

*The Practice
of
Peace*

Harrison Owen

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A Note on This Publication

The publication of this book is the result of a collaborative, global effort undertaken by that remarkable community of people which has formed around the use and practice of Open Space Technology. The book was written by Harrison Owen, who remains solely responsible for the content – good, bad, or indifferent. Joelle Everette volunteered her time and skills for the tedious process of text editing, thereby fixing the multiple egregious errors of punctuation and spelling perpetrated by the author. Such errors as may remain must be attributed to Harrison who keyed in her corrections.

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The Practice of Peace is in fact a work-in-progress. Subsequent editions may contain new material.

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Preface

On September 11, 2001, our world changed yet again. Four airplanes took off for routine flights on a cloudless morning, filled with passengers expecting nothing more than a continuation of their lives as they had come to know them. Business to be done, families to raise, friends to see.

Sitting among these passengers were a group of young men with very different expectations. They knew they were going to die, and had every hope that their deaths would occasion the righting of wrongs they perceived to be egregious.

Within an hour of take off, all four flights ended in a fiery cataclysm that caused thousands more to die, and the whole world held its breath. For a moment out of time, millions of people, in every corner of the planet, found themselves locked in a common space as the television monitors displayed pictures of rising plumes of black smoke darkening the cloudless blue skies of New York and Washington.

When breath returned, the commonality of the moment shattered. With the next breath many gave voice to anger, anguish and pain. And many others gave voice to shouts of victory and joy. The lethal divisions of our world became startlingly clear in an instant.

In truth, the world had not really changed. The hungry still needed food, and the well to do continued their diets. People made love, children were born, business was done – and the sun and the moon marked the passage of days as they had before that moment out of time. However, our perceptions had changed, and in this case, perception *is* reality. But what, exactly, is this new perception – and what is the reality created? I, along with everybody else, pondered these questions, not in some abstracted, academic fashion, but with the raw existential tumult that occurs when all the pieces of your life are thrown in the air, and come down in massive confusion.

I had recently passed my 65th year, having known a rich, full life of shared experience with thousands of people around the planet. Villagers in West Africa, the dispossessed of American cities, sugar workers in Latin America, corporate executives in the US and Europe, government officials of all sorts, and just plain folks, all had contributed to the rich tapestry that my life became. If I had a driving passion, it was to think about, write about, and work with phenomenon of transformation in our common lives. Along the way, I was privileged to stumble upon a funny way to hold meetings, which has

traveled under the name of Open Space Technology. And suddenly all of that was caught up in the whirlwind of the instant.

The details of my personal odyssey are of no moment, but in January of 2002, I found myself in Israel, and more specifically on the rooftop terrace of a friend's apartment near Tel Aviv. I had come to that troubled part of the world to share whatever it is that I knew that might be of assistance. The news reports were filled with bombings and death, but the evening was silent and clear. A gentle breeze caressed my cheeks, and I found myself caught between the serenity of the moment and the hellish despair which pervaded the land. Somehow, in the open space between serenity and despair, words formed on my lips. It is all about *The Practice of Peace*, I said to the night.

In the moment, as is usually true at such moments, clarity of insight was possible only because of the lack of details. Subsequently, details have emerged, and pieces begun to fit. In what follows, I would like to share the results.

Harrison Owen
Camden, Maine
September 2002

Chapter I

Peace, and The Practice of Peace

Peace. It is a wonderful word in just about any language. And strangely, it seems to be most commonly used in that part of the world where there is no Peace, by whatever definition. In the Middle East, virtually all parties greet each other with "Peace." *Shalom* in Hebrew and *Salaam* in Arabic. At time of meeting and again at departure, both Jew and Muslim invoke Peace. And they are not alone in the practice. Christians know The Kiss of Peace, and politicians run on Platforms of Peace. And people everywhere have gone to war in search of Peace.

Obviously the word, and what it connotes, has great importance in our lives, but its meaning, at least in common usage, is more than a little elusive. It is possible to understand the universal Semitic practice as more in the nature of a hope or prayer than a confirmation of present reality, but the meaning of the word remains a will-of-the-wisp. Like the word *Love*, the meaning of which stretches all the way from raw fornication up to and including "the essence of divinity," so also Peace seems patient of a multitude of interpretations.

For many of us Peace is defined by the absence of its opposites, such as chaos, confusion and conflict. Absent any, or all, of these and we have Peace, and the way to Peace would obviously be the elimination of this unholy trinity. But what sort of Peace would we have? Unfortunately, I think the answer would be, pretty boring and quite dead. Peace under these terms would amount to some static, frozen, idealized state. In the hot moments of living, we might look at such a state with envy, but as a long term reality, we may just have thrown the baby out with the bath water. In the name of preserving life, we have removed precisely the elements that make life possible.

The temptation to desire a life devoid of chaos, confusion and conflict is quite understandable, if only because all three produce circumstances that are decidedly uncomfortable. Given any reasonable choice, who would want such a life? Unfortunately, I

suspect all three come with the territory, and are not to be considered under the heading of unnecessary nuisances. For the truth of the matter is that chaos, confusion and conflict are integral to the process of living, and each brings its own special gifts, without which life, in the fullest sense of the word, is scarcely worth living. Heresy, I am sure, but let us look more closely, starting with the “biggie” – *Chaos*.

Chaos

From ancient times to the modern day, Chaos has definitely been “off the list” in polite society. And for good reason, Chaos makes a mess. Chaos comes in an infinite variety of sizes and packages, but all share a common trait. They do violence to the established order. Rather like a skunk at a garden party, or a bull in a china shop – when chaos raises its head, the old order stands in jeopardy, or worse.

Human beings, as indeed most of the critters in nature, become very attached to that old order, which provides the shape and structure of our lives, gives us meaning, and allows for the orderly planning of our futures. Should the agent of chaos be a rampaging river, our response is to raise the levies and protect our towns. Change “river” to “volcano” and the response is rather the same, but usually much less effective, for molten lava usually runs its own way.

Contemporary corporations are no less adverse to the appearance of chaos, and when one implodes due to competitive pressures, change in consumer interests, or because of internal corruption and greed, the response is not unlike ants when their hills are under attack. At first they scatter and run, but soon they may be found attacking the invaders and rebuilding the ruins.

No news here. Chaos is not a welcome guest, now or ever. But it may be important to notice two components of the chaos laden situation for human beings: outrage and control. Indeed these two go together, for the basis of the outrage is often the loss of control. Somewhere along the line we humanoids developed the notion that we are supposed to be in charge, and when things go contrary to our expectations, we are not pleased. I grant that this idea seems to have some validity, if only because our dominant position is carefully written into some of our oldest and most revered sacred texts. For example, in the book of Genesis in the Old Testament

(for Christians) or Torah (for Jews), it is specified by God, no less, that Mankind shall have dominion over the earth and all her creatures. Definitely in charge, or so it might seem.

I leave the detailed exegesis of this text to the experts, but I would point out that this idea of being in charge has its limitations, not the least of which is that it never quite seems to happen. Despite our best efforts, some river rampages, some volcano explodes, our business goes kaput, and the ants invade our picnic. If we are supposed to be in charge, something is definitely wrong.

