

## Chapter 11. Leadership and Strategy for a New Age

### Introduction

Writing this paper took more courage than any other I have undertaken, because in it I first spoke publicly about the importance of releasing the power of love in organizations. At the time I wrote the first version of the paper (1981), I had for several years been meeting with a group of fellow consultants to explore ways we might bring our practice more closely in tune with our personal and spiritual values. We met under the auspices of the Institute for Conscious Evolution, an organization established by Barry McWaters and Susan Campbell to foster the dissemination of the New Age thinking of people like Barbara Marx Hubbard, Willis Harmon, etc. One of the buzz words we used was "alignment," by which we meant bringing actions into conformance with purpose and values. The concept of alignment had just received a big boost with the publication of *In Search of Excellence* (Peters and Waterman, 1982).

I was from the outset a little suspicious of the idea of alignment as an unalloyed virtue, because of my own experiences with highly aligned organizations. I had found in my work with plant startup in Europe (Harrison, 1981\*) that the startup situation evoked such loyalty and commitment that people could not be trusted to take care of themselves, nor did the norms that developed encourage doing so. Startups are time limited, but I wondered what it would be like to work in an organization where such norms lasted for years. At the time *In Search of Excellence* was published, I was doing a good deal of work with one of the nation's National Laboratories, and I observed that the people in their Nuclear Weapons Program were about as aligned to purpose as an organization could be. Certainly they showed all the positive qualities claimed for such organizations. They voluntarily worked long hours for very modest pay; they had a strong sense of camaraderie; they made personal sacrifices to advance the work. But the

dark side of alignment was evident, too. Although the anti-nuclear movement was swirling all about them, at times with protesters at the gate, I never heard any thoughtful discussion within the organization about the larger questions of value and policy evoked by their work. By concentrating attention and intention so exclusively on their mission, people seemed able to keep their doubts and the awkward questions about greater purposes at bay.

It seemed to me that traditional authoritarian organizations were in retreat under the onslaught of the strongly self oriented values that had begun to emerge during the sixties. These were individualistic values to which I and my colleagues had contributed our bit. Certainly, in much of my early career I had cast myself in the role of a "freedom fighter" for the liberation of the individual in organizations (see (Harrison, 1995)). I felt what was missing in my own individualism and in that expressed in *In Search of Excellence* was an appreciation of the needs of the whole. I suspected that in some ways the "aligned organization" would substitute the tyranny of purpose for the tyranny of the boss. I personally preferred an organization committed to purpose. However, when I thought of all the evil that has been done in the name of high purpose, for example, for God and Country, I wasn't sure the exchange would be as favorable as it seemed at first. What was missing, I felt, was the power of love as a balancing force to purpose.

These ideas of mine took shape through our discussions in the "Organization Alignment Group" at the Institute for Conscious Evolution, and I wrote a short piece about them in the Institute's journal (Harrison, 1981). It was seen by Marie Spangler, who at that time directed the survey research staff in the Values and Life Styles Program at SRI International. She asked me to write a longer treatment of the subject for distribution to the Program's clients, most of which were marketing departments in large consumer goods companies.

Faced with an invitation to go public with my ideas about love in organizations, I was both excited and nervous. I remember pacing the floor of my family's cabin in the woods, where I had gone to work on the paper, wondering out loud to my spouse, Diana, whether I was about to sacrifice my credibility as a rational, clear thinking consultant by "coming out of the closet" about the importance of love in organizations. It felt enormously risky at that time, when US businesses were becoming ever more strongly oriented to the "bottom line."

After the report went to the Values and Life Styles Program's clients, it circulated by hand among consultants and interested managers, and I republished it twice (Harrison, 1983) and (Harrison, 1984\*). The version given here is the one that is closest to the original report. As I describe in my autobiography (Harrison, 1995), the responses to this work have been somewhat polarized, but I feel strongly that the encouragement my work has given to like minded people in organizations has been well worth any risk I took. Subsequently, many others have written about the importance of releasing love in organizations. This paper was probably not the first, but it was one of the earliest.

### **Leadership and Strategy for a New Age**

During the last few of my twenty-five years as a management consultant, I have been impressed with the seeming intractability of organization problems. I ask myself why it is that so many of our attempted solutions seem either to produce no effect or exacerbate the problems they were designed to solve.

For example, why is it that decades of human relations training for supervisors and managers have not produced committed and happy workers? Is it only a coincidence that as information systems make more information available to managers, it becomes more difficult to make decisions? Why have incentive systems so often failed to keep productivity high, and why

have more psychologically sound attempts to motivate workers had equally ambiguous outcomes? Is there any connection between the development of sophisticated planning systems and the increasingly unpredictable fluctuations in the environment? How is it that organizations seem so unmanageable just at the point when we have learned so much about the arts and sciences of management?

