

## **POETRY-MAKING AND POLICY-MAKING**

### **PART IV**

#### **Clues towards Transformative Congressing**

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## 1. COMMENT

The following texts attempt in different ways to group together themes suggestive of ways of approaching the challenge of interweaving poetry-making and policy-making concerns as raised explicitly or implicitly in Parts I to III. The texts are adapted to the challenge of those large-group meetings or conferences which are **not**:

- (a) Organized according to procedures considered reasonably satisfactory by most of those directly involved, possibly on the basis of experience of previous meetings in the same series;
- (b) Deliberately structured by the instigators to achieve a certain objective, irrespective of the individual preoccupations of those who choose to participate under such circumstances;
- (c) Conceived around a pre-defined set of topics, irrespective of any other topics which may emerge during the meeting as common to a number of participants present;
- (d) Deliberately unstructured as an environment for spontaneous exchange between participants, but without any concern that such exchanges should lead to the emergence of some larger pattern.

The main concern is with highlighting problems and possibilities relevant to the organization of more mature meetings on the new frontier of high-risk gatherings in response to social development issues and the global problematique. Attention is only given to the "mechanics" of meeting organization (covered in the many books available on such matters) in so far as they directly affect the psycho-social dynamic of the meeting. The topics are therefore oriented around the possibility of maturing the power of a larger meeting to:

- (a) reflect the complexity of the external environment in an ordered manner (representation), to reflect about that environment (conceptual processes), and to reflect about itself (self-reference or self-reflexiveness);
- (b) focus the variety of perspectives represented, without destroying that variety in some simplistic formula of superficial consensus;
- (c) transform the issues presented, and the organizational groups which take responsibility for them, into new configurations of operational significance;
- (d) act, or empower those represented to act, in the light of the level of understanding achieved during the meeting.

In line with the general theme of this project, there is a concern that meeting innovation is being severely hindered by the limited vocabulary by which meeting processes and structures are defined: programme, session, speaker, participant, topic, organizer, *etc.* This is especially the case in that most of this vocabulary focuses on the logistics and administration of the meeting. The challenge is to find ways of enriching understanding of the range of meeting processes, including "conceptual logistics", moving beyond the limitations of that vocabulary, clarifying new distinctions and reinforcing those new distinctions by a new vocabulary.

## 2. ENVISIONING THE PERFECT MEETING

In recent years many people have deplored the inadequacies of the visions of society in the future. It is argued that credible visions offer a vital guideline to long-term policy. Clarifying such visions is a useful focus for debate. As a central process in society, meetings also merit

this form of concern. Indeed if the problems inherent in meetings cannot be solved, is it possible to move toward any better society? What could constitute a perfect meeting in the future? Adequate images of such ideal meetings can guide reflection on present inadequacies and on how they may be overcome. The following points identify aspects which can be usefully borne in mind.

**1. Inter-weaving resources:** Rather than the present emphasis on isolated participant contributions, the emphasis will be on interrelating contributions to form a pattern whose form evokes further contributions thus bringing about an appropriate balance of perspectives. Representatives of each discipline or approach will strive for better ways to evoke that pattern. Lengthy contributions (in time or on paper) will become secondary to the contribution of specific ideas, values, facts, problems or relationships. Those which significantly improve the emerging pattern will be valued most.

**2. Pace:** Rather than the present hectic exercises in maximizing "communication", many meetings or sessions will bear a greater resemblance to a public game of chess or go. Periods of silence will be interspersed with brief contributions to the emerging pattern on whose evolution all are reflecting.

**3. Status and reward:** Rather than status being accorded or acknowledged by protocol and "prime time" privileges, it will be self-evident from the record of the relative significance of the contributions made to the emerging pattern. This will be the prime source of personal satisfaction.

**4. Process:** Rather than the simplistic overt processes of present meetings (made possible by a complex of covert processes), the range of processes will be understood to interweave as they do in a complex but healthy ecosystem - of which there are many types.

**5. Maturity:** Rather than the present possibility of immaturity in a meeting of the most eminent, the maturity level of the meeting will be a matter of explicit concern and many will have skills to evolve the meeting beyond the characteristic traps of the present.

**6. Roles:** Rather than the limited range of roles in present meetings, those of the future will be characterized by a rich variety of supporting, guiding, informing, facilitating roles. The potential of a meeting may well be judged by the "participant/supporting role" ratio (*cf* the teacher/pupil ratio in schools) as well as the number of "jargons" between which "interpretation" is provided.

**7. Modes:** Rather than the limited range of modes now permissible in a given meeting, it will be possible for a meeting to move flexibly between many modes according to the energy requirements of the participants - and without losing a sense of coherence.

**8. Conceptual environment:** Rather than the crude (lack of) awareness of meeting conceptual dynamics, participants will be much more conscious of the "species" of each contribution made, the effect it can have on the evolution of the conceptual environment, and the constraints on its viability.

**9. Physical environment:** To those involved in such perfect meetings, the negative effects of the many subtle and less subtle design factors in present conference centres will be obvious. Conference environment design will focus on enabling the many aspects of conceptual pattern formation rather than "processing" participants and inhibiting synthesis. Flexible settings will adapt to the changing conceptual environment.

**10. Technology:** Aside from the already evident move towards "electronic meetings" between distant participants, much greater use will be made of technology to enable spontaneous communication between participants (rather than at them), to represent graphically the pattern emerging from the contributions made, and to facilitate synthesis whilst protecting variety.

**11. New challenges:** Because the environment will enable collective reflection on much more subtle questions than at present, new challenges will emerge - possibly to be recognized as of greater (or more fundamental) significance than the often simplistic preoccupations of present meetings.

### **3. INTEGRATIVE FAILURE**

Although integrative skills may be successfully applied to a situation, their elusive nature can be partially defined by the ways in which such skills may fail or be used to conceal abuse.

**1. Reduction in variety:** A simple way to ease the integrative problem is to reduce the diversity of elements present in the situation using an argument for standardization and against any "hodge podge" mixture of elements. This of course eliminates some minority interests. In the extreme case of destructive or "meltdown" synthesis, all variety is eliminated.

**2. Reduction in quantity:** By eliminating a significant number of the elements, the problem may also be eased. The argument that can be used is that they are well-represented by the variety of elements that remain and that any "proliferation" of elements is disorderly. In practice this results in the absorption of some elements by others, such as in the case of minority groups.

**3. Simplification:** Subtleties and nuances, possibly defended by specific minority groups, may be ignored. Interconnecting webs of relations can be ignored.

**4. Tokenism:** Emphasis may be placed on the image or desirability of synthesis in order to conceal inability to achieve any steps towards it.

**5. Temporary synthesis:** In a dynamic situation it may be possible to achieve some measure of integration in the short-term by ignoring factors temporarily absent or only emerging over longer time cycles.

**6. Coloured synthesis:** A significant degree of synthesis may be achieved, but from a particular viewpoint or in terms of a particular mode, approach or strategy. The narrowness of such a synthesis, coloured by the perspective of those who achieve it, may be difficult to communicate within the framework established by that synthesis.

**7. Enforced synthesis:** In some instances, as with a dynamic set of minority interests, a form of integration may be imposed by constraining the dynamics (although without reducing the number or variety of the elements).

**8. Dogmatic synthesis:** An impression of synthesis may be achieved by stating frequently and forcefully that it has been achieved and thus eroding expectation that a greater degree of synthesis is possible.

**9. Laissez faire synthesis:** By reinterpreting the nature of synthesis or integration, it may be deemed to exist under any circumstances as the pattern of interaction amongst the elements. No intervention is required, although if undertaken it would merely add to the pattern of interaction.

**10. Agglomerative synthesis:** Appropriate integration may be assumed to have been achieved simply by ensuring the juxtaposition of the various elements or viewpoints. This corresponds to the use of the prefix "multi" (*eg* in multidisciplinary). In books reflecting such a multidisciplinary synthesis, it is the binding which provides the synthesis, given the absence of any relationship between the constituent disciplinary chapters.

**11. Comparative or cross-referential synthesis:** Integration may be assumed to have been achieved by recording comparisons between the perspectives or elements. This often corresponds to the use of the prefix "cross" (*eg* in cross-cultural).