Part of what's "wrong," I think, is our inability to comprehend the enormous complexity of the cosmos in which we reside, albeit in a very small and insignificant corner. Being in control, or in charge, requires that you have some idea of what's actually happening, "get a number on it," so to speak. True we are gaining some knowledge, and perhaps even have a general idea of the forces at work and the elements at play. But it seems that more we know the more we discover our ignorance, and when it comes to turning knowledge into power, we are definitely playing catchup ball. After all we can't even accurately predict the weather on this silly little piece of solar driftwood we call home – let alone control it. But someday. . .

And then we come to the matter of outrage. Somehow it seems that the universe is not treating us correctly. When a river takes out a town, a hurricane batters the East Coast of the United States, a typhoon swamps a Pacific isle – or our business goes bump, something inside us demands that the Ruler of the Universe take counsel with us, for clearly there has to be a better way.

But it could be that the way chosen has not done at all badly. After all, with the passage of typhoons and hurricanes rock crumbles into fine sand – without which it would not be possible to have a nice day at the beach. And the passage of our favorite business typically opens up space in the competitive environment for new business and new ideas. Painful for us to be sure, but not all that bad for the consumer and the world at large. There seems to be a rhythm here. You have to plow before you can sow and reap. Breathe out before breathing in.

Chaos appears in multiple forms. It is always painful if you happen to be caught in the path, but for all that pain there appears to be a purpose – opening space in the old order so that the new may appear. It might just be that this life we hold so dear is less about the established forms, and existing order, than the journey itself. In which case the chaos we experience is by no means just a painful incidental, but rather an essential component, for the journey would clearly

cease without open space in which to move forward. And when it comes to our notion of Peace, I would suggest that Peace without chaos would be no Peace at all.

Confusion

Confusion is the intellectual equivalent of chaos. Just when you thought you had it all figured out, the path straight, the map set, suddenly the world changed, and somehow it did not match what you were planning on. Surprise, and definitely not a nice one, particularly for those of us who take pride in our rational capacities, our ability to look the future dead in the eye and come up with a winner.

Plan makers everywhere fall prey. The general whose carefully crafted battle plan gets lost in the mists of war. The CEO, whose business Plan looked great on paper and in all the Power Point presentations, suddenly discovers that the yen has fallen through the basement and “The Plan” was directed towards the Japanese market. And the dissolution of nice plans is not an experience limited only to business folks and generals. Lovers have the same dilemma. That great life plan which included graduate school, building the business reputation, creating a little capitol for investment – all go out the window when “she” appears and whisks you off to Bali. In all cases, it’s confusion.

The consequences of confusion can be real and painful, but the major pain, I think, is to the ego. We really thought we had it pegged – but we didn’t. Our problem, it turns out, is that we had forgotten Korzybski’s¹ famous dictum, “The map is not the territory.” To be sure, maps are useful, but never to be confused with the land they depict, even as menus are not the meal, nor is the book the experience.

The cloud of confusion, however, holds a silver lining. For as the faulty maps of our of our fertile minds are dissolved in the acids of experience (life), we find the page wiped clean so that we can begin again. If we are wise, we will remember the lessons of our confusion, even as the good general recognizes that The battle plan goes out the window when the first bullet is

¹ Korzybski, Alfred, *Science and Sanity* (Fifth Edition) Institute of General Semantics, 1994

fired, but the activity of planning is still a valid one. Its validity, however does not come from the plan's capacity to create the future, for the future almost inevitably has a mind of its own. But the plan is a great place to start, and a wonderful checklist of things to notice along the way.

In a word, confusion clears the mind of all we thought we knew, or suspected, so that we can truly appreciate what actually transpires. Without confusion we would be condemned to live in a world of old maps and outdated plans which quickly become dogmatic pronouncements. And the dead weight of dogma is something a vital mind can live without. If wisdom begins with an acknowledgment of our limitations, confusion may be an essential first step.

Conflict

If ever there was a true opposite of Peace, conflict would appear the natural culprit. Even Conflict, however, has its positive side. The presence of conflict in the human community means quite simply that people care. Show me any organization or situation where there is no conflict, and I will show you one where nobody cares. And without caring, some real passion, the long term vitality of that organization is in jeopardy. Conflict only becomes a problem when people run out of space.

The appearance of conflict in our lives indicates the hot points of growth. In the realm of ideas, philosophies and paradigms, to which might also be added social systems and technologies, conflict not only indicates the points of growth, but is also essential for the growth process.

Thomas Kuhn, in his seminal work, *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*,² describes the progress of science in terms that many at the time, and still, find quite uncomfortable. In the place of the nice, neat, linear, rational rolling out of scientific discovery described in many high school and college classrooms, he relates a tale filled with explosive jumps and massive conflicts which not only characterize the process, but are seemingly essential to its progress. As paradigm succeeds paradigm the process is characterized by discomfort at the beginning (things just don't

²Kuhn, Thomas, *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, 1962

seem to fit anymore, and confusion abounds) and culminating, more often than not, in massive confrontation, as an older view of the established order gives way to a newer, and usually more adequate, one. Along the way, the presence of conflict gives rise to a clarification of vision as differences are perceived, formulations rationalized, and new data considered. At the end, a new paradigm emerges, a new map of our world. And then the process begins again, for it remains true that the map is not the territory.

The world of scientific inquiry may seem abstract, and far removed, from the everyday world of our common experience, particularly as we witness the bloody consequence of conflict in the hot spots of The Middle East and elsewhere. But it is probably worthwhile noting that even in the temple of science things can become very heated, and sometimes result in disastrous consequences, as Galileo discovered in his struggles to articulate his new map of the cosmos. It would be very nice, of course, if such disastrous consequences could be avoided, but not through the elimination of conflict through which ideas are sharpened and clear positions formed – until the next time. It turns out that physicists and astronomers are passionate too. They care deeply about what they do. Absent the passion, and we would probably still be living on a flat earth. When two passions collide there you have conflict, but you also have the intellectual heat and desire that transmutes half formed ideas, clouded in confusion, into blinding new insights. The problem, I suggest, is not the conflict, but rather that there is insufficient space to work things out. Destructive conflict occurs when you run out of room – physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually. And the answer would seem to be – open more space.

The applicability of Kuhn's insights to the broader world of human affairs is amply demonstrated by the rapidity with which his notion of paradigm and paradigm shift have found a place in the thinking and vocabularies of those in business, government, non-profits, and the whole broad range of human institutions. As a testimony to the pervasive impact of his thinking it appears that many folks have forgotten (if they ever knew) that it was Thomas Kuhn who started the whole thing rolling. No discussion of organizational change seems to move very far without the magic word *paradigm* putting in an appearance. It is interesting to notice, however what is typically *not* a part of such discussions: conflict and its potential consequences.

As Kuhn's thinking has moved into the public domain, it has seemingly become domesticated and sanitized. Shifting paradigms becomes a matter of rational choice, or executive

dictate – as in “We will have new paradigm thinking.” Or, “Our business will operate according to the new paradigm.” Doubtless there are elements of rational choice and decision making in the shifting of paradigms, but that, I think, is just the tip of the iceberg. In truth, people care deeply, and have great passion for their old paradigm. No matter how attractive a new paradigm may sound, at the end of the day, it is not me. The passage from old to new will only be negotiated with chaos, confusion and conflict. It all comes with the territory, no matter how many consultants offer Programs for Painless Paradigm Progress. And there is even a more bitter pill to swallow. There is an end to the old paradigm. It dies. In rather dry tones, Kuhn says as much.