It seems to me that the processes by which leaders and consultants endeavor to fix organizations too often resemble eighteenth century medical practice. They bleed and physic their patients, and when they become sicker and weaker, they bleed and physic them some more. When they do die, it is not clear whether they are carried off by the disease or the treatment. It would seem that all of us, leaders and consultants alike, would do well to heed the Hippocratic admonition to "First, do no harm." We seem impelled to action even when we may suspect that our interventions may be applying more of what caused our difficulties. To do nothing in the face of our problems would be painful, even though it might be as efficacious as the actions we do take.

Contemplating this state of affairs, I have slowly come to the conclusion that the tools and approaches that got us where we are today are not the ones we can use to advance to another level. I sense that like the drunk in the story, I have been looking for my lost keys under the street lamp simply because there is more light there; the real answers to our dilemmas lie in the dark, beyond the circle of illumination given by our current concepts and methods.

### ***Where to look?***

It is hard to venture out of our little circle of light into the vaster darkness without some guidance or sense of direction. Far easier to go busily over the ground again, hoping we may have missed our keys in the last circuit.

We may not yet be at the beginning of a New Age, but we do seem to be ending an old one, if that can be measured by the increasing unworkability of current forms and by the failure of old beliefs and values to give peace, certainty and satisfaction. It is a time when many varieties of heresy flourish, amid calls for a return to traditional virtues.

Return to the past has little heart for me, and as I contemplate the plethora of choices, the heresy that attracts me is a constellation of ideas that embodies that ancient admonition of gentle Hippocrates about doing no harm. We live in a troubled world, beset with forced changes. Surely the answers will not lie in ever more drastic intervention and frantic activity but rather in some organic approach that allows healing forces to emerge. In search of that approach, I find myself drawn toward an ideal of balance and harmony. For me that ideal is best represented by the concepts of *alignment* and *attunement*.

***Alignment: A New Age Conception of Leadership***

Managers are fond of saying that people's attitudes toward work have changed, and the low productivity in the United States is often so explained in part. In place of a voluntary commitment to hard work and high quality, we manage with systems of rules, regulations, checks, and controls. This is not only costly, but the low trust and depersonalization that are engendered further reduce the motivation to contribute, and the system becomes self-perpetuating. In the effort to make up for the inadequacies of voluntary performance, more and more sophisticated systems are developed, often replacing humans with more reliable machines.

Of late, interest in leadership has been reawakening. The leader (as opposed to the mere manager) is seen as a source of vitality and vision, who can articulate values that organization members can live by. Through his or her articulation of common purpose and exciting future possibilities, the leader lines up the organization members behind him or herself, and the

organization marches forward into a rosy new dawn. Indeed, in most arenas of contemporary life, we lament the lack of leadership and await its charismatic emergence, which we hope will lift us from our apathy. I believe it is true that most organization members hunger for some purpose higher than mere career success, a nobler vision in which they can enroll. The idea of alignment is about vision and purpose.

Alignment occurs when organization members act as parts of an integrated whole, each finding the opportunity to express his or her true purpose through the organization's purpose. According to Kiefer and Senge 1984, who have explored the concept in depth, the individual expands his or her individual purpose to include the organization's purpose. The authors point out that this concept differs from that where the individual sacrifices his or her own identity to the organization, a process that is said to achieve only "a degree of alignment." It is not quite clear what kinds of leaders and followers achieve the one result rather than the other, however.

There lies the difficulty. Most Americans mistrust, and rightly so I think, the easy giving over of one's will to any collectivity, whether it be the nation-state, one's employer, or even one's nuclear family. Even while we acknowledge the startling superiority of Japanese productivity to our own, most of us are unwilling to find our own fulfillment in the purposes, no matter how noble, of any business organization. And, for the most part, our business organizations are indeed lacking the nobility of purpose that is attributed to the Japanese firms of whose productivity we have read so much.

Organization alignment behind charismatic leadership must involve the merging of the individual's strength and will with that of the collectivity. In high-performing organizations animated by a noble purpose, this may not feel like much of a sacrifice. But even high-performing organizations have their inhumanities. They burn people out; they take over their

private lives; they ostracize or expel those who do not share their purposes; and they are frequently ruthless in their dealings with those outside the magic circle: competitors, suppliers, the public. It seems to me no accident that many of our most exciting tales of high-performing, closely aligned organizations are either literally or metaphorically "war stories." War is the ultimate expression of unbridled will in the pursuit of "noble" ends.