**12. Cross-impact synthesis:** Integration may be assumed to have been achieved by taking into account the constraints and feedback loops emerging from other disciplinary perspectives. This may correspond to use of the prefix "inter-" (*eg* in interdisciplinary). Note however that it is only with the emergence of a new level of order that a synthesis breakthrough may be said to have occurred (this may correspond to the use of the prefix "trans-" as in trans-disciplinary).

#### 4. INTEGRATIVE SKILLS

Although during meetings there is much discussion of "integration" and there are many attempts at producing a "synthesis", the skills called upon seem to be poorly understood, hard to communicate, and very difficult to put into practice. It is therefore useful to note very different domains where integrative skills are practised successfully, even if it is not immediately clear what can be learnt from them for use in a meeting environment.

**1. Design and composition:** This is the process through which creative intuition influences the selection of elements and the manner and proportion in which they are to be balanced - what is to be put together and how. In each of the following the configuration of elements tends to relate to an emergent focal point:

- (a) Composing music
- (b) Painting a picture
- (c) Flower arrangement (Ikebana)
- (d) Landscaping
- (e) Building and community design
- (f) Interior decoration
- (g) Designing a meal (or menu)
- (h) Putting together a group a team, or an evening party
- (i) Writing a novel
- (j) Casting for a film or play

**2. Managing dynamic situations:** This is the process whereby the relationships between a complex set of given elements is kept in focus. Examples are:

- (a) Juggling
- (b) Leadership of a group (including use of charisma)
- (c) Production of a show
- (d) Conducting a military campaign
- (e) Controlling a chemical plant
- (f) Scheduling railways, deliveries, *etc*
- (g) Making a party "go" (hosting)
- (h) Conducting an orchestra
- (i) Gardening

**3. Analyzing complex situations:** This is clearly oriented to understanding whatever can be analyzed irrespective of whether this leads to broader synthesis. Examples are:

- (a) Operations research
- (b) Systems research
- (c) Cybernetics
- (d) Management research
- (e) Political analysis

**4. Communicating synthesis:**

This is the process whereby a sense of wholeness or unity among diverse parts is imparted to others, even if only as a symbol or token of what may later be achieved in practice:

- (a) Environmental appreciation ("One Earth")
- (b) Art education
- (c) Art of speaking
- (d) Political commentator

**5. Embodying synthesis:** Whereas each of the above is in some way a manipulation of synthesis, however necessary, there seem to be instances where a person acts as the focal point for synthesis and is so perceived by those whose interests are reinterpreted and focused in this way. Examples are perhaps:

- (a) Spiritual leaders (including saints, gurus, and charismatic evangelists)
- (b) Political heroes (including statesmen, military and revolutionary leaders)
- (c) Cultural heroes (including pop-stars, film-stars)

## **5. MEETING FOCUS: A DESCRIPTION**

In a discussion an individual may be rebuked for not "keeping to the point". In a meeting this may refer to relevance to a point on the agenda. It is the agenda which is used to focus the meeting process, although when there is a programme, focus may only be achieved through the agendas of individual sessions or possibly through a concluding plenary session. What is focus in a meeting and what is its significance, especially in relation to the aim or objective of the meeting?

**1. Imposed focus:** A meeting may be convened to focus on a particular concern decided in advance. In such a case those present, and the points raised, will be clearly related to that concern, although perhaps not in the view of all present. Focus is thus a question of establishing and maintaining the relationship of a variety of subsidiary concerns to one central concern, even though the proponents of particular subsidiary concerns may not recognize each others relevance to that central concern.

**2. Emergent focus:** A meeting may be convened in the hope that a point of common focus will emerge as a basis for interlinking a variety of partially (or un-) related concerns. The problem is then to facilitate its identification and emergence.

**3. Multiple focus:** Whether imposed or emergent, it may be a question of a multiple focus, rather than a single one. There may be no intention, desire or ability to relate the multiple points of focus to one another or to a single underlying concern. This may be reflected in a variety of unrelated points in an agenda or meeting programme.

**4. Degree of focus:** Whether a matter of ability or intention, the meeting may resist any classification or sharpening of focus in preference to a diffuse focus or none at all. An unfocused meeting may be viewed as more creative or effective under certain conditions, or perhaps all that is feasible. Note that focus may be achieved without any verbal

acknowledgement of its nature.

**5. Aims, objectives and goals** Although it is possible to make useful distinctions between these, it is their difference from focus which should be noted. Each of them is in one way or another an intention or desire as opposed to the definite achievement characteristic of focus. But focus is also a precondition for them, in that it interrelates the relevant elements necessary for their achievement, whether any subsequent action is taken or not. In this way a meeting can focus on its objective, for example, or may fail to do so because its ability to focus is inadequate.

**6. Focus and transformation:** To achieve whatever transformation it intends, a meeting must bring the resources it has assembled to bear, bringing them appropriately into focus. This establishes the critical quantity or variety of factors necessary to the transformation. Focus ensures that the configuration of factors assembled will direct the energy of the meeting participants appropriately, rather than allowing it to dissipate ineffectually. Individual actions are then mutually reinforcing rather than nullifying. Depending on the nature of the meeting, focus may also be required to disseminate or contain the energy released by the transformative process.

**7. Strategy and process:** Focus may be brought about, from the prior unfocused condition, by an appropriate strategy for a process - a focusing procedure. Such strategy may even be considered the time dimension of focus.

**8. Structure and focus:** One method of ensuring focus is through the conventional hierarchical structure of executive and other programme committees and officers, culminating in the meeting president. The weakness of this approach results from the limitations of the simple hierarchy as a means of appropriately channelling and interrelating the information flows associated with interrelated topics. This is especially true when the hierarchy also has to perform protocol and other non-substantive functions which prevent either the executive director or the president from ensuring a substantive synthesis, even if they were able.

**9. Focus and configuration:** Where hierarchical ordering of the meeting programme or lines of responsibility no longer suffices to contain the complexity of the subject matter, a programme matrix may be used. When this is inadequate more complex configurations are required (*eg* critical path and network diagrams). There is however a major constraint in that focus is no longer possible if the complexity exceeds the ability of participants to comprehend. And in order to maintain comprehensibility the configuration of issues must contain elements of symmetry and pattern to reinforce memorability and communicability. Whilst it is not necessary for all participants to comprehend the whole configuration, there must be sufficient overlap both to maintain connectedness and to prevent loss of confidence in the chain of overlaps linking the most distant parts of the configuration.

**10. Focus and the individual:** The adequacy of the configuration depends on the quality of the participants and the extent to which its features engage their attention and energy. The greater the variety reflected in the configuration, the greater the potential, but also the greater the risk that participants will only be engaged partially or superficially and that the focus will be trivial. Powerful focus is achieved when the meeting configuration matches to a significant degree the psychic configuration of the participants. Participants respond to finding their own condition reflected in the meeting configuration, and the meeting reflected within themselves - it is this resonance which energizes the meeting. Any action through the meeting is then directly consistent with the individual's own development and calls upon all the participant is able to contribute because of the manner in which that contribution results in personal growth through the meeting. The meeting configuration thus reinforces connections which enable focus and

transformation at a new level of significance, both collective and individual.

## **6. MEETING FOCUS: A CHECKLIST**

Below are listed, in no particular order, different aspects of focus or processes which tend to occur when a meeting is in focus.

**1. Category transformation:** A condition of focus should permit a reordering of the categories governing the meeting (or the organization of its subject matter) into a less procrustean pattern corresponding more appropriately to the reality encoded.

**2. Organizational transformation:** In a condition of focus the organizational units or subdivisions whereby it has been brought about can be reformed into a pattern more appropriate to the functional categories.

**3. Problem sensitivity (resolving power):** a condition of focus permits problems (otherwise considered identical) to be appropriately distinguished.

**4. Problem subtlety:** certain all-pervading subtle problems can only be detected in a condition of low "noise-level" characteristic of focus.

**5. Stabilized overview:** focus is a necessary condition for a stable overview of the meeting's domain (possibly as a meta-dimension) otherwise viewed as a multi-faceted image.

**6. Contribution of the seemingly irrelevant:** only in a condition of focus can the contribution of otherwise "irrelevant" resources to the balance of the whole be understood.

**7. Hospitable to divergent perspectives:** a condition of focus is hospitable to otherwise "divergent" perspectives.

**8. Sensitivity to new options:** the reduction in "noise-level" associated with a condition of focus permits new options and directions to emerge.