“But if new theories are called forth to resolve anomalies in the relation of an existing theory to nature, then the successful new theory must somewhere permit predictions that are different from those derived from its predecessor. *That difference could not occur if the two were logically compatible. In the process of being assimilated, the second must displace the first.* (Italics mine)”³

The ending of anything, be it a theory, a paradigm, a way of life, or life itself does not take place without trauma, and even on a good day, trauma is not something that most people look forward to. And yet the old dictum holds its truth: *In life only death and taxes are inevitable.* Actually, taxes may be avoided, which leaves death as the inevitability of life.

Not wishing to dwell on the macabre note of ending and death, I think it important to point out that even as chaos, confusion, and conflict must have a place in our understanding of Peace which may be painful, but also positively contributory, so also ending and death. Peace on earth which does not include, and also transcend, all of these apparent negatives is bound to be a

³ Kuhn, Thomas, *op cit* pg 97

very shaky Peace. And a Practice of Peace which does not effectively deal with these realities is, at best, naive.

Peace

How shall we understand Peace in ways that allow the inclusion and transcendence of the harsher realities of our lives? Peace without chaos, confusion and conflict is no Peace, not because we would not prefer it that way, but because each member of this unholy trinity makes a positive contribution to the process of living. Equally, Peace without ending and death is productive of an idealized, static life, stuck in its ways – precluding the possibility of any sort of evolution.

Had the Ruler of the Universe taken our council at the start, perhaps we could have suggested a better way. Indeed it seems that He or She almost had it right in those halcyon days of The Garden of Eden (or whatever primal/primitive vision of our initial utopia). But then something happened. Some folks will see the departure from that happy place as the beginning of the end, and the source of all our problems. Personally, I see it as the end of the beginning, the starting place of the incredible human journey. In a word, we were kicked out of the nest and forced to fly. Like young eagles, we have been screaming ever since, and for sure our initial wing beats were frantic, verging on comical. But we have learned. Not without a multitude of rough landings, ill advised take-offs – to say nothing of more than a few “crash and burns,” but we now know something of the joys of flight. For those who desire a return to that idyllic state, I say lots of luck. And when the going genuinely gets tough in this thing we call life, I can certainly see their point. But at the end of the day, and indeed on most days, I choose to celebrate the rich heritage of *Homo sapiens*, crash landings and all. The flight of the human spirit is, for me, truly awesome. But you do have to leave the nest, and that departure has its consequences.

As for Peace – I like the metaphor of flying – all of flying, including first flights, last flights, and bumps along the way. Peace then is a process, not a thing, a journey and not a destination. It is flow and not a state. *Peace is the dynamic interrelationship of complex forces productive of wholeness, health and harmony. The Practice of Peace is the intentional creation of the requisite conditions under which Peace may occur.* Peace, as far as I am concerned, is

infinitely more than the cessation of hostilities, which often takes the form of bombing the offending parties into submission until they can no longer fight back, or each other. And Peacemaking neither starts nor ends at the negotiating table, for the objective is not just a set of treaty terms acceptable to all parties, but rather the renewal of meaningful and productive life for the planet, the nation, businesses, social institutions, the family, and each one of us.

Please do not expect a radical, new approach. In fact, I believe each and every one of us already has both the knowledge and skills necessary, and the fundamental mechanism is essentially “hardwired” into our being. We have only to remember what we know, and practice what we are. I concede that the apparent simplicity of these affirmations verges on the naive. It may also be true that a blinding flash of the obvious may be good for the soul.

The core mechanism referred to above is the phenomenon of self-organization, and the core practice is what we now call Open Space Technology. I will suggest that self-organization drives towards Peace and, when freely operative, is generative of *the dynamic interrelationship of complex forces productive of wholeness, health and harmony*. Open Space Technology (OST) is an extraordinarily simple approach which enables groups of people, large and small, to engage complex, chaotic, confusing and conflicted issues in a Peaceful fashion. Further descriptions of the approach, and its various applications are presented in the following material (see especially page 51 ff), and for a complete account, please consult my book, *Open Space Technology*.⁴

First utilized in 1985, Open Space Technology has now been applied thousands of times, all over the world, with virtually every imaginable sort of group. It’s effectiveness as a tool for meetings is a matter of record, but many continue to find it strange, if not shocking. The reason is not hard to ascertain, for Open Space apparently violates essentially all theory and practice of group organization. The notion that large groups of conflicted people could virtually instantaneously organize their affairs and pursue their tasks without elaborate pre-planning and a host of facilitators flies in the face of what appears to be the accepted wisdom. And yet the global experience demonstrates that every time a group of people gather of their own free will, around an issue of strong common concern, the experience is repeated – provided they sit in a circle, create a bulletin board on which to identify issues, open a market place to arrange time

⁴ *Open Space Technology: A User’s Guide*, Berrett-Koehler, 1997

and place particulars – and they are on their way, typically in something more than an hour. From the point of view of what I might call “standard” theory and practice, what happens not only should not happen, but could not happen. But it does. However, when viewed from what we are now learning about the power and function of self-organizing systems, the unbelievable becomes the predictable.

In truth, I find the Open Space experience much more interesting as an ongoing natural experiment in which we can both experience the reality of self-organization and learn to support and enhance that experience. The phenomenon of self organization is a relatively recent discovery, and not an altogether comfortable one for those who have understood that order in our lives can only be the product of humongous effort. Recently, we have been learning that, given certain very simple preconditions, order just happens. We will be taking a look at some of these new learnings in Chapter IV.

From where I sit, Open Space does not contribute anything new, but rather helps us to see what is already quite functional in our midst as a naturally occurring phenomenon. But just because it occurs naturally does not mean that we can’t learn to use it, and learn to use it well, even as the natural occurrence of gravity can be used to our advantage. To the extent that self-organization in general, and Open Space Technology in particular, is productive of Peace, this is an experiment we must run. I hope that you will take everything I have to say as a testable hypothesis, which of course is a critical part of any experiment. Don’t believe a thing, and certainly not on my say so. Do it – and if the experimental results are replicated, do it again and do it better. It could just be that Peace will break out.

Two Stories to Set the Stage

In the early ‘90s, I happened to be in South Africa a few weeks after Nelson Mandela was released from prison. For the vast majority of the population this release was an occasion for celebration and joy, others were not so sure, and everybody felt the deep anxiety characteristic of the onset of massive social change. With the approaching end of Apartheid, a dark period of the human story was seemingly coming to a close, but how it was going to play out remained a total mystery. Some saw only bloodshed and disaster. Others envisioned the dawning of a new golden

age. And somewhere in the middle, reality would set its marker. For all of the uncertainty, one thing was crystalline clear – people needed to talk to each other, quickly and very deeply.

In Capetown, where I happened to be, the situation was nervous, to say the least, made all the more so by virtue of the fact that Mandela's island prison, lay just off the coast. My hostess, Valerie Morris and her associates managed a hotel, and when they had sensed the moment, they immediately volunteered their facility as the site of potential conversation. Who, what and how remained to be determined.