There are close parallels between what conscious evolution has to say about alignment, and recent research and theory on high-performing groups and organizations. It seems to me that both tend to ignore the dark side of man's nature, what Rollo May (1969) calls the *daimonic*. The daimonic is that aspect of man that seeks to express itself and to have impact on the world, no matter what the cost or consequences. It is amoral, and it tends to take over the whole person if unchecked. We find the daimonic in all sorts of obsessions, for there is hardly any human faculty that does not have the capacity, in some persons, to overcome and direct the personality. We find the daimonic in the passions of the social reformer, the libertine, the dictator, the actor, the artist, the evangelical preacher, the lover. We find it in the expansive dream of the entrepreneur, in the limitless personal ambition of the dedicated careerist, and in the dedicated money-making of the financial genius. Where it is checked and balanced by other parts of the personality, its energy fuels great achievements and contributions. Where it gets control of the person, it turns against nature and creates the tragedy of an Oedipus, an Othello, or a Julius Caesar.

People in groups seem to find one another's *daimons*. Mob scenes, sports stadiums, family quarrels, and battlefields are favorite haunts of the daimonic. Its power has always been with us, and I find it hard to conceive of any evolutionary leap that would rid us of it. New Age prophets of the light seldom write about the daimonic, and when they do they tend to imply that

it will wither away in the coming global transformation, as the state was supposed to under communism. I have my doubts.

### ***Attunement***

In New Age thought I find a powerful concept that is missing or understated in much contemporary writing about leadership and highperforming organizations. It is the concept of *attunement*, meaning a resonance or harmony among the parts of the system, and between the parts and the whole. As the concept of alignment speaks to us of *will*, so that of attunement summons up the mysterious operations of *love* in organizations: the sense of empathy, understanding, caring, nurturance, and mutual support.

Love. What a closet word it is in organizations! Far better to talk openly of those old shibboleths sex, money, and power than to speak of love. This is the true male chauvinism in business: the discrimination against women masks the deeper fear of love.

Yet love is far too powerful ever to be truly exorcised. We find it everywhere if we but look. Love is evoked by beauty and by quality in the products or services we produce. It is present in the comradeship of co-workers, in the relationship of mentor to protégé, in the loyalties between people that transcend personal advantage. Love is found in the high ideals of service and contribution that are articulated in the published values of many corporations. It speaks through our dedication to workmanship and excellence of performance.

There is a mystery in words. When we call the love we find in our organizations by other names than its own, it loses its power. I suspect we are reluctant to name love because to do so will release that power, and we do not have forms and processes with which to channel it. Love has its daimonic side, too, and we are perhaps not wrong to be wary of it. We do speak,

somewhat gingerly, about caring, open communication, consideration, and the like. Not about love.

When we do think about love and organizations, we are apt to see love as a disruptive force, destructive of order and good business judgment. Images come to mind of managers making personnel decisions on the basis of affinity and friendship, or setting prices based on the needs of the customer. Of course, people do sometimes make business decisions by consulting their hearts, but it is seldom admitted, and there are certainly no business school courses on how to do it.

New Age organizations, by contrast, attempt more often than not to invoke the power of love in their decision making. They have developed forms and processes for effective decision making: group meditation to enable members to "go inside" and consult their hearts, asking themselves what they are "called" to do, and other similar approaches.

Alignment and attunement are both processes for achieving *integration* and unity of effort among the differentiated parts of a system. The idea of organization alignment is getting a good press of late through the awakening interest in the role of superordinate values, top management leadership, and the characteristics of high-performing systems. I believe we also have much to learn of attunement. Alignment channels high energy and creates excitement and drive. It evokes the daimonic. Attunement is quieter, softer, receptive to the subtle energies that bind us to one another and to nature. It tames and balances the daimonic in alignment by opening us to one another's needs and to our own sense of what is fitting and right, what is the "path of the heart" that best expresses our higher selves.

Without attunement and without evoking the power of love in our organizational lives, I think we shall not find peace but only ceaseless striving. During the decades since World War

II, we have unleashed in our organizations and in the world an enormous amount of personal power, through changes in expectations, aspirations, and values. Many of us learned to aim high in our careers and personal lives and to believe we could realize our dreams through our own efforts and the abundance that science, technology, and cheap energy brought us. We became net "takers," more concerned about what we could get and achieve for ourselves than what was needed to maintain our organizations and social institutions. In the process of "doing our own thing" we became highly differentiated in our goals, values, tastes, and life-styles, and as we did so our differences and conflicts with others increased. In our efforts to get what we believed we deserved, we became increasingly issue-oriented and litigious, careless of the fragile webs of relationship that bind any society together. We did indeed find "personal growth," but we pay an increasingly high price in conflict and stress for what we have achieved. We have created a world in which it is increasingly difficult to *compel* anyone to do anything. How shall we find order, peace, and harmony, if we cannot learn to open our hearts to one another?

