating spirit of the program’s early days still living in the grasslands of its wilderness place. The next step was to share the dream with the group to see the degree to which they resonated with it, and what form a return to a fecund meadow might take in their eyes.

### **Informed Intuition: It’s Not Rocket Science; It’s Not Esoteric**

Informed intuition means trusting an intelligence that lives beyond the rational mind that is accessible to all of us. It is a broader way of knowing, informed by subtleties, multisensory experiences, and historical memory. Intuition and dreams are sourced from actual events, interactions throughout the day, and literally thousands of bits of information drawn from more subtle sensory perceptions (both contemporary and historical). Intuition relies on information outside the familiar, the habitual, outside of common sense or the logical.

The leader using informed intuition as a guide more often than not finds herself on the “road less traveled,” guided along the way by a deeper navigational system. Time and energy get invested in meanderings outside the demands of obligatory business practices and static organizational compliance requirements. The door is open for intuition to walk through and have its place at the table. And with intuition come

its dear companions: curiosity, fascination, and emotional intelligence—all contributors to keeping a business vital, fresh, and renewed. The entrepreneurial spirit, some may even say the “entrepreneurial genetic predisposition,” of the leader experiences a homecoming of sorts. She feels refueled, nourished, fed by a reconnection to a way of knowing that is integral to her core. With renewed vigor and heightened sensibility, responsiveness to the marketplace strengthens; ways to develop new product lines reveal themselves; and the psychic energy (morale and motivation) within the company percolates. The corporate space intersects with the dream space when leadership includes an active working relationship with informed intuition and the processes of the deep psyche.