Their decision was made on a Sunday, and by the following Wednesday a hundred or so people had agreed to show up several days later. And it was quite a group ranging from the mayor of Capetown to young residents from the local township (Black area), with others coming from all over the local society including the ANC and Afrikaners. They all shared a common concern for their country, but most did not know each other, and certainly had had little occasion for intimate conversation up to that present moment.

We met in Open Space. One hundred people sitting in a circle were invited to identify their passions and concerns for the future, announce them on sheets of paper, and take personal responsibility for their discussion. Within 20 minutes from start, multiple issues were posted on the wall, and one hour later discussions were under way. The issues were not the easy ones. Land reform, reparations, education, housing, employment – all made a showing. But the last one posted said it all. A young man from the township said, "I have one issue. Fear. My fear and our fear. And how do we get through it all."

And it started. For 8 hours the discussion groups ebbed and flowed. Sometimes in anger, sometimes in silence, and occasionally with laughter. By the end of the day, we stood silently in a circle, and then shared with each other what the experience had meant. There was anger, fear, hope, despair – and at the end silence, broken by a single voice saying, "I think we are the new South Africa, and we have a lot of work to do."

Final Peace did not arrive that day in Capetown. But in a very powerful sense, Peace was already there. Amidst that chaos, confusion and conflict, there was also a sense of connectedness, and people sang the songs of their homeland in the tongues of their birth. It is noteworthy that the whole enterprise was created in four days. There was one facilitator who spoke only briefly

at the beginning, and never intervened in any way with any of the groups. The people did it all by themselves.

A Different Tale – USWEST

From a very different world, and slightly later in time (mid '90s) comes this story of USWEST (now known as Quest), an American local phone company which found itself in some degree of difficulty. The sources of its difficulties were multiple, including the fact that a massive “Process Re-engineering” project had failed to take into account a major shift in their market. After several years of effort, costing many millions and involving massive amounts of executive time, the new organizational design was revealed. Unfortunately, there had been an unforeseen event – major earthquakes in California, This caused many nervous Californians to seek alternative habitation, which they did in such places as Washington State, Oregon, and the American Southwest – all of which constituted the service area of USWEST.

The net effect was that projections for customer growth were off by wide margins, and the demand upon the system was almost more than it could tolerate. Installations of new phone lines, even emergency ones, could take as long as six months. Added into the muddle was the fact that a major part of the “re-design” included a substantial reduction of the work force – downsizing, as it was known. The net effect was a most unhappy situation, made even worse in the State of Arizona by the occurrence of a major flood. As most people know, floods are not supposed to happen in the desert, and when they do, the damage can be severe, particularly if you happen to be a phone company.

For the 5000 employees of USWEST in Arizona, “unhappy” was too mild a term. Angry, frustrated, confused would come a lot closer to their reality – to the point that the union let it be known that unless there were some serious conversation with management, prior to the beginning of contract talks, it was their stated intention to “have the company for lunch,” as one Union representative explained it to me. The union suggested Open Space as the means.

Barely 6 weeks after the union suggestion, 160 representative of the company, including the full management team and people from all the skills, trades and geographical areas in the company found themselves sitting in a circle at 9 a.m. There had been no warm-up, no training,

no agenda building, no caucuses. There was only a focusing issue, stated as “How do we fix Arizona?” And nobody had any question that it was broke. There were obvious questions, however, as to whether anybody could be civil enough, or even wanted to be civil enough, to work together for a resolution. Looking at the surrounding faces, it was apparent that most people could not figure out whether they were attending a funeral for the company or the opening rounds of civil war. Peaceful it was not.

Following a brief 15 minute introduction, the assembled body answered the invitation to identify the issues and opportunities for fixing Arizona with a curious enthusiasm. Within 45 minutes, 60-70 issues had been posted on a large blank wall, people had signed up to participate in the multiple discussions, and it was off to work.

The first day was intense, to say the least. Discussion raged, people came and went, and as one participant said – there was an incredible amount of anger and bitching. But it all held together, and on the second day the same participant said, “I think we are finding solutions for what we were bitching about yesterday.”

By the morning of the third day, it was quite a different world. Issues were prioritized, actions identified, and people accepted responsibility for carrying them out. But that was just the business side of things. Perhaps more significant was the atmosphere of the final gathering. One more time 160 people sat in a circle, but this time they were thanking each other for the opportunity to work together, and for the steps that were being taken. A final participant rose to address the group, a large union guy with tears running down his cheeks. He said something like, “As some of you know, I have had some trouble with my family. But I just want you all to know that I have found my family, and it is you.”

When a group traverses the treacherous ground from incipient civil war to addressing each other as members of a family, it is clear that a profound shift has taken place. It was also clear that massive amounts of chaos, confusion, and conflict remained to be dealt with, but the assembled folks had demonstrated, most importantly to themselves, that they were up for the task. Indeed, they had already been doing it. And they did it essentially all by themselves.

A Starting Point

It might appear from the two stories told above that Open Space Technology represents the magic bullet for Peace. That would be a profound error. It is only a start. The true power lies with the incredible capacity of self-organizing systems to create Peace for themselves and with their environment. Not all the time, not always perfectly, and not without continuing problems, but Peace, none the less. This power is owned by no one, and is available to everyone. We have only to use it.

Unpacking all of this, and making it quite practical, is our task for the balance of this book. There is little need for yet another theoretical discourse on the nature of Peace, even less for impassioned exhortation. Theory is useful, and the temptation for exhortation understandable, but given the state of our world, practical application is essential. The manifestation of Peace in our personal lives, with our neighbors on this shrinking planet, and with the planet itself, is the first order of business, indeed it may be the only business – unless, of course, we choose to go out of business.

Chapter II

A Piecemeal Approach to Peace

One needs scarcely more than a quick glance at the morning newspaper to see that there is indeed trouble in River City, to say nothing of Planet Earth. Leaving aside the normal, and usually productive, doses of chaos, confusion and conflict, it is apparent that the forces at play go much deeper. The overt manifestations of the pathology in our midst come in multiple forms, all of which might be summarized by two generalities: Organizational Dysfunction and Soul Pollution.

Organizational dysfunction is a bland short hand for the apparent fact that many, perhaps most, of our organizations and institutions are no longer capable of doing what they were designed to do. Nation states flounder as they seek to address the internal issues of their citizens, while simultaneously engaging the challenges posed by their neighbors in the family of nations, to say nothing of the deteriorating conditions of our natural environment. We have a new term for the wounded and dead – a Failed State, a condition which seems pandemic in Africa and the Middle East, epidemic in Latin America, and showing first symptoms in the Far East. Only the United States and Europe seem in marginally good health, and we aren't too sure about them.

The litany of disturbance and dissolution by no means stops with the largest of our institutions. Corporations and small businesses, city governments and town halls, social service organizations and philanthropic foundations, and last but not least, that smallest of organizations – the family, all seem to be in an increasing state of disrepair. Assembling and validating the necessary data to prove these assertions would be a monumental task with little to be gained, for although it is doubtless true that some organizations are doing better than others, it is quite clear that a significant number of people *think* something is profoundly wrong. And in this case, I would argue that perception is reality.