**9. Transformation of collective self-awareness:** the condition of focus facilitates the emergence of a collective sense of identity at a new level of integration and immediacy.

**10. Transformation of personal awareness:** a condition of focus enhances the processes of personal transformation in each participant and in relation to the here-and-now.

**11. Energy containment and release:** a focused configuration is able to contain and anchor the synergy normally dissipated during a meeting (possibly as a temporary state of enthusiasm or euphoria).

**12. Emergence of simplifying perspectives:** a condition of focus enables simpler descriptions of complex conditions to emerge, possibly as appropriate metaphors.

**13. Empowerment:** a condition of focus empowers the meeting to act at a new level of significance in the light of emergent values.

**14. Risk:** a condition of focus, because of the radical nature of the transformations which are then feasible, is also a condition of high risk. Such risk is a necessary "investment" (in the sense of "nothing venture; nothing gain").

## 7. LOSING MEETING FOCUS

The nature of focus may be partially understood from the various ways in which it may be lost during a meeting. These are the processes which may be guarded against although they are not necessarily independent.

1. **Loss of immediacy:** Participants may lose any sense of immediacy and allow discussion to focus on questions which erode their sense of urgency and responsibility. The assumption that necessary action can be taken on some other occasion, possibly by others, gradually holds sway.
2. **Attention absorption:** Topics become a focus for attention for different participants to the exclusion of any understanding of the context from which they emerge and by which they are linked.
3. **Attention span:** The complexity of the topic is such that participants do not have the patience to attend to any discussion of its intricacies and thus fail to comprehend it. This situation may be aggravated by poor verbal presentation, particularly when an audio-visual presentation would be clearer and quicker.
4. **Topic change too rapid:** When the meeting is switching between supposedly related topics, this may be done too rapidly for the participants to retain any permanent understanding of their connection.
5. **Topic change too slow:** Time spent by participants in treating one topic may be too great to retain adequate understanding of the previous topic. In this way they lose sight of the whole and may in fact become bored with excessive detail if they are not unnecessarily fascinated by it.
6. **Loss of connectedness:** Participants, for any of the above reasons, may lose understanding of the web of relevance interlinking the different topics under discussion. Conceptual fragmentation holds sway and most topics appear irrelevant to the participants major interest.
7. **"Topic twiggling":** Topics may be explored with such enthusiasm, that issues are broken up into sub-issues, sub-sub-issues, *etc* without any control over how to maintain the connection between such "twigs" or branches and the trunk of the "tree" from which they spring.
8. **Games and traps:** Discussion of topics may become enmeshed in various games and traps from which participants find it impossible to extract themselves. Such "sub-routines" may divert all energy from the fundamental or underlying issues.
9. **Superficiality:** The focus of the meeting may be trivialized by unnecessary enthusiastic interventions which do not take participants forward.
10. **Disruption:** The "noise-level" of the meeting may be such that no focus may be shared amongst participants.
11. **Polarization:** Discussion of the focus may provoke some participants to advocate a counter-focus, thus dividing the meeting.
12. **Energy drain:** The structure and processes of the meeting may be such as to drain participant energy rather than enhancing it. This weakens any focus which is still possible.

## 8. FOCUS SUBTLETIES: MEETING MAGIC

Occasionally, perhaps under special circumstances, meetings "come together" and "take off" as if by magic. It might be called serendipity. There is very little indication of why this comes about or how it is to be described objectively. It can happen when every care has been put into arranging the meeting and selecting the participants, or it can happen under extremely non-ideal circumstances. The following notes indicate some possible directions for further reflection on the question.

1. **Indirection:** In such a case there seems to be a strength in defining the central point of focus by discussions which use it as an unspoken reference point. The totality of tangential dialogues is then facilitated by this approach, whereas "going to the heart of the matter", and efforts to render it explicit, effectively only introduce perturbation and fragmentation. (Note that non-directiveness, being the non-imposition of a line of discussion, is only loosely related to indirection in this sense).
2. **Paradox:** There usually seems to be a strong element of paradox in such cases, or at least a tolerance of it and a suspension of judgement. (The meeting could almost be considered a collective reflection on a Zen koan).
3. **Incompatibility:** Associated with paradox is a context which permits incompatible perspectives to be "bracketed" and held in complementary juxtaposition. It is the shared attitude underlying this contextual awareness which provides a subtle interface between the perspectives.
4. **Attunement:** The magic tends to occur when participants are attuned to each other or empathize with each other, possibly stimulated by a quota of antipathy which provokes a search for a more fundamental level of harmony (*cf* the use of this concept in certain group meditation techniques).
5. **"Chemistry":** As in the previous point, when the right mix of participants is present, they react in unpredictable ways to produce interesting transformation for all concerned. (The "recipe" analogy may also be used).
6. **Aesthetic elegance:** There seems to be a special economy and proportion of structure and process which can only be described in aesthetic terms.
7. **Drama:** Relating to the previous point, there is often a sense of evolving and mounting drama, engendering appropriate events at each stage. There is a collective awareness of how each event is charged with significance.
8. **"Invisible hand":** Relating to the previous point, at certain moments events seem to be guided by an unseen hand, so well do they emerge spontaneously and fall into place unplanned. There is a strange "rightness" to the flow of events.
9. **Non-action:** During the course of such meetings, deliberate actions usually tend to be of less significance or else their significance emerges totally transformed in relation to the original intent. The more participants can approximate to the Taoist attitude of non-action, the better the event for all concerned (*cf* the adage: "Don't push the river. Guide the canoe").
10. **Non-conscious:** Relating to the previous point, participant appreciation of the event depends on ability to "let go" and "flow with the stream of things". This seems to call upon instinctual and intuitive aspects of personality, appropriately blended by the participant (*cf* the

Japanese concept of *hara*). It should perhaps be contrasted with unconsciousness and "stream of consciousness" monologue.

**11. Humorously quixotic:** In contrast to the heavy quality of conventional meetings, such events have an underlying thread of humour strangely blended with wisdom (*cf* the Sufi tales of Nasruddin). This also serves as a very powerful and rapid means of conveying an explanation.

**12. Innocence:** The flow of such events tends to evoke a childlike innocence and sense of wonder in participants, which is to be contrasted in conventional meetings with the defensive attitude towards ignorance, a pervasive cynicism, and childishness under certain circumstances.

**13. Magical shifts of perspective:** Characteristically in such meetings, apparently insignificant events brought about in an unforeseen manner can trigger major shifts of perspective (*cf* the Zen tales concerning achievement of *satori*).

## **9. COMPLEMENTARY METAPHORS OF DISCOURSE**

The following set of commonly understood metaphors endeavours to highlight the range of mind-sets through which discourse in meetings might be envisaged. Fundamental problems associated with each are briefly noted. The metaphors provide contrasting windows through which the imagination can explore the ways in which people, groups, factions and governments organize meetings, projects and long-term cooperation to improve the condition of the world.

### **1. Networking and Teleconferencing**

Discourse may be understood as networking -- the sending and receiving of messages amongst a network of people, groups and institutions within the "global village". This bypasses the conventional difficulties of communicating through and between different levels of organizational hierarchies and opens the doors to new opportunities for discourse.

### **2. Revolution**

Discourse arises when we "bury our differences" in a revolutionary struggle to bury some common enemy, usually a group of people responsible for an iniquitous social structure or for an erroneous belief system. Self-interest, normally the principal obstacle to successful discourse is transmuted into self-righteousness in a "holy war".

### **3. Trade and Development**

\*\*?? Discourse, especially for some French-speaking governments, is equivalent to development -- or the policies and procedures through which it is brought about. In practice this means evolving terms of trade -- "let's trade" -- perceived as mutually beneficial, whatever the constraints and recognized inequities under the agreement.

### **4. Sexual intercourse**

At its best "making love" is one of the principal examples of effective discourse between people -- "make love, not war". It calls for sensitivity, initiative and receptivity, and enhances mutual respect. Ideally it ranges from the reassuring to the transforming, and through such dynamics a new generation is conceived.

### **5. Environmental ecosystems**

The ecosystems interlinking flora and fauna are a valued example of how different species can cooperate -- the ideal of symbiosis is a much favoured model. The Gaia Hypothesis is explored

as a model for discourse at the global scale. Such insights are fundamental to the "green" movement.