The "how" of attunement is beyond the scope of this paper, and indeed the forms and processes that may work in business organizations are still unclear to me. I think we have something to learn from intentional communities, many of which have been extremely inventive in their search for noncoercive means of making and implementing group decisions. I believe that attunement begins in stillness, in some quieting or meditative process for connecting with our own higher purposes. As is true with any intuitive process, attunement can be facilitated by ritual, by music, and by the visual arts. I can imagine business meetings in which participants begin in an atmosphere of soft lights and meditative music, with a few minutes of silence in which they go inside to seek guidance as to the higher purposes to be achieved in the work of the

meeting. When I think of my current clients engaging in such rituals, however, I am aware that there is some distance to be traveled between here and there!

### **The Leader as Steward**

What does the foregoing imply about leadership? The picture of the leader that emerges looks remarkably like that which Michael Maccoby (1981) proposes, proceeding from a social psychological perspective. Maccoby looked at the emerging social character of the workforce and then projected the leadership traits that such a character would demand. The picture of the new leader that he draws has much in it of attunement. The new leader is seen as having a caring, respectful, and positive attitude toward people, and a willingness to share power. He or she is more open and nondefensive regarding his or her own faults and vulnerabilities than former leaders, and less likely to use fear, domination, or militant charisma than heretofore. The picture is one of a personally secure and mature individual who can articulate the values and high principles that give organizational life meaning, but who is more humble and receptive than we normally expect visionary leaders to be. Perhaps this conception of leadership is best expressed as *stewardship*, that is, leadership as a trust that is exercised for the benefit of all: the leader as serving the followers, guided by a vision of the higher purposes of the organization. Thus, the organization is seen as animated by a sense of its own higher purpose. The leader focuses the attention and consciousness of the members on those purposes. But the leader also knows that the individuals who are the parts of the organization have legitimate purposes of their own that are not completely expressed by the purposes of the whole, and he or she facilitates the attunement processes by means of which organization members can come to know, respect, and care for one another's needs and individual purposes. The flow of human energy is not one way,

from the members to the organization, but the uniqueness of each individual is also preserved and nourished by the whole.

In the past, leaders we called "great" have generally been very strong, ruling through fear and respect, and/or very charismatic, releasing and focusing the daimonic for their followers. The concept of leadership described here is clearly different. The "new leader" avoids the use of fear and arbitrary authority, without being soft or avoiding conflict. He or she is a visionary, but the daimonic thrust that is implicit in the charismatic style is balanced and tamed by a nurturing receptivity. The leader brings healing and harmonizing influences that we can only call love into the organization.

We are clearly a long way from the point where we could imagine the majority of business organizations in this country as animated primarily by noble purposes and love. There are far too many situations that engender feelings of fear and weakness in organization members, and it is not possible to be truly loving when one is powerless and fearful. How could we ever get from here to there?

New Age thinking tells us where to start. We create reality with our thoughts. The events we experience as the world unfolds are actually manifestations of thought, having no existence independent of our willing and believing them into being. Thus, if we call love by its proper name, look for it in ourselves and others, and affirm its potency in our organizational lives, we shall summon it into being, much as Aladdin summoned up the genie from the lamp. At first glance, not an idea likely to appeal to most hard-headed business people.

Yet the idea of manifesting reality through thought has actually been around on the fringes of business for a long time, and it seems to be gaining currency. Motivational speakers such as Norman Vincent Peale on "the power of positive thinking" have never been more

popular. Most of us (at least in California) have friends who practice the manifestation of money, career success, or love, and many tell remarkable tales indeed of the results of their efforts. (I manifest parking spaces myself, but I always make a joke of it when I mention it to others.)

We make jokes, too, about the stories we hear of the regimented inspirational group singing in Japanese companies like Matsushita and Toyota (or, closer to home, in IBM and Tupperware)! We may not respect their methods, but we certainly respect their success. In one way or another, mysterious or mundane, positive thinking in groups works for these organizations. Would they harmonize more sweetly at work if they sang of love? I do not know, and I know of only one way to find out.

Studies of high-performing people (athletes, managers, researchers) consistently turn up findings that suggest the power of thought. Successful people are prone to visualize the results they want in their lives and work and to affirm to themselves that they can accomplish their goals. They create a clear and conscious *intention* as to the desired outcomes and allow their actions to be guided by that frequently affirmed intention. Rather than planning in detail what they are going to do, they start by creating an intensely alive mental representation of the end state. That representation then works through the individual's intuition as he or she makes the multitude of everyday decisions that bring the goal ever nearer.