Just to make matters worse, the personal cost for each one of us individually is going up exponentially. I call it Soul Pollution. Early indications appear in our vague malaise when we face a new day. Not necessarily bad – but certainly not what we could call great. The source of our discomfort is unclear, and usually ascribed to the great, amorphous *they*. They did that, they did this – but truthfully nobody ever saw *they*. Whatever else might be happening, not too much of it relates to that soaring feeling when our spirits just fly. The old lament, “How can I soar with eagles when I have to live with such turkeys?” seems more appropriate. The terminal stages of Soul Pollution show up with the arrival of paralyzing stress and the abuse of just about everything in sight, including substances, spouses and fellow workers. Not a happy situation.

The “Fixes”

As each new set of problems appear, new fixes are created. For economic downturn we create stimulus packages, and when it appears that behind the downturn lies an uneducated work force, we initiate education development programs. Should it turn out that the workers can’t learn because they are hungry or diseased, the fix is determined to be nutrition and health programs. Each of these several programs were well intentioned at the start, and possibly quite effective in terms of their primary objectives – but as they proceeded on their separate ways it appeared that the unintended consequences are often more disturbing than the initial problems.

The strategy employed is an ancient and honorable one. Consider the area of discord, identify the constituent problems, break them down into manageable units (typically small), and create fixes appropriate to the problem. There is an obvious logic, even elegance to the approach, which we might call *Peacemaking in pieces*. Or less elegantly, eat the elephant one bite at a time. Unfortunately life turns out to be more complicated and interrelated than we thought, but it was certainly worth a try, and we tried over, and over again.

In the middle ‘60s as Peace Corps staff in Liberia, West Africa, I and many others became aware of a real problem. Liberian children showed the unmistakable signs of malnourishment (swollen bellies and red hair), for which the cure appeared to be more food. And so, thanks to the infusion of American and international aid, large amounts of rice were imported and distributed. The children seemed to do somewhat better, but the imported (subsidized) rice

had the unintended effect of lowering the price of rice in the market place and thereby making the local rice product non-competitive. This of course had a disastrous impact on the pocket books of the local farmers. But all was not lost. It seemed that the local farmers depended largely on so called “Upland Rice,” which was planted on the hillsides. Upland rice is very tasty, but compared to Swamp Rice, very unproductive by a factor of 3-4. The solution was glaringly obvious: plant Swamp Rice. And the good news was that major portions of Liberia are essentially one big swamp – receiving something like 200 inches of rain each year. And so, at large expense, the Swamp Rice Project was begun.

After almost 10 years, the demonstration plots looked as beautiful as always, and their productivity was as anticipated, 3-4 times that of Upland Rice. However, the rate of adoption (old style farmers switching to new style rice) remained basically zero. What happened?

A small group of anthropologists took the bold step of talking to the farmers. It turned out that the local folks were well aware of the increases in productivity possible with Swamp Rice, however the mythology and lore of the area held that swamps were the home of some very nasty spirits – and who would want to go there? The swamps were also home to a beastly bug which causes Schistosomiasis, a terribly unpleasant and lethal disease. Adding insult to injury, the whole village life cycle was keyed to the cultivation of Upland Rice which extended over the course of a year. Festivals and celebrations took place as the annual cycle of preparation of the fields, planting, cultivation and harvesting occurred. Swamp Rice, on the other hand had three, possibly four crops a year, which threw everything out of kilter.

The net effect of massive effort and funding was that nothing changed, or more accurately, a lot of things did change, making the situation in many ways worse than it was to begin with. Say what you will about the village agricultural system, based on Upland Rice, it worked, and did so for millennia. For sure there were problems and shortages, but Upland Rice had one major advantage over the centralized, capital driven system of imported rice, which had replaced it. It was decentralized and close to the folks that used it. Neither money nor roads were required which was fortunate, as both were in short supply.

The point of this tale is not to celebrate the good old days, nor to idealize some romanticized notion of past tribal life. The lesson I perceive here is of the mind-boggling complexity of an apparently simple problem-solution scenario. What started out as a good idea at

the time, to fix an obvious problem, dissolved into multiple new demons. One cannot draw a straight line from the failed Swamp Rice project to the current sad situation of the Failed State of Liberia. But there is no question that Liberia is a failed state, and I believe no small part of that failure may be traced to an inability, or unwillingness, to acknowledge the unbelievable complexity of a situation, and the bluntness of our tools. Add in massive doses of avarice and greed, and you have the perfect formula for failure, which we achieved.

Lessons Learned – a Whole Systems Approach

Almost 40 years have passed since I was in Liberia, and in the interim we have learned a few things. Barriers to Peace remain and, if anything, have increased in size. But their names continue largely unchanged. Hunger, ignorance, economic deprivation, social injustice and dysfunction, and many more. But it is now startlingly clear that none of these challenges to the tranquillity of the planet occur in isolation, they all have a context which insures that the whole is infinitely greater than the sum of the parts. That context, of course, is the social entity afflicted, and that entity does not come in packages labeled education, finance, social justice, economic development. The names are something like New York, Monrovia, Dar Es Salaam, Mogadishu and the like. Furthermore, all problem areas are interrelated so that the parts are infinitely more complex than they might appear at first sight. A “problem” which initially looked like an Education Problem turns out to be an education/economic/nutritional/social justice/. . . and so on through all possible combinations and permutations. It becomes clear that one cannot deal with a part without considering the whole, nor the whole without effectively dealing with the multiple interrelationships of the parts. Mind bending, but there seems to be a way forward.

Coming out of the world of Systems Theory, ably articulated by the likes of Peter Senge⁵ the notion is a simple one. Parts only make sense in the context of the system of which they are a constituent element. And to understand what is going on in any significant area of human activity (as indeed all the rest of the cosmos) you have to think systemically. Senge’s work was directed initially at the world of business and commerce, where he is probably best known as the

⁵ Senge, Peter, *The Fifth Discipline*, Doubleday/Currency, 1990

originator of the Learning Organization, but the impact of Systems Thinking has been felt in virtually all areas of activity where the intent was to consider and enhance the complex machinations of the human community.

In the international development community (where a primary concern is, hopefully, Peacemaking) systems thinking shows up as Multi-Factorial Development. Thus when one is working in one of the hot spots of the world such as The Balkans, or the Middle East, it is understood from the start that educational interventions (for example) alone will have only limited effect unless combined with the whole broad range of developmental activities such as economic, infrastructure (roads and such), legal systems, public administration, and many more. Positively an elegant idea, but the passage from concept to successful implementation is blocked by extraordinary obstacles.

On a recent journey to Serbia, whose tribulations and needs appear almost unending, I had the privilege of working with a large international development program which was definitely in the multi-factorial mode. Funded primarily by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the program had multiple elements all designed to work together in what might be described as *a full court press*⁶ on the problems of that country. From economics to education with many pieces in between, the multi-factorial list had been checked off, and the pertinent programs put on the ground. A voluminous program plan minutely outlined the steps and relationships to be effected, all presented with mind boggling, complex detail. It looked marvelous on paper.