#### **6. Drama and Opera**

A dramatic work can be construed as a design for discourse -- in which the actors cooperate in exploring themes and dramatic moments which play off each other to bring out certain qualities and insights. For the integrity of the work there is necessarily a deep commitment to ensuring the effectiveness of such discourse.

#### **7. Sharing in spirit**

When spiritual values predominate, whether in an established religious tradition, a sect, a charismatic movement, or a religious community, then self-interest as an inhibitor of discourse is bypassed. Discourse becomes a sharing in spirit -- in the name of such as Christ, Allah, Buddha, Gaia, or of their enlightened representatives. People are "born again" into a new mode of interaction.

#### **8. Building**

Discourse may be seen as "building together". Emphasis is placed on the tangible, if not on construction in its most concrete sense, whether houses, barns, schools, clinics or community amenities. It may take the form of major projects (joint ventures) such as dams, aircraft, defence systems or satellites. Or it may take the form of building communication networks or distribution networks. Differences are necessarily resolved in the practicalities of ensuring the viability of whatever is constructed -- the process may even be facilitated by common membership in some group such as the freemasons for whom building and architecture are fundamental symbols.

#### **9. Games and Teamwork**

Games necessarily involve significant discourse between the players, whether the games take the form of board games, competitive or team sports, or war games. In team games, discourse operates in one way amongst those of the same team and in another in relationship to the opposing team(s). Successful business and military strategy is developed through a strong awareness of the importance of teamwork in relation to opposing teams. Within a team, explicit recognition is given to the role of each and the manner in which they should be able to support and substitute for each other in the event of crisis. Special attention is given by each to "marking the opposite number" in the opposing team. Each must endeavour to know the games his opponents (and his team mates) endeavour to play.

#### **10. Celebration**

People cooperate through gathering together in some ceremonial, for a celebration, or for a "happening". This form of discourse may be extended through media events such as Live Aid, Hands Across America, or a World Run. It may take the form of celebrating achievements such as the 40th Anniversary of the United Nations, or the annual celebration of "days", such as One Earth. It may also fulfil a psychologically important ritual or liturgical function within the life of a group -- rekindling enthusiasm and commitment, and reinforcing a sense of community.

#### **11. Rule of law**

The elaboration of agreements and networks of regulations binding the relationship between social actors is discourse in one of its most lasting forms. Much effort is devoted to formulating resolutions, declarations of shared principles, and multilateral treaties -- as a means of evolving the framework of law, whether national or international. The stream of regulations from the EEC is a prime example.

## 12. Conspiracy of elites

Real discourse may be seen as associated with the unpublicized, long-term working relationships between elites of whatever kind. This may range from a group of community "elders", through "old boy networks" or "nomenklatura", through academic "invisible colleges", to semi-secret societies such as the freemasons and Opus Dei. It may be cultivated in closed meetings (Trilateral Commission, Bilderberg Group) and by secret diplomacy. It may be articulated in secret agreements, whether between governments, classified research establishments, intelligence agencies, corporations, crime syndicates or revolutionary groups. It may take a seemingly innocent form in conspiracies of the spiritually "initiated" or of like-minded social change agents (the "Aquarian Conspiracy").

The challenge for the 1990s may involve not so much abandoning any one of these mind-sets but rather of learning how to avoid being trapped within any such metaphor as providing "the one solution". In each case there is a need to see through the veils of opportunistic reporting and media hype establishing claims of successful discourse. The danger is one of being deluded by semblances of discourse and symbols portrayed as achievements. Their current status constitutes a re-emergence of idolatry -- the perfection and worship of new forms of "golden calf". Such idols of discourse should not disguise the questionable value of efficient rearrangement of the deck-chairs on the Titanic or of effective use of a tea cup in bailing out a life-boat being swamped in heavy seas.

## 10. CONFIGURATIVE METAPHORS

Focus emerges as a consequence of an appropriate configuration of perspectives, people or groups within a meeting. To assist the exploration of the possibilities associated with configuration, it is appropriate to note different kinds of configuration in use in other domains in the hope that they may offer clues to its significance in meetings.

### 1. Socio-structural configurations:

(a) *Orchestra*, with stationary groups of musicians/instruments, usually forming an incomplete circle around the conductor.

(b) *Auditorium*, with seats ordered by row, aisle and tier, usually in a semi-circle facing a stage area, but occasionally surrounding the stage (*eg* colosseum, sports arena, circus) or interpenetrating the stage (*eg* some avant-garde theatres).

(c) *Parliament*, with seats arranged and allocated in terms of the parties and a perception of their relationship to each other (*eg* facing each other) and to the government (*eg* facing the podium).

(d) *Temple or cathedral*, with participants arranged in relation to a symbolic focal point before which one or more intermediaries may officiate; minor chapels may be located within the temple or disposed around it in an appropriate configuration. Special significance may be attached to location and orientation.

(e) *Fortress or castle*, with elements appropriately arranged to ensure successive lines of defence in order to maximize the protection of what is most valued. Importance is attached to the strategic location and the relationship to the surrounding terrain.

(f) *City*, when planned as a whole from the start may be specially divided into zones appropriately (often symmetrically) arranged in relation to each other according to their function and the lines of communication required. usually located in relation to natural resources or a

transport nexus.

(g) *Battle plan*, whereby opposing generals locate the different functional units of their respective forces both in relation to one another and to the opposing force, in order to favour respective strategies. Special attention is given to terrain, logistics and the training and morale of participants.

(h) *Table design and seating*, whereby an attempt is made to reflect the status of the participating parties (eg in negotiations or mediation) or at functions requiring careful attention to protocol.

(i) *Ritual, dramatic or dance movements*, in which participants continually modify their relationship to each other, possibly to bring about a sequence of changes in the overall pattern they constitute. Some forms are completely pre-determined, others are partially or completely improvised. In some forms all participate all the time, in others they may be absent for the part of the sequence in which their role is most stressed, or when it is stressed by their absence.

## **2. Energy-processing configurations:**

(a) *Antenna*, for which the constituent elements are precisely located in relation to one another to constitute a configuration (often parabolic) to focus incoming electromagnetic radiation for subsequent processing. The orientation of the configuration as a whole is vital to its operation, as in the case of the microwave receiver or the radio-telescope.

(b) *Magnetic "bottle"*, whereby a configuration of precisely located magnets is used to contain plasma in such a way that its temperature may be maintained at over one million degrees for a period of seconds in order that fusion can take place (as an alternative source of energy to nuclear fission). It is only through the use of magnetic forces that the plasma may be kept from destroying any material container.

(c) *Reactor*, in which particular attention is given to the configuration of heating, cooling, agitating, input and output elements, in order that an optimum transformation of materials should take place. This applies as much to the simple crucible, although the precision and symmetry of the configuration is most evident in nuclear reactor design.

(d) *Mirror configurations*, as used for focusing sunlight in certain solar power furnaces, or alternatively for directing light, as in search-lights and lighthouses.

(e) *Optical systems of lenses*, as used in telescopes and microscopes.

(f) *Acoustical configurations of walls and baffles*, as used in an auditorium, required to ensure the balanced distribution of sound and the elimination of unwanted echoes.

(g) *Electric motor or generator*, in which electricity is used or generated by the controlled movement of one configuration of elements in relation to another due to the effects of polarized forces operating in phase.

(h) *Factory complex*, usually designed with special attention to the transfer of energy and materials to processing locations which are therefore appropriately arranged in relation to each other. Usually located in relation to natural resources, a transport nexus or associated factories.

### 3. Symbolic configurations:

(a) *Monument or memorial*, whereby architectural or decorative elements are disposed in relation to some central focal point. Such elements often reflect aspects of the central theme of the monument. In the larger memorials a considerable degree of symmetry is usually to be found.

(b) *Memory devices*, whereby items to be remembered are associated with or "impressed upon" some easily remembered configuration such as the elements of a memorial, the features of an ornamental garden, a suitable pantheon, *etc.* The items may then be "recovered" by progressing through the configuration in whatever order is appropriate.

(c) *Mandalas*, whereby a complete set of complementary figures are disposed symmetrically in relation to one another around a central focal point in order to indicate both a succession of possible experiences and a progression to more or less fundamental levels of experience. Each such experience is understood as essential to the harmony and evolution of the whole. Mandalas, or their equivalents, are used as attention focusing devices in different cultures.