In fact, I have never in all my years as a consultant seen anyone change an organization in any fundamental way through rational planning. Plans have their place, of course, but the managers I have seen deeply influence their organizations' characters always operated by intuition, guided by strongly held intentions. They communicated their intentions verbally to others who could share their vision, and they communicated it daily to others through their real-

time actions and decisions. In due course, enough people shared the vision/intention for it to reach "critical mass," and the dream became reality. I guess if we are to have organizations that are animated by both love and will, it will be through the efforts of a few dedicated people who have a vision of what such an organization could be like, who share that vision with others, and who together *intend* it into becoming reality.

### **New Age Concepts of Strategic Thinking**

We usually think of strategy as the art of predicting the future, and then planning how to change the organization so that it will perform well at the future time. It is a frustrating business for a number of reasons, not least because the organization is always defined as wanting, when compared to the strategic ideal. Add to that the fact that the most dramatic aspects of the future are the ones that are least predictable from an analysis of the past for example, the sudden increase in oil prices in 1973-1974) and it is little wonder that many managers have little taste for strategic planning.

We seem to do more planning in organizations as planning becomes less and less effective, in a desperate attempt to make the future behave. In fact, planning can only help us to deal with conditions and variables that we already know or suspect are important (Davis, 1982). Planning defines what we know and do not know within a given context. Any future changes in context (changes in variables not known or thought to be important when the planning was carried out) will invalidate our plans to a greater or lesser extent. Planning, for example, can estimate the risk of a downturn in the economy, based on known historical factors, and the probable impact of that downturn on, say, the launch of a new product. Planning cannot tell us anything about either the likelihood or the impact on our marketing plans of unforeseen events such as the sudden rise of a new religion or an epidemic of some new disease.

Most of us seem to be aware that unforeseen events are looming over our futures. We know that we do not know. We imagine wars, economic disasters, and cataclysmic natural events, but we do not believe we can predict their likelihood by reference to historical data trends, so we cannot plan for them. If we could assign a probability to these events, we would still find it difficult to plan, because the events we imagine are so sharply discontinuous with our current experience as to paralyze both mind and will. I think it is fair to say that because we cannot plan for the future we fear and imagine, we plan instead for the future we hope for, one in which even the projected negative events possess a comfortable familiarity.

### **Planning and Planetary Purposes**

If we cannot plan for the future, how can we best prepare our organizations and ourselves for it? The suggestions provided by conscious evolution involve attuning our organizations to planetary purposes. This means moving out of the rational and analytical modes of thought typical of the planning process and into intuitive and intentional mental processes.

A radical leap is required to move from our normal habit of thinking of organizational purposes as defined internally to thinking of an organization in terms of planetary purpose. Seen from the planetary point of view, the organization exists only as part of a larger reality, supported and nurtured by the larger system on which it depends. Its purposes are not solely determined or decided by itself, but are "given" by its place in the larger system. Organization purpose is not simply decided by its members but is rather to be *discovered*. The process of discovery is partly internal to the organization, involving an inner search for values and meaning. It also has an external aspect, that of discovering meaning through the transactions of the organization with its environment. Viewed in this way, a primary task of the organization is the discovery of its place

and purpose in the larger system. Every event in its history can be viewed as part of a lesson, the meaning of which is to be intuited by the organization's members.

Adopting such a point of view requires a fundamental change in one's orientation to goals and to the success and failure of one's plans. We can begin, in Kipling's words, to "meet with Triumph and Disaster/And treat those two impostors just the same." If one's orientation is to learning, then failure carries just as much information as success. In fact, failure may be more valuable because in our failures are embedded nature's messages about required changes.

Most business organizations today strive to succeed and to win against their competitors, against the government, and sometimes against their suppliers and customers as well. The tougher conditions become, the harder they strive. Since conditions are increasingly tough, there are a lot of people out there striving. Because conditions are tough, those people experience a lot of failure, and consequent blame from themselves and others. They are accordingly under a lot of stress, as can be seen from the ever increasing popularity of alcohol, tranquilizing drugs, and "stress management" courses.

When one is striving to achieve goals, one's learning is oriented to *means*; one learns more and more about what to do or not to do to achieve those particular goals. The excitement and stress are liable to blind us to the question of whether the goals themselves are worthy. Stepping back and taking the perspective of planetary needs forces us to ask the larger question: are these goals in line with our higher purpose? Is the fact that they are becoming increasingly difficult to achieve perhaps a signal that they are no longer appropriate to this stage of our evolution? If we find on reflection that there is no longer joy in the struggle, that we are burning ourselves out in the effort, that we are no longer energized by what we do, then that may be a "signal from the universe" that it is time to move on to find a "path with heart."

### *The Search for Meaning*

From a planetary point of view, strategic planning is a search for meaning rather than a search for advantage. It is an intuitive process in which the goals and activities of the organization are examined against the criteria of the heart: does this task enliven the doer, giving value and meaning to life? Do we still experience satisfaction in the attainment of this goal? Do we strive joyously, or with desperation? Do we feel that we are net contributors of value in our work in the world?

As my colleague David Nicoll says, in approaching strategy from the point of view of purpose, our aim is definitional, rather than positional in a market domain. Our endeavor is to forge a shared view of reality that will serve the organization members as a base for day-to-day decision making and that will direct the leadership thrust of the dominant coalition (Nicoll, 1981 Personal communication).

The activity is definitional in that we are attempting to penetrate the forms the organization takes in its internal and external relationships in order to discover its essence. Our belief is that when the forms (systems and structures) and processes (doings) of the organization flow from its essential qualities (being), the organization will become energized and integrated and will be effective in dealing with its environment.

The questions we ask in order to determine the essential qualities of the organization are simple, though the process of answering them may be difficult.

First we may ask, Who are we and what are our gifts? What are our distinctive competences? What have we to contribute that is unique or different? What special knowledge do we have? What do we value? What do we believe in?

We may also ask of ourselves, What are we called to do? What needs do we see in the world that we are moved to meet? What activities have "heart" for us? What do we love doing?

We may examine our core technology, those processes we use to transform inputs into outputs. How does the core technology link us to those parts of the environment that supply us with our inputs and receive our outputs? What do these key domains in our environment need from us, and what do we need from them?

We may ask ourselves what other messages we are receiving from the environment, from governments, publics, and special interest groups. Do these tell us more about our mission or calling in the world?

Of course, answering the questions can become extraordinarily complex when our organization is made up of many diverse constituent parts, each of which may produce markedly different answers to key questions. In heterogeneous organizations, it may be necessary for each part to go through the strategizing activity on its own. Then some integrating process is needed to attune the parts to one another and harmonize their differences. I am not underestimating the difficulty of this task, but it is one that must be faced by any strategizing activity in complex organizations. It is perhaps more difficult when we adopt the aim of preserving the essential integrity of each part, because then we forego the convenience of using authority simply to override the aims, values, and world views of those who disagree with us.

This strategizing process can embrace both alignment and attunement, as it searches deep within for values, and turns outward to acknowledge the organization's connectedness with all of life. It results in a statement of the purposes of the organization, embedded in the larger purposes of its environment. The statement of purpose forms the basis for a projection of the organization into the future. This statement of intention, the "willed future," describes the

organization's state of being and its relationship with its environment at a later point in time when its essence will have been realized in its forms and processes and it will be making its maximum contribution to the common good of the planet.

The statement of the willed future becomes the basic operating document of the organization, to which all plans and decisions are related and upon which the *intentions* of the organization members are focused. In this way, the power of thought to create reality is brought into play. By consulting the willed future at each point of uncertainty and endeavoring to keep plans and decisions in conformity with its statement of intentions, the organization aligns all its efforts with the strategy.

### ***Evaluating the Approach***

How shall we evaluate the usefulness of an approach to strategic planning that says, in effect, "Get your values right, listen for your call to serve, decide what you want, go for it with all your heart, and trust in the Lord"? Certainly, on the one hand, it has the advantage of simplicity in concept. It is consistent with the growing interest in leadership as a value-transmitting activity and a creator of meaning. Because of its comprehensiveness it can have a unifying and stabilizing effect, compared to strategies that are responsive to transitory changes in markets and competitive position.

On the other hand, there are real obstacles in modern organizations to the establishment of a common vision of purpose and a unified idea of the willed future. For one thing, most large and complex organizations are heterogeneous and highly differentiated. If it is difficult to keep a coordinated planning activity going between, for example, the production and marketing people, what shall we say of the chances of their agreeing on ultimate values and the meaning of life?

The idea of seeking consensus with one's business associates on deeper values and the call to serve implies a high degree of mutual commitment between the individual and the organization. It is one thing to contract with the organization to give it control over our activities for a certain period each day. It is quite another for us to pledge to one another "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." Such deeper commitments to purpose are implicit in New Age strategizing. They are quite evidently not for everyone.

Then, too, I wonder why it is that so many nonprofit and grassroots organizations that are dedicated to the highest principles are badly managed, undisciplined, and prone to personal backbiting and political strife. Why, I ask myself, have I frequently found more kindness and human decency in organizations committed to commercial pursuits than I have in those espousing lofty ideals?

The answer to the paradox lies, I believe, in the operations of the daimonic. In many business organizations, the daimonic is repressed beneath layers of structure and impersonal systems, kept in check by authority and regulations, and bought off with financial rewards. It is as though the implicit contract is, "Leave your daimon at home, and we'll give you the wherewithal to indulge it during your off hours."

By contrast, many nonprofit organizations, and particularly the more activist ones, unleash the daimonic in the service of their ideals, but fail to tame and channel it. It is easy for their members to fall into the tragic error of identifying their own egos with the ideals they serve, which results in their sometimes becoming self-righteous, arrogant, and quarrelsome. To me, the message seems clear. It is not sufficient simply to align oneself with high ideals and set off down the road in pursuit of lofty purpose. We need also to remain receptive to those we meet along the way, both companions and strangers. Through the heart-opening process of

attunement and through the humility and reason that enable us to accept discipline in the service of order, we can keep the daimonic in check without losing its energy and vitality.

After due consideration, then, I remain basically optimistic about the possibility of introducing New Age thinking into business organizations. In the first place, the personal needs are there. There is a hunger for meaning, commitment, and service that is often not fulfilled in work. There is a reservoir of positive energy waiting to be tapped, if we can give people something to enroll in that is larger than their own careers.

At the same time, there exists in business organizations a willingness to be led, to accept discipline and to respect and follow rational authority. There is an ability to forego immediate ego gratification for the sake of getting a job done. I believe, in fact, that many business organizations are ripe for the transformation. Their members slumber uneasily, knowing there is something missing, that there should be more to working life than this. This energy and vitality wait to be released by a vision of purpose and love. At the same time, they fear the awakening, as we always fear powers that are unknown. We know that change is coming, for the signs and portents of change are all around us. It is hard to believe that the changes will be positive in the midst of increasing disorder, scarcity, and confusion. Thus we cling to the past without really believing in it, and we distract ourselves with business as usual and with our personal careers. Even if the promises of the New Age are real, how shall we awaken ourselves and others to their messages?

### **The Processes of Paradigmatic Change**

I said at the beginning of this paper that I am drawn toward a gentle stance on intervention and organization change, one that seeks to release the organization's own vitality

and healing energies. Are there organic approaches to transforming organizations in the fundamental ways discussed above?

In fact, I do not believe that organizations are changed much if at all by consultants like myself and my colleagues. They are occasionally changed by managers. They are mostly changed by markets, technology, economic cycles, social and political developments. Managers and consultants can assist an organization to change in more productive and less painful ways, and that assistance may be decisive for its health and continued survival. Few of us are given the opportunity to make history.

If events were going well, and we were all prosperous and expecting to become more so, no amount of intervention and management activity would be sufficient to accomplish significant changes in perceptions and values within business organizations. Crisis provides the stimulus and opportunity for change. The ingredients for transformation exist now in our organizations. We have to concern ourselves with what prevents change, not with how to create it.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) and others have studied personal reactions to terminal illness and other traumatic losses. They have discovered that there is a predictable sequence through which individuals pass when they suffer major trauma or loss, such as impending death, loss of limb or crippling accident, death of a spouse, and the like. David Nicoll suggests, and I believe that we may be going through a similar sequence as we face the death of our worldview, the concepts and values that have served us throughout our oil-fueled ride to prosperity and high technology (Nicoll, 1981 Personal communication).

The early stages of this sequence are characterized by denial and rage; the later stages by depression and despair. These emotional reactions are followed by acceptance and a change in self-concept and worldview that is appropriate to the individual's new circumstances. With

acceptance and reorientation, the individual experiences new energy for learning and coping with life as it is.

I do not think it is far-fetched to state that we are suffering just such reactions to traumatic loss as our dreams fade, our cherished institutions work less and less effectively, and scarcity takes the place of abundance. Since we are not one individual but a multitude, all of the emotional manifestations can be found at once, rather than occurring in an ordered sequence.

Some resort to denial: "Reports of resource depletion and environmental damage are exaggerated. There is not really any scarcity. We have coal and oil resources for hundreds of years." "Concerns about nuclear pollution are overdrawn. Technology will take care of these problems, just as it has done before." "We will soon be able to feed the population of the Earth and provide ourselves with abundant nuclear power that will usher in the dawn of a New Age of global prosperity."

Some are angry: "It is the prophets of doom who are responsible for our doubt and uncertainty." "We have betrayed our traditional principles, and we're being drained of vitality by the freeloaders and the welfare cheats." "Our confidence is being undermined by a socialist conspiracy." "We are being exploited by the dominant military-industrial complex." "The youths of our nation are morally weak, dissolute, and unwilling to do an honest day's work."

Some are in despair and apathy: "War is inevitable." "We are headed for economic collapse." "The ecosystem is irreparably damaged." "We are headed for a new Dark Age. The Day of Judgment is upon us."

Depending upon whether we use denial, anger, or despair, we go on with our lives as if nothing crucial were happening or we strive to overcome or protect ourselves against the forces of change or we sink into a planless apathy and dread. Since the sequence is by no means

irreversible, we may migrate between these positions, depending on how we are affected by events. I have certainly experienced all of them in myself at one time or another.

People who have worked with the dying and the severely traumatized know that explanations, arguments, and pressures are ineffective in moving the sufferer through these stages. Indeed, opposition tends to fix the individual in whatever stage he or she is at the moment or sometimes move the person back to an earlier and even less adaptive stage. Effective help consists first of all in offering empathy, understanding, and love. The helper neither forces unacceptable reality on the other, nor does he or she join into any delusions or distortions of reality. The unacceptable truth is offered without pressure. Acceptance of the person is offered too, and it is not contingent on the individual's readiness to deal with reality.

I think that in our organizational lives we are groping for ways to come to terms with the death of our paradigm: that complex of assumptions, values, and perceptual frames that constitutes our worldview. In the struggle to hold onto our dreams and beliefs, and in our attempts to deal with their demise, we have great need of one another's understanding and support. We also need new dreams and hopes, but we cannot use them until we have done some grieving for the world we have lost. In this process, we all stand in need of help, but instead, we tend to set off one another's defensive reactions with our differing interpretations of reality.

Against such an appreciation of our current dilemma, I have asked myself how managers and consultants can aid organizations in achieving a new, positive, energy-releasing worldview. As I have struggled with this question, I have come to understand more deeply my intuitive distrust of old-style charismatic leadership in this period. If the model I have outlined is correct and if most people have not yet accepted the changes that are in process, then they are in a state

of denial or anger. That suggest a reason why great charismatic leaders are so notably lacking in our world: the new paradigm has not yet acquired enough vigor to be led.

If not charismatic leadership, then what? I have come to the ideas presented here too recently to have a program to propose for transforming organizations. What I am clear about is that the changes in consciousness that are required cannot be forced. The seeds of those changes are in all of us. We each need to experience conditions that support the growth of those seeds. One way to create those conditions is through discussion with others, discussion which goes beyond our day-to-day work and deals with our deeper hopes and fears for our work, our organizations, and our connections with others. I believe that in small discussion groups we can experience that combination of mutual support and gentle confrontation that we need in order to change. We need to be reminded that reality is changing, and we need to be understood and accepted in our struggles to come to terms with that change. I know that the properly managed small group can provide that balance of conditions, nudging people to change through exposure to different views of reality while creating a climate of mutual support that transcends differences of belief and opinion. (We all know that groups can be destructive, tyrannical, and intolerant as well, but we have learned a lot in the last three or four decades about how to create conditions for more positive outcomes.)

Concretely, what I would propose to those business leaders who wish to explore the relevance of New Age thinking to their work is that they meet regularly with a few others they trust and respect to share their concerns and thinking. Explore the issues outlined in this paper. Spend enough time at it that you can share your deeper hopes and fears. Open your hearts to one another a little at a time, as you test the others' willingness to accept you as you are. Here are some questions you might address:

- Can we see the daimonic at work in our organization? How does it express itself? If it is suppressed, what are the effects?
- Where do we see love at work in the organization? What stops us from talking about it? Does it matter?
- What does the idea of stewardship mean to us? What kind of leadership does our business need? What kind would we follow ourselves?
- Can we change reality with thought? What is the role of intention in bringing about the results we achieve? Do we visualize our desired results? What would happen if we visualized as a group?
- Do we use intuition to make decisions? For what kinds of decisions? How can reason and intuition work together?
- What kinds of future events do we ignore in our planning? What would happen if we allowed for them?
- What is our organization's purpose? What is its driving thrust, its distinctive competences, its values? How do these relate to our own purposes and values?
- Of what large purposive systems is our organization a part? How, if at all, does our organization's purpose become attuned to the larger system's purposes? If the planet had a purpose, how would our organization relate to it? How would we know?
- Does a focus on goal achievement block learning in our organization? How, and how well, does our organization learn?
- What messages do we receive from different parts of our environment? Are there some parts whose messages we consistently ignore? What would happen if we listened to them?

- With respect to goals, are we for the most part *pushed* by events or *pulled* by our vision of a desirable future outcome? Does it make a difference in the stress we experience in work?
- What is the relationship between our stated strategy and what we do? If our strategy does not determine our actions, what does?
- As an organization, can we identify a "willed future"? How does it focus our efforts? If we do not have one, would it make a difference if we did?
- What losses do we fear in the future? How do we deal with that fear? How do we react to people who have different fears? How can we help each other with our fears?

Lastly, if the discussion of these issues in a small group of your peers has been a useful and productive experience, how might you offer such an experience to others in your organization? Is it possible that given the opportunity to open our hearts and minds to one another, we shall discover that we know our way home?