Since the overall program has only recently begun, any judgement regarding final impact is definitely premature. But the early signs were hardly encouraging. Although the people involved seemed very expert in their several areas, and the words “cross disciplinary conversation and collaboration” constantly sounded, at the end of the day, economists still seemed to think and act as economists, educators as educators, engineers as engineers and all of them thought like the expatriates they were. In short, it was not Serbian.

⁶ *Full Court Press* comes from the world of basket ball and refers to the strategy of attacking the opposing team from all sides (Full Court)

It is very easy to make such a critique, and my intent is not to disparage the concept, the energy and dedication of those involved, or the overall objectives. The concept is truly elegant, the people generally outstanding, and goodness knows the objectives, both in general and particular, are laudable. My issue quite simply is – can we get there from here going the way we are going? In a word, it is really possible to *think systemically* towards some useful conclusion? And having thought the thoughts, is it really possible to effectively weave the myriad elements into some coherent, new, social fabric bearing the requisite characteristics of Peace: wholeness, health, and harmony?

I would guess that the answer is yes, conceptually. However, execution to date has not been exactly outstanding, to the point that some senior officials in the United States government, including the President, George W. Bush, and the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr Neil, have come to the conclusion that the idea of Nation Building (development and Peacemaking on a truly grand scale) is off the agenda. I would disagree totally, but I can appreciate their position. For all of the billions of dollars expended since the end of World War II, the results have been disappointing, witness the current state of our world.

Others will suggest that given the stakes we are now facing, and no matter the experience to date, we simply have to keep trying. Perhaps someday we will get it right. I cannot disagree, but I would suggest that it might be well to take a look at our fundamental premises and explore the possibility of alternatives, or additions. *Putting it directly, is it really possible to think systemically and then rationally implement effective solutions, when the system we must think about is so horrendously complex as to boggle the mind, and the rate of change such that our best thoughts and efforts are rendered futile before the ink dries on the page, or the fingers leave the computer keyboard?*

We might imagine a day when our vaunted, and growing, capacity for digital wizardry increases to the extent that one might effectively model the whole system (Serbia, the Middle East, the total human community) in its totality and infinite detail, so that we actually see what is going on at all levels, from the whole enchilada down to the finest grain of rice. Then as conditions change, we could push that wonderful button, “Recalculate” and our cosmic Excel spread sheet gives us the new picture. And we would not be limited to historical data and present

experience, for we could also play grand “What if ?” games, postulating future occurrences and calculating possible results.

Advanced computer technology is definitely not my field, and as a lay person I can only hope that such a happy day will soon arrive, but until then (or even after) I confess to certain reservations. Based on my very limited knowledge, it appears to me that the computer(s) required may give new meaning to the words Super Computer, and just the data entry needs would keep a small army of technicians at work for a long period. None of this is bad or impossible, but applied on a global scale, I would imagine the costs in terms of time and funds to be staggering, and unfortunately, both time and money seem to be in very short supply in our current quest for Peace.

Deeper Reservations – Have we thought about the Whole System?

The systemic approach to development, and ultimately Peacemaking, is an obvious advance over some of our earlier efforts. The idea is definitely a good one, but I think there is real question as to whether or not we have gone far enough. Have we truly thought about the *whole system*?

Ken Wilber⁷, who is probably best known as a philosopher, psychologist, and mystic, argues, No. Indeed, he would suggest that we are playing with only half a deck of cards, thereby making the quality of our playing somewhat questionable. In very simple terms, Wilber proposes what appears to me a self-evident thought, but with some interesting implications. He says that for every “outside” there is an “interior, and there are “outsides” and “insides” for groups (the collective) and for individuals, hence what Wilber calls The Four Quadrant Systems Model. Thus when we look at any system and its components, we typically start with the externals – the so called hard realities such as dollars earned, students educated, buildings built, roads traveled, and the like. This is quite understandable, if only because such things are what we

⁷ Ken Wilber is a prolific writer, but for an introduction to his thought, particularly as it relates to the issues under discussion here, I recommend *A Brief History of Everything*, published by Shambala in 1996. The title is outrageous, but in large part, I think Wilber delivers.

can see and count. At some level, and for many people, if you can't "get a number on it" it doesn't quite exist. Starting with the externals is doubtless a good place to start, but it leaves the whole arena of internals unexamined. Internals would include such things as values and emotions. Thus knowing that there are X number of students in school tells you nothing about whether the education is "good," and what would *good* mean anyhow? Equally, you would know nothing about what the students felt about their learning – happy, sad, bored?

The examples given are oversimplified, and obviously much effort is devoted to "getting a number" on the interiors mentioned through questionnaires and focus groups. One might question how accurate such numbers might be, but that is really a different issue. However, I think Wilber's critique stands. The so called system thinkers appear much more comfortable with the hard "countables" than with what some would term the warm fuzzies, and to the extent this is true, they are playing with only half a deck when it comes to looking at the whole system.

The Evolution of Consciousness

The simplicities of Wilber's thinking quickly complexify when he adds the evolutionary dimension. We might avoid this complexity in our search for a Practice of Peace, save for the fact that I believe it presents our greatest challenge. More than the disparity of power and resources, or the presence, or absence, of relevant social and physical infrastructure, I believe disparities in our individual and collective consciousness represent the critical hurdle for the Peacemaker. Therefore I beg your forbearance as we take a brief sojourn into the arcane world of Consciousness. It is my intent only to say enough to make the pertinent points, which will inevitably mean that my treatment of this enormous body of thought and experience will be superficial in the extreme. For those who wish to go deeper, I leave a trail of footnotes.

Along with many world thinkers, Wilber sees not only internals and externals in all human systems, but also an evolutionary progress of the human adventure such that both internals and externals change, or change their meaning, at each step along the journey. For example, if we may assume that individuals and organizations that see themselves as belonging to a Nation State somehow represent an advance over those who understand the world, and their place therein, in tribal terms, it should then be expected that the nature and content of Education, along with the

meaning of The Good, The True, and The Beautiful might be quite different at each level of evolution.

The notion of some kind of hierarchy of consciousness, or awareness, has come in for rough treatment in recent times. Indeed it has become quite politically incorrect in some circles to even suggest that Tribal is somehow inferior to Nation State. It is pointed out that many aspects of tribal life have much to teach us in the modern world of the nation state. I myself made exactly this point in a short book on Liberian tribal life.⁸ That said, I think few would argue with the notion that tribal life, as we see it manifest in our world, or know it from the ancient artifacts and literature, has a few drawbacks we would just as soon do without. But our evolutionary progression (which I take to be real) is no justification for the rather idyllic notion of the 19th century Doctrine of Progress, which held that everything is just getting better and better. Obviously some things have gotten better, and equally some things have gotten worse. Take for example our knowledge of the atom's secrets – which has enabled great progress the practice of medicine, and also the total annihilation of the human species. Rather than a march of inevitable progress, our experience is much closer to the ancient understanding of light and shadow. The greater the light, the deeper the shadow. There are real gains and deeper possibilities for destruction.

There are innumerable, and sometimes enormously detailed versions of the evolution of consciousness. The model that Wilber presents through his All Quadrant work is an elegant piece of detailed scholarship, a wonder in itself, but perhaps more complex than we need at the moment in order to see the relevant points and move on to the practicalities of peacemaking. A sparser version is offered by Don Beck and Christopher Cowan under the banner of Spiral Dynamics,⁹ but it too has a level of detail I feel to be unneeded at the moment. For our purposes, I think we can do well with what might be termed the original version, which is traditionally known as *The Great Chain of Being*.