(d) *Symbols*, such as a crown, a chalice or a stupa, which may be viewed as a configuration of elements constituting a "receptacle" for energies, qualities or attributes thus held in balance.

### 11. SELF-CONSTRAINING CONFIGURATIONS: ENERGY DISSIPATION

In organizing a meeting there is concern that it should be sufficiently "stimulating" to attract and maintain the interest of participants. There is however also a concern that any "controversy" should not exceed what can be contained by the meeting structure and processes. A low risk meeting therefore runs the risk of being boring and without significance. The question is whether this dilemma can be understood in a new light in order to be able to organize interesting and significant meetings, whilst minimizing the risk of their being torn apart.

Consider, as one extreme case, what needs to be done to avoid all controversy. The relationships between the participants, the topics or the meeting sessions need to be such that only supportive, reinforcing information is exchanged between them but none which challenges, denies, accuses, limits or questions assumptions. If any such challenges are effectively transferred to the relationship between the meeting and the external world, the meeting can maintain its positive harmonious nature. This could be called exporting or projecting problems, inconsistencies or contradictions.

For this to be possible however, no effective link should be established between those participants, topics or meeting sessions which would draw attention to such contradictions by the nature of their interaction. This can best be illustrated by a grid, reflecting (according to its size) the variety of participants, topics or meeting sessions. In it supportive information of one kind is transferred from point to point along grid lines. Only by confronting information from distant points which is avoided in the meeting, would the challenge they constitute be evident. In the meeting the challenge between them (at any particular grid location) is minimized. Expressed differently, every effort is made to ensure that feed back loops are not completed. Or alternatively, the meeting is perceived as a grid on an infinite plane.

This approach ensures that energy is effectively drained into or absorbed by the meeting environment. There it merely goes to reinforce any positive or negative images of external problems or organizations. It does not enhance the ability of the meeting to get to grips with such problems or its own. The meeting is essentially escapist, dumping its own problems on

the environment. A grid configuration is a de-motivating, energy- dissipating pattern, not an energy conserving pattern. For this reason care should be taken when basing meetings on linear agendas, coding or classification schemes.

Consider now the opposite extreme in which conflict is internalized and challenge is accepted as an integral feature of the meeting. If the meeting is not to be torn apart, the opposing participants, viewpoints or meeting sessions need to be held in relation to one other by a configuration which distributes the stress evenly throughout it. This calls for the completion of all feedback circuits and the juxtaposition of integrative (harmonizing) and dissipative (challenging) forces at every point throughout the configuration. Such configurations are not constrained by the environment, as in the previous case. They are self-constraining. Energy is not dissipated; it is conserved as synergy.

It is such self-constraining patterns of curvature which provide the focus which is absent in a "planar" meeting. The question is how to "foldup" a grid into an appropriate configuration.

## **12. SELF-CONSTRAINING CONFIGURATIONS: COMMUNICATION PATTERNS**

To understand how different configurations may emerge, it is useful to look at the variety of communication patterns which may be characteristic of a meeting. At one extreme, for example, participants, viewpoints or conditions interact more or less randomly with no detectable pattern or order. This is characteristic of "idea fairs".

One approach to the possible patterns in a large group is to review the well-studied communication patterns in small groups of 3-6 participants. These are described as the circle, the star, the Y, the line, and the starred circle. Although these patterns have been examined in groups of participants, they may also be characteristic of groups of groups, or groups of themes, or the relationship between meeting sessions. For example, the star pattern emerges when all participant groups (or themes), except one, are related to that one but not to each other. Each pattern has well-recognized advantages under certain conditions.

Another approach is to see the large group as a complex, but reasonably stable, network of relationships between participants, themes or meeting sessions. Social networks are studied by the discipline of social network analysis.

Another approach is to imagine all participants, viewpoints or meeting sessions as being represented as points on the surface of a simple stretched rubber sheet. If they are located, such that lines of communication drawn between them cross to a minimal extent, then the meeting pattern as a whole may be viewed as a particular deformation of a regular grid. For example, if stretched in one way, many of the lines of communication might converge on one point as in the star pattern (above). Or several such points of relative convergence might emerge. Alternatively, by stretching the sheet so that a single space emerged in the centre, all the communication lines between points would be pushed into an approximate circle around it, creating the circle pattern.

The grid deformation approach which has been briefly outlined above may also be associated with a possible application of catastrophe theory to an analysis of meeting events, structural stability and morphogenesis.

But even if a highly ordered communication pattern is achieved, this does not necessarily mean that it can focus usefully in terms of any objectives. It may simply be an efficient way of dissipating energy generated at the central point (see elsewhere).

Supposing however that, in this case, a "counter-grid" or "counter-pattern" is delineated in the same way for the problems with which the elements of the communication pattern are confronted. This problem pattern could simply be the reflection of the other (effectively generated by "reflection" within it on the perceived problems and how they are linked). But if the one pattern "comes to grips" with the other and is "constrained" by it, a balanced configuration could emerge in one of two forms.

Such forms may correspond to those of convex or concave lenses. The resulting optical analogy draws attention to the significance of the fact that, constrained into curvature in this way, the focal point, previously "at infinity", is brought closer to the lens according to the degree to which the configuration is constrained into curvature (being at the centre of a spherical configuration, as the limiting case).

### 13. MEETINGS AS METAPHORS

It is normally assumed that meetings are either concerned with issues in wider society (the external world) or constitute an environment or vehicle for interaction between persons or viewpoints (or possibly a mixture of both). Both perspectives fail, in an important respect, to focus on the meeting itself. They treat the meeting as a vehicle or device but fail to consider the significance of the structures and processes constituting the vehicle, whether as a result of forces emerging within the meeting or during its planning stages.

Meetings may usefully be viewed as models of the reality of the forces and perspectives in the wider external society as comprehended within the meeting. This is only partly acknowledged in concern for the representativity of the meeting. This concern only reflects an awareness, from a particular perspective, of who or what should be represented at the meeting. The meeting structures and processes reflect more than the simple list of participants or themes, they reflect their possible relationship in the light of the constraints imposed on the meeting. As such they constitute a map of the external reality, significant in its own right and especially because of any detectable limitations.

In a different sense a meeting also provides a convenient "surface" onto which concerns may be projected. As such, some meetings may be treated as new opportunities to redefine and concretize "the good, the true, and the beautiful", following the failures of previous attempts.

The problems of the external world are also reflected in the decisions and compromises required to organize the meeting. Clear examples arise from policies (or their absence) on: handicapped participants, interpretation budgets, travel budgets, privileges, space and time constraints, use of recycled paper, *etc.*

Aside from such technical problems, the more fundamental societal problems can also emerge to some degree in embryonic form in the meeting environment, if only as analogues. Examples are: limitations on the human rights of participants; alienation, structural violence; problems arising from the multitude of participants each concerned  
o populate society with their particular perspectives; intellectual or emotional undernourishment of participants in the meeting process; problems associated with the different levels of education/experience of participants, and the constraints imposed by ever present ignorance; overconsumption and privileged use of resources. In each case the forces contributing to the problem may be observed.

Given the central role of meetings in society, they may also be seen as the focal point from which arise programmes, organizations, information systems (including periodicals, bibliographies, *etc.*), and recognized problems. Such societal artifacts emerge, "peel off" and

acquire separate identity, partly because of insensitivity to the significance of the meeting and avoidance of the issues it raises. In this sense such artifacts are an escape from the immediacy of the issues raised by the meeting and a delegation of action to others beyond the here-and-now. A loss of vitality and information content goes with this loss of immediacy.

Meetings also usefully model the capacity of those assembled to interweave their perspectives and skills within a viable whole - a whole capable of encompassing creatively the problems to which those same perspectives give rise. In this sense failure to bring about a new level of significance within the meeting is a strong indication of the limited relevance of the assembly to wider society.

Following from the previous point, meetings can be used by participants as a social microcosm within which the significance of emergent insights can be tested. As such they are extremely valuable laboratories which have the immense advantage of being immediately accessible to those participating.

#### **14. MODELLING MEETINGS: ANALOGIES AND METAPHORS**

It is easy to get locked into a conventional pattern of reflection about meetings. This blocks the opportunity offered by many analogies to highlight alternative or complementary perspectives. These can be useful in suggesting more fruitful approaches, if only under special circumstances.

##### **1. Games and contests:**

(a) *Medieval tournament*: Participants may be viewed as knights gathered for a tournament. Each bearing a heraldic coat of arms representing his qualities and territorial origins to be defended at all costs. Contests are ritualized under an elaborate code of honour.

(b) *Miss Universe contest*: Issues are paraded before eminent panellists who discuss their qualities before ranking them and selecting the "issue of the year". The whole process being immersed in a sea of public relations and other interests.

(c) *Martial art*: The struggle between issues or their representatives may be viewed in the light of the "holds" and "throws" of Eastern martial arts (aikido, judo, etc). In these the supreme achievement is to use the enemy's energy to defeat him, and ultimately to see the enemy as but a reflection of oneself.

(d) *Market-place*: The production, exchange and consumption of perspectives may be seen in terms of the dynamics of the market and the economic laws governing supply, demand and marketing considerations.

##### **2. Physical processes:**

(a) *Thermodynamics*: The social processes in the meeting may be viewed in terms of the relationships between "pressure", "volume", "temperature" and various measures of energy stored and released.

(b) *Magnetothermohydrodynamics*: The challenge of assembling the different participant orientations into a coherent configuration, generating and focusing the associated energies, and reaching a new level of significance, may be seen in the light of a fusion approach to plasma in a magnetic bottle.

(c) *Meteorology*: The condition of a meeting may be viewed in terms of meteorological phenomena: wind, fog, heat, cold, visibility, precipitation (rain, snow), clouds, warm/cold fronts, wind patterns, *etc.*

(d) *Geology/topography*: Participants and their interests may be viewed as geographical features (continents, islands, mountains) isolated or linked by seas, rivers, rifts, *etc.*

### **3. Biological and chemical processes:**

(a) *Chemistry*: The "chemistry" of a meeting may be explored as the sequence or pattern of reactions taking place at a certain rate, possibly in the presence of catalysts. A meeting may also be seen as a "chemical soup" within which new varieties of complex molecules may emerge under certain conditions.

(b) *Biochemical and metabolic processes*: The range of possible meeting processes may be seen as constituting a map of pathways whereby various kinds of essential transformation take place with the assistance of specific enzymes.

(c) *Environmental genetics*: The viewpoints represented and emerging at a meeting may be seen in terms of species and gene pools linked and isolated by food webs and ecological niches, but subject to genetic drift and mutation. Such environments may be poor, vulnerable, or in process of enrichment. Meetings may be seen as ruled by the "law of the jungle".

### **4. Agriculture and food processing:**

(a) *Horticulture and gardening*: A meeting may be seen as a garden of flowers, vegetables and other species (with "a hundred flowers blooming"). The challenge is to care appropriately for these species: to water, to cover, to prune, to weed, to encourage or reduce certain insects, *etc.*

(b) *Cooking*: A meeting may be viewed as a menu of dishes amongst which participants select. Balance is important both in selecting the dishes an individual consumes (the art of the gourmet) and in combining the ingredients whereby a dish is prepared (the culinary art).

(c) *Diet*: A meeting may be viewed in terms of the dietary regime appropriate to participant nourishment, namely the quantity of carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins, interpreted as various kinds of information. The question of "calories", "exercise" and "obesity" may also be raised.

### **5. Physical constructs:**

(a) *Architecture*: The structural and functional divisions of a meeting may be viewed in terms of architectural analogues, from the simple one-room hut to the complex cathedral, fortress or palace. This raises questions of design and practicality of layout.

(b) *Tensegrity*: This recent advance in architectural possibilities (and the basis of the geodesic dome) suggests new ways of balancing configurations of opposing forces in a meeting.

(c) *Circuits*: The variety of components in electric, electronic and fluidic circuits suggest ways of combining well differentiated modes of participant information processing.

## **6. Social activities:**

(a) *Orchestra*: The challenge of interrelating participant view points to produce a new balance between harmony and dissonance may be seen in terms of an orchestra.

(b) *Theatre*: The possibilities of drama, dramatic tension, the roles of actors, and the audience relationship have often been used to describe meetings.

(c) *Dance*: The rhythmic interweaving of dancers may also be used to describe the rhythm of meeting processes and participant interaction.

(d) *Temple ritual*: The meeting as a ceremony of celebration of the values to which the participants subscribe may be seen in terms of temple processes with extremes of sacrifice and communion accompanied by ritual chants.

## **7. Psycho-physical processes:**

(a) *Respiration*: The meeting may be viewed as composed of cycles of inbreathing and outbreathing of information in the light of yoga attitudes towards the ultimate significance of such processes.

(b) *Meditation*: The meeting may be viewed as an exercise in collective meditation and group consciousness, with all the consequent problems of physical, emotional and mental alignment.

(c) *Alchemy*: The various alchemical processes explored by psychoanalysts may be used to model the progressive transmutation of the crude (material) perspectives initially present in the meeting.

## **15. PARTICIPANT INTERACTION MODES**

Meetings as a whole, or groups of participants within a meeting, may give preference to one or more modes of interaction possibly at different stages of the meeting. This effectively determines the styles of the meeting and may either attract or alienate certain participants.

### **1. Primarily verbal modes:**

(a) *Fact-oriented*: The stress is on stating information (often quantitative) considered to be factual, querying such facts, comparing them, and extrapolating from them to domains about which fewer facts are known by those present.

(b) *Affect-oriented*: The stress is on the expression of emotional opinion concerning different experiences and facts. Participants may be emotionally aroused by the repeated reinforcement of certain opinions.

(c) *Concept-oriented*: In this mode, categories of fact and experience are compared, criticized, re-ordered, possibly with only incidental reference to the referents.

(d) *Doctrine-oriented*: A set of beliefs shared by participants may give rise to statements reaffirming and justifying them, as well as extending their application to new domains. This includes interaction about legal and procedural matters.

(e) *Value-oriented*: Statements stressing the qualitative importance of particular approaches to any of the above.

(f) *Action prescriptive*: Here the stress is on what should be done, usually in the light of any of the above.

## 2. Primarily non-verbal modes:

(a) *Physical sharing*: Feasting/drinking, dance, physical games, group exercises.

(b) *Emotional sharing*: Drama, song, music, group empathy exercises.

(c) *Intellectual sharing*: Conceptual "resonance" of participants ("on the same wavelength"), usually stimulated by occasional words; drama, music.

(d) *Status affirming*: Actions which reinforce the importance of a participant and of those who articulate the beliefs or doctrines he shares.

(e) *Communal celebration*: Partially ritualized collective affirmation of values, and renewal of participant belief therein.

(f) *Action*: Shared work, whether constructive or destructive.

## 16. DIFFERENCES IN STYLES OF ARTISTIC AND POLICY ENDEAVOUR

It is a clearly a basic mistake to assume that the sense of either appropriate aesthetics or appropriate policy-making is held in the same way, whether between cultures or within any culture. Indeed it is these differences which contribute most to the distinctions between cultures, and between the ways in which people develop within them. For any project to be significant to this larger multi-cultural context, there must therefore be an ability to respond to the variety of styles of aesthetic or policy endeavour.

The following "axes of bias" derive from work by the philosopher W T Jones who was concerned with a new methodology in dealing with strongly held differences in any debate. His interest was provoked by the unending debate on the definition of the "romantic period" -- hence the title of the book. The result, which he extended to both the sciences and the arts, is one way of understanding the different emphases which people and cultures may bring to any debate -- prior to any "rational" discussion on substance. They are not mutually exclusive. This initiative could be related to that on the underlying metaphors of different management styles as explored by Gareth Morgan (\*\*). Can each such emphasis or bias be recognized as a skill in a pattern that interrelates their differences?

### (a) Order vs disorder

Namely the range between a preference for fluidity, muddle chaos, etc. and a preference for system, structure, conceptual clarity, etc.

**1. Ordered array**: Modes of work can be viewed as constituting an ordered array, like stations on a subway network. This view would tend to be favoured by those who are used to defining their environment in an orderly manner, in terms which favour management and control, whatever the degree of simplification necessary. In such an array, all modes are relatively accessible, although some may only be reached through intervening conditions. Modes are different, but not necessarily better in any developmental sense. In this metaphor, development might be envisaged in terms of extending and complexifying the network into a rich array of modes. This would be contrasted with a less developed condition equivalent to a subway network with relatively few stations and (possibly unconnected) lines. Goals of human development

might be expressed in terms of improving the stations, increasing the facility of movement throughout the network, and organizing the network into the most effective configuration of stations. *(To be contrasted with...)*

**2. Disorder and chaos:** Modes of work can be viewed as completely unordered, to the point of being essential chaotic and disorderly. This view would tend to be favoured by those who have lost control over their environment, realize that they are subject to more forces than they originally assumed, or simply prefer the challenge of the disorderly and unpredictable (cf

William James, Bergson, Schopenhauer, Rousseau). Modes of work are then too confusing to present any stable or orderly features permitting them to be distinguished or labelled. In this metaphor, development might be more concerned with ways of experiencing this chaos more completely, responding to it in a manner unfiltered and uncensored by artificial orderings.

#### **(b) Static vs dynamic**

Namely the range between a preference for the changeless, eternal, etc. and a preference for movement, for explanation in genetic and process terms, etc.

**3. Static structure:** Modes of work can be viewed as forming a static, semi-permanent set of psychological conditions (especially by those who benefit from such predictability). This view would tend to be favoured by those seeking a reliable workforce (employers), stable markets (advertisers), or faithful constituencies (politicians), over an extended period of time. The view is then reinforced by legislation and regulatory procedures anticipating the range of basic needs of the average citizen, which are held to be unchanging or to change quite slowly. Human development is then primarily the process of ensuring that more people have such needs satisfied. *(To be contrasted with...)*

**4. Dynamic structure:** Modes of work can be viewed as constituting a dynamic structure, in which the modes arise in the dynamic relations between static elements. Like harmonies and melodies, based on a configuration of established musical notes, such modes cannot be readily isolated and named. They only exist as dynamic relationships changing continuously. This view would tend to be favoured by those who respond to the unique opportunities of the moment, possibly because their survival depends on the uniqueness of their response. In terms of the musical metaphor, human development then becomes a question of being able to form more complex harmonies amongst the predictable features of the environment, encompassing for longer periods the disharmonies which might otherwise be considered more significant.

#### **(c) Continuity vs discreteness**

Namely the range between a preference for wholeness, unity, etc and a preference for discreteness, plurality, diversity, etc.

**5. Discrete phenomena:** Modes of work can be viewed as distinct, with some form of boundary separating them. This view would tend to be favoured by those who need to distinguish clearly where they are, either from where they have been, or from where they want to be. As on a ladder, each mode corresponds to a dependable step and there is no intermediate condition. In terms of this metaphor, human development may then be conceived as moving up a series of steps, possibly understood as a series of initiations, or developmental stages. From each successive step a broader view may be possible, incorporating those below it. *(To be contrasted with...)*

**6. Continuous phenomena:** Modes of work can be viewed as part of a single continuous field of work. In the light of field theories, particular modes might then be understood as interference patterns (cf Moiré patterns). In this metaphor, human development might be understood in terms of increasing the number and complexity of such interference patterns and increasing the facility for shifting elegantly between them.

**(d) Inner vs outer**

Namely the range between a preference for being able to project oneself into the objects of one's experience (to experience them as one experiences oneself), and a preference for a relatively external, objective relation to them.

**7. External relationship to phenomena:** Modes of work can be viewed as externalities, as objects of investigation, and as "places" that can be visited. As such their existence is independent of any particular observer. This view would be favoured by those with either a rationalist or an empiricist orientation. This may be seen in the scientific investigation of states associated with biorhythms. It is basic to the assumptions in many educational development programmes. Human development is thus a question of acquiring the expertise, or possibly the technology, to gain access to such places at will. *(To be contrasted with...)*

**8. Identification with phenomena:** Modes of work can be held to be only genuinely comprehensible through an intuitive identification with the experience they constitute, experienced by the observer as he experiences himself (cf Bergson, Hegel). This view would be favoured by those whose views have been strongly formed by particular unsought personal experiences of altered states of work, largely unconditioned by external explanations and expectations. Human development from this perspective might then be viewed as progressive achievement of a more profound, enduring, and all-encompassing identification with such states through which identity itself is redefined.

**(e) Sharp focus vs soft focus**

Namely the range between a preference for clear, direct experience and a preference for threshold experiences, felt to be saturated with more meaning than is immediately present.

**9. Sharply defined phenomena:** Modes of work can be viewed as being directly experienceable (cf Descartes, Hume), like individually framed paintings. This view would tend to be favoured by those concerned with the objective reality of such states as joy, pleasure, and love. For them, any other kinds of work are unreal abstractions of no significance, other than as distractions from the concrete reality of human experience. Human development might then be viewed as a process of achieving more intense experiences more frequently, rather as an art connoisseur seeks greater exposure to better paintings, through which his taste is developed. *(To be contrasted with...)*

**10. Implicitly defined phenomena:** Modes of work can be viewed as implying levels of significance greater than that immediately experienced (cf Hegel, Whitehead, Niebuhr, Proust). As with the experience of an iceberg, this view would tend to be favoured by those for whom work encompasses both the tip and some sense of the invisible presence of its underlying mass (and the possibility that it may suddenly become visible). Significance is derived from the unexpressed presence or the potential of any moment. Human development might then be viewed as the birth of such potential and the increasing recognition of the immensity that remains unexpressed.

**(f) This world vs other world**

Namely the range between preference for belief in the spatio-temporal world as self-explanatory and preference for belief that it is not and can only be comprehended in terms of other frames.

**11. Inherently comprehensible phenomena:** Modes of work can be viewed as comprehensible in terms of existing paradigms or through their natural evolution. This view would tend to be favoured by pragmatists, and those with a scientific orientation, for whom a satisfactory explanation in terms of collectively known factors must eventually be possible (if one cannot immediately be imposed). Human development is then a process of making what is known to the experts more widely accessible and of investigating what they do not yet comprehend. *(To be contrasted with...)*

**12. Inherently incomprehensible phenomena:** Modes of work can be viewed as calling for explanation in terms of other frames of reference, which may not necessarily be accessible to the human mind (cf Plato, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Plotinus, Niebuhr, Toynbee). This view would tend to be favoured by many religious groups and in cultures sympathetic to belief in other levels of being or realms of existence. Human development is then essentially an evolving mystery whose nature is beyond the grasp of the human mind.

**(g) Spontaneity vs process**

Namely the range between a preference for chance, freedom, accident, etc and a preference for explanations subject laws and definable processes.

**13. Phenomena in a context of due process:** Modes of work can be viewed as subject to known (or knowable) laws as a part of definable processes. This view would tend to be favoured by those endeavouring to develop programmes of human development in which certain modes are experienced at certain stages or developmental phases. Human development is then viewed rather like an educational curriculum through which people need to pass in an orderly manner, building on appropriate foundational experiences, to the possible levels of achievement defined by the outstanding pioneers of the last. *(To be contrasted with...)*

**14. Spontaneous phenomena:** Modes of work can be viewed as totally spontaneous conditions or peak experiences unconnected to each other. This view would tend to be favoured by those who perceive chance, accident or divine intervention to be prime explanatory factors. It is also natural to those who respond spontaneously to their environment, placing relatively little reliance on norms and expectations. In this view human development is the increasing ability to rely on the spontaneity of the moment and the ability to respond proactively to the opportunities it offers.

Clearly these different views are not mutually exclusive and overlap in complex ways in the case of any culture, discipline or school of thought. The 14 views have in fact been elaborated on the basis of an investigation by W T Jones (1961), who developed 7 axes of bias by which many academic debates could be characterized. The 14 views above form 7 pairs of extremes corresponding to the extreme positions on such axes. Jones showed how any individual had a profile of pre-logical preferences based on the degree of inclination towards one or other extreme of each pair. The scholars named in each case are those given by Jones as examples.

*W T Jones (The Romantic Syndrome: toward a new method in cultural anthropology and the history of ideas. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1961)*

## **17. PARTICIPANT PERSONALITY NEEDS AND PROBLEMS**

Wherever individuals groups or institutions work to remedy social problems, there is an inability of all concerned to admit openly the psychosocial needs of the individuals and groups involved. It is only in informal discussion, and in the absence of the concerned individual, that there is frank discussion of how to confer a sense of prestige by suitable juggling of organizational procedures and positions, appropriate use of flattery, *etc.*

The facilitation of individual "ego trips", for example, is often an absolutely essential condition for their further support of a meeting or project. Even when two organizations or initiatives should be merged in the light of all available information, this will be opposed (behind-the-scenes), by the personalities involved, unless their status needs can be fulfilled.