⁸ *When the Devil Dances*, Mara Books, 1970

⁹ *Spiral Dynamics : Mastering Values, Leadership, and Change (Developmental Management)* by Don Edward Beck, Christopher C. Cowan

Wilber himself uses this millennia old model in some of his earlier works¹⁰ and I will use his version. Traditionally there are understood to be seven levels to our increasing consciousness. The first level is “nothing,” as is the last. Since it is quite difficult to speak of “nothing” we are left with the remaining five, which are Body, Mind, Intellect, Soul, and Spirit. Very roughly these levels of consciousness may be described as follows.

We all start at the level of *Body*, and the extent of our awareness goes scarcely further than the tip of our nose. We might think of the newborn child, or small infant, for whom the world is its *corpus delicti*, and major concerns of the day include eating and the opposite. Of course, creature comforts, such as hugs and kisses are nice too. It might be noted that all of us start here, and there is nothing wrong, or bad, with that status, unless we never grow out of it, which most of us do.

Next stop is the level of *Mind*. Here we develop certain mental capacities, the major one being language, which enables us to engage a wider world in ways other than the purely physical. Words and realities coalesce so that we can perceive differences and identity. Thus “Mommy” takes some shape in our awareness as something special and unique. As our vocabulary grows so does our perception of the world, and at this stage our perception is our reality. All very good, and a definite improvement over life as Body, but not without limitations, especially when it comes to making critical assessments, and reasoning our way through life. Just think of a three year old with lots of new words and marginal judgement. Fortunately, there is more.

The fourth level of consciousness is *Intellect*, which might also be understood as the consciousness of consciousness. This is that point in our development when we find the capacity to think critically about our state and our future. This is also the point where our Ego comes into play. And so *I* (as distinct from all else and others) can look critically at my self and my world to contemplate its goodness or badness, while simultaneously raising the possibility that it could be better. In short, the future comes into play, and it seems possible to influence the course of that future to my advantage. Pretty heady stuff. And there is the rub. We tend to get stuck in our heads, and hung up on the old ego. This is definitely a good news/bad news situation. As we

¹⁰ _____, *Up From Eden*, Anchor Press Doubleday, 1981

become critical of our situation (good news), we may become overly critical and think we are in charge (bad news). But there is hope.

Hope appears with the next level in our journey to consciousness. Call it *Soul*. Soul, as I am using it here, has little to do with that disembodied something we never quite get our hands on – and rather more to do with American Black street usage, as in “*He/she got Soul.*” If I hear my black friends correctly, this translates to mean, “He/she has it all together.” In a word, this is about the full integration, and transcendence of the prior three levels. We still have Body, Mind and Intellect, but now they are all working together, and best of all, we can now find our rightful place in the world at large, not as an alien, stranger, or combatant hiding behind thick walls of ego, but as a co-sojourner in the cosmos, one amongst the many critters. Fully integrated, and fully individual, with a proper sense of place and purpose. No longer the “wannabe” ruler of the universe seeking personal command and control at all costs (dominion over the earth), but a good and responsible cosmic citizen.

And the journey is not yet complete, for traditions tells us that there is yet another level to be attained: *Spirit*. In rather esoteric terms this might be described as consciousness appearing as itself, pure consciousness no longer constrained by the normal limitations of time and space. Granted, such a state of consciousness is hard to talk about, and maybe even hard to imagine. However, I think there are some elements of our common experience that give us useful clues, such as those rare and wonderful moments when we find ourselves performing at levels well in excess of our technical ability, or even physical possibility. Athletes call this *Being in the Zone*, and Jazz musicians call it *Being in the Groove*. By whatever name, and no name really does it, this is Peak Performance (Maslow) with a vengeance.

There is one final piece to be added to this schema, at least in the view of Ken Wilber, which I share. *Each level transcends and includes the preceding one(s)*. Thus if one were to represent the evolution graphically, the appropriate picture would be not a ladder, but rather nested spheres. As we move from Body to Mind, we don't lose Body, rather it is transcended and included by Mind. And also at the level of Intellect, we do not remove Body or Mind, but both are effectively out framed, and included in the new consciousness of who and what we are. The importance of this additional piece is that no matter what level of consciousness we attain, we always have available that which came before, which may be understood as primal or deeper.

With the arrival of the level of Spirit, we come to the end of the journey of consciousness described by age old tradition. I leave it to your further reading to explore the endless details and philosophical justifications, or if you are already well versed in the literature, and deeply grounded in the experience, and wish to debate the fine points, I beg deferral to another time. But for the moment I would like to suggest that even if the words and descriptions don't quite fit, there is a certain intuitive "rightness" to the descriptions as offered. There should be little problem with the levels of Body, Mind, and Intellect. We all recognize the territory and the associated benefits and liabilities. Things get a little fuzzier once we reach Soul and Spirit, but even here I suspect we can all feel a certain connectedness. We know people who seem to have it all together, and yet remain open to new experience and possibility. And we have at least heard of folks who make to the *Zone*. So if "intuitive rightness" works for you, it will be a more than sufficient basis from which to make a most important point. Implicit in this hierarchy (and yes, it is a hierarchy – but so are all developmental taxonomies from Aristotle to Piaget, and onwards), there is the potential for genuine misunderstanding, conflict and confusion. It pretty much comes with the territory, probably can't be avoided, and even has some real benefit – but should be of genuine concern to all those who would follow the path of Peacemaking, at least at the level of interpersonal relationships.

Conflicts of Consciousness – The Individual

The simple truth of the matter is that individuals separated by more than two levels of consciousness have real problems with each other, and actually even those on adjoining levels are not very comfortable. For example, those at the level of *Intellect* find the behavior of those at the *Body* level annoying at the least, and probably boorish, particularly if the Intellectual has gotten locked in his or her ego, which is a constant danger. Of course, if the offending party is a small baby allowances can be made, maybe. But should the offender be an adult (and in truth many adults never quite get beyond the *Body* level of consciousness), that individual is definitely

off the list, to be avoided at all costs, and if encountered then subjected to the strictest of controls. Such people are called stupid, or more colorfully, “Hunks” (for the guys) and “Dolls” (for the women). All Body, no brains (mind), and not a shred of intellect anywhere. And this is the stuff of good relationships?

On the other side of the fence, the situation is no less contentious. For the Body who, please note, is quite happy to be Body, and for whom the ultimate life experience may be defined as a cold Budweiser in hand on a warm sandy beach – Intellect is a dreadful snob. And that is putting it mildly. Given sufficient language skills (Mind), which are not typically present, the description would go on to include words like effete, party-pooper, and definitely subversive. Under normal circumstances, Body will never meet Intellect, but in the unhappy event that they do, a good punch in the nose might straighten things out. We do have a problem, particularly if our concern is for making and keeping the Peace.

And just to make matters a little worse, consider the unhappy circumstances which may arise between two individuals just one level apart, in this case Intellect and Soul. Not only do they see themselves and their worlds in vastly different ways, it is also true that the *summum bonum* of each is anathema to the other. For Intellect, control and being in control are viewed as life’s highest calling, and to be out of control is to be consigned to the dung heap of history. This fixation on control may be relatively benign so long as the threat level is low, and it appears that all is in order – which means that I am in charge, or at the very least somebody I know and trust is in charge. But as the threat level increases, so does the urge to control.

Soul, on the other hand has a very different view of control, at least the sort of control idolized by Intellect. Soul recognizes that this absolute, being-in-charge sort of control is basically a figment of a fertile imagination, or more accurately, a deluded ego. It is not so much bad as illusory, given the complexity of things and the rate at which they change. But the *quest* for such control is understood to be highly destructive because of the way it is carried out. Operating under the ancient maxim of “Divide and Conquer,” Intellect segregates the elements of his/her world into smaller and smaller pieces, which are contained in smaller and smaller spaces. This is justified initially in terms of understanding how things work, otherwise known as making intellectual distinctions. The model for this behavior is the procedure of dissection. Thus to know (understand) a frog, one cuts it in small pieces. At the end of the day, Intellect perceives

an advance in knowledge, and a gain in control (over frogs). Soul on the other hand sees primarily a small pile of pieces, and the destruction of life.

In the unhappy event that Soul and Intellect are forced to work together, or worse yet, that one or the other is assigned the role of “supervisor,” we are definitely in for some rough water. While Intellect is busy making distinctions by building departments, bureaus, and branches all separated by clean lines of authority and responsibility which are maintained and enforced by a vigilant management, all in the name of control, Soul has a very different agenda.

For Soul, life and organization become fully meaningful and functional only in their totality and wholeness, and while differences and separations do occur, they are to be linked and bridged to enable a natural, organic flow. The keywords are integration and wholeness. For Intellect, the keys are separation and control. It usually does not take long before we hear Soul mumbling something about fascist dictator, while Intellect decries the muddleheaded idealist. Not a positive working environment.

Under the circumstances, which become increasingly uncomfortable and destructive for the individuals involved, it is tempting to find a fix, which is typically some form of mediation or negotiation, based upon a rational approach which seeks understanding of all positions. This is a fine idea, but doomed to failure from the start, for rational conversation, of whatever sort requires, at a minimum, the sharing of some fundamental, common presuppositions. In this situation, those common presuppositions do not exist. Each individual looks at themselves and the world from their own point of view which is determined by their level of consciousness. What is logical and rational from the viewpoint of Body (more beer and a better beach) makes no connection with the premises of Intellect, which might be something like “finer distinctions and more productive control.” It is a classic case of apples and oranges.

With failure of a negotiated settlement, a more radical strategy is employed which might be termed Separation of the Parties. Since it appears that there are irreconcilable differences and little basis for common understanding, it only makes sense to put some distance between the folks in the name of domestic tranquility (which should not be confused with Peace). Under this plan, only Body types may play on the beach, Intellectuals should talk to each other, and Souls should be left to wander the fields of wholeness. In truth such separation appears to occur as a natural phenomenon in our experience. We even have a short aphorism to describe the drill,

“Birds of a feather flock together.” There is a short-term positive effect derived from the strategy, but longer term, the results are hardly useful, for in place of the rich natural diversity of the human community the disparate elements are rigidly separated. Body folks are left on the beach with no challenge to move on. And Intellectuals converse in their ivory towers, disengaged from the messiness of daily living.

A final strategy, which is definitely draconian but unfortunately quite common, is the subjugation of the lower levels to the higher. The Body people are consigned to the shipping room and assembly line, Mind folks are expected to perform clerical tasks, and low level technical work, leaving Executive and Senior Management firmly in the hands of the Intellectuals. The arrangement has all the appearances of total order, and rigid discipline, to say nothing of tight command and control, all exercised to insure that order is maintained. It is surprising how long this dictatorial approach can be maintained, but occasionally it is challenged by what is known as a strike.

As should be totally obvious, my description of the roles and relationships of the several levels of consciousness has been accomplished with no small amount of overstatement and too little attention to subtle details. I hope, however that you will not be put off by the overly bold black and white representations – at least until you consider the possibilities inherent in what I have chosen to call *Conflicts of Consciousness*. Truthfully, there is nothing subtle about the intensity of engagement, or the damage that may be done. If our chosen role in life is that of Peace Maker, none of this can be overlooked. To be effective it is essential that we deal not only with the bits and pieces of life, but also the wholeness of life, inside and out, and along the full spectrum of evolving consciousness. Obviously this is no small task, but before we can get to work, there is one additional level of complexity to be explored, which might be called the evolution of consciousness at the level of the organization. Or put as a question – What happens when individuals, at a particular level of consciousness, clump? As noted above, Birds of a feather flock together, or so it has been said for many years, and when you find a whole mess of people with a common level of consciousness in a single organization, could it be that organizations as a whole have consciousness (collective consciousness)? And therefore levels of consciousness?

Organizational Consciousness

In the early 1980's, inspired by the work of Ken Wilber and driven by my own professional concerns to understand the deep functions of the organizations with which I worked, I found myself asking the question, *What are the organizational analogues to the individual levels of consciousness?*¹¹ It seems that other people, notably Ken Wilber and Don Beck, have been asking similar questions, but the history of this particular endeavor is a short one indeed, and definitely not to be compared with the age old consensus represented by The Great Chain of Being. Regardless, the notion that there has occurred, in the process of human history, a certain unfolding of developmental stages is by no means novel. Historians, political scientists, sociologists, to say nothing of philosophers and priests, have all noticed and described in various terms the obvious (at least I think it is obvious) journey and way stations that *Homo sapiens* has traversed from the days of the primal pair to the present moment. The terms vary with the author, but the sequence usually goes something like Family, Clan, Tribe, Kingdom, Nation State, which seemingly brings us to the present moment. From this moment forwards, the visionaries take over with projections for our future, which might include a Global State, or maybe the elimination of all States.

Settling the issues of the nature and levels of organizational consciousness will not be accomplished here, but I raise it only to suggest that should it all actually make some sense, the job of the Peacemaker suddenly becomes profoundly interesting, to say nothing of difficult. As long as the threats to Peace through what I have called Conflicts of Consciousness exist only at the level of the individual, we definitely have a problem, but it is one we can get our arms around, if only conceptually. The way forward, it would seem, lies in facilitating individual transformations (probably with supportive therapy) until sufficient critical mass has been created in order to move the whole. When, however, the object of our concern ceases to be the individual and becomes whole organizations, countries, and cultures, we have a horse of a very different

¹¹ My early foray into the world of organizational consciousness is described in my first book, *Spirit: Transformation and Development in Organizations*, Abbott Publishing, 1987. This book is no longer in print, but an updated version appears in *The Power of Spirit: How Organizations Transform*, Berrett-Koehler, 2000

color. Dealing with the 6 billion-plus folks, currently existent on Planet Earth in all of their organizational aggregations, one person at a time, is mind boggling. And thinking about dealing with this mass of humanity all at once, simply goes off the charts. If the way forward lies through individual transformation with supportive therapy for those on the fringes, we will definitely have a shortage of ashrams and couches. And the notion of getting the whole system in the room, to quote the current mantra of those involved with large systems change, can only inspire an embarrassed chuckle.