Such concerns, whether for a person individually, or for a group as represented by an individual, are basic to all social action. When they are not even recognized in behind-the-scenes planning, they are recognized tacitly in the dynamics of interaction with the person in question.

The inability to handle these matters in open debate severely inhibits the manner in which organizations or meetings can function. Even in crisis situations, discussion of action to be taken during a meeting will not occur until these other matters have been satisfactorily resolved through behind-the-scenes manoeuvring. Frequently it is questionable, even in a crisis situation, whether a given individual is not more interested in the recognition accorded to himself or his group than in any substantive matter which may be discussed.

Organizational action of any kind (and even in response to crises) may be perceived primarily as providing a legitimate opportunity for appropriate conference and organizational ritual to satisfy the psychosocial needs of the individuals and groups involved. The situation is particularly serious when the personality needs are neurotic or border on the psychopathic. There are many well-documented examples of this amongst national leadership, and in the leadership of groups represented in conferences or having responsibilities during them. Such matters cannot currently be discussed in open debate.

Clearly the priority accorded to these needs, and the inability to give explicit recognition to them in organizational documents or debate, despite their fundamental importance to organized action emerging during conferences, constitute a constraint upon the full realization of human potential. This is the case both because it distorts the manner by which a person develops through action within an organization or meeting, and because it distorts the manner by which an organization or meeting is able to act.

## **18. PARTICIPANT ENTRAPMENT: ALIENATION OF COMMITTED ACTIVISTS**

Each generation produces a number of well-qualified individuals concerned with one or more social problems and prepared to commit themselves, and possibly their careers, in an effort to achieve a significant impact upon them. Such people frequently instigate or function actively in meetings.

As in any occupation, some years are spent learning the dimensions of the problem and the possibilities for action, especially in a conference environment. Thereafter, however, many of them find themselves forced into positions of compromise. In an effort to stick to their original values, they come into conflict with conference structures and resource realities which often prevent anything more than token action.

They are encouraged to be patient and find that patience changes little. They find that those activists who have preceded them, and continue to attend meetings, lapse easily into cynicism or are satisfied with minimal change. They find that those who are similarly inspired, and who should be their allies, are frequently hostile and suspicious of any form of cooperation of more than a token nature.

Some become aware that even when their recommendations are fully accepted in a conference, and implemented by some organizational system with apparent success, the system in effect nullifies such achievements by adjusting itself so that other different problems emerge. There is then no end to such a chain of displaced problems, many of which are as much internal to the system of meetings and organizations as they are external foci of the action of a meeting or an organization.

These situations finally lead to a withdrawal (or "loss of faith") of many of the committed activists.

This withdrawal takes place without transfer of acquired experience and insight to others who might later be able to overcome the dynamics of entrapment. There is no accumulation of learning. Those who know about the dynamics are often unable to speak about them, or have lost the desire to do so. Those who do speak about them are frequently ill-informed, self-interested and merely provoke a repetition of learning cycles.

This withdrawal may well take the form of a refusal to participate in meetings in which their insight would be invaluable. They may argue that "large conferences are a useless waste of time". Such conferences then become meetings of the uninitiated with all that implies for their outcome.

Some withdraw partially and are willing to attend conferences if they are given some significant role in their organization, or as speakers. As such they may be totally indifferent to the impact on participants of the conflicting views disseminated by themselves and their colleagues of the same frame of mind.

Other eminent individuals attend conferences but remain silent in order to allow time for the uninitiated participants to interact and learn from the experience. Again this may prevent their experience from being appropriately reflected in the outcome.

## **19. PARTICIPANT ENTRAPMENT: REPETITION OF LEARNING CYCLES**

In many social domains, reflected in conferences, time and a variety of collective experiences have created amongst those concerned an awareness of which actions are feasible, viable and useful and which are not. Such collective learning is difficult to transfer to others in such a manner as to enable them to understand the (usually relatively sophisticated) dynamics which limit the value of seemingly obvious positive actions.

Since there is a certain turnover of organizations, groups and individuals concerned with the problem in that domain, and represented at relevant conferences, those entering a meeting for the first time tend to initiate proposals, recommendations and programmes which past experience has shown to be a waste of resources or of otherwise limited value. They will however have difficulty in recognizing this and will attribute past failure to ineffectiveness of those involved at that time.

The consequence is that any group (possibly of institutions) with experience extending over several "programme generations" always has latecomers who are drawn together at a meeting

in support of projects which constitute the repetition of a learning cycle. Such cycles must play themselves out in order that the latecomers may acquire the understanding as to why those particular actions are of limited effectiveness. They will however then be repeated when the number of newcomers again becomes great enough to make it difficult to redirect their attention during a meeting from such seemingly obvious courses of action, particularly when the obvious courses attract good press coverage with its immediate pay-off.

This repeated fragmentation of groups and the use of resources in support of ineffective programmes clearly limits the ability of meetings to respond adequately to any problem situation. It is also discouraging to those who have already acquired, through such learning cycles, the necessary knowledge base from which more effective programmes could be designed.

However, it is also the desire of the latecomers to apply their creative energies without regard for past experience which leads to the acquisition of new knowledge.

The situation is such that it is seldom possible to blend both forms of knowledge in a meeting in an effective response to the problem situation.

## **20. NON-LINEAR AGENDAS AND LINEAR THINKING**

There is increasing expression of regret at the prevalence of "linear thinking". By this is meant any ordering of concepts which is sequential between (or within) subdivisions but contains no loops linking non-proximate elements in the sequence. Such linearity constitutes a method of ordering experience which is recognized as crude in relationship to the complexity of the environment.

Linear thinking is reinforced by many of the conventional responses to constraints on presentation of information:

- (a) The necessarily linear sequence of: words in sentences, paragraphs, sections, and chapters in documents. (This is only slightly modified by the device of parallel columns of text).
- (b) The linear schemes for numbering subdivisions of any structured document or thesaurus.
- (c) The sequential ordering of words of a speaker at a meeting.

The agenda of a meeting conforms to this pattern of linearity in the sequence of agenda items. Even the use of parallel sessions or sequences of sessions maintains the linearity. There are no particularly satisfactory procedures to ensure cross-fertilization between sessions and convergence on new levels of significance or synthesis.

An interesting alternative to the conventional representation of an agenda by items in a linear sequence having a beginning and an end, is to treat the sequence as circular, so that the end joins the beginning. The agenda items are then associated with points on the circumference, through which the meeting may progress sequentially.

This raises the interesting questions:

- (a) Should the subdivision of the circumference into agenda items constitute a complete set as implied by this approach - thus "exhausting" the topic? And does it, if only by an "other matters" item?

(b) Should the last element in any such sequence link back to the first - "closing the loop"? Or is the relationship between the beginning and the end unclear and, if so, why?

For more complex agendas, with distinct themes considered to be complementary or in some way related, one circular sequence may be subdivided for each such principal theme. But rather than separating the circles, they may then be represented as overlapping, such that the related agenda items in different thematic circles are at the points of overlap. Since such circles necessarily overlap at two points, one can indicate the priority of theme A over B, and the other the priority of theme B over A - necessary conditions for functional interweaving.

In order to move beyond this simple representation of non-linear interconnectedness, the communication links between non-adjacent items, necessary to preserve the topology of the representation, may then be inserted. This permits the agenda to be represented as a 3-dimensional configuration of functionally related items in which the necessary relationships to maintain the integrity of the configuration are explicitly indicated.

This procedure has the advantage of challenging any simplistic comprehension of the verbal description normally used to identify individual agenda items. Then the meaning to be associated with such descriptors emerges to a greater extent from the position of the items within the configuration. The latter also raises useful questions about the relative importance of agenda items possibly leading to the combination or subdivision of some of them.

Clarifying the non-linear relationships between the agenda items can guide conceptualization and action concerning the relationship between meeting sub-division (into groups, commissions, *etc*) and any attempt at synthesis in plenary.

Configurations of the kind described may also be considered as representing functional subdivision through the subdivision of a spherical surface area rather than a line. From this point of view, the implications of subdivision by triangulation (the basis of topographical survey techniques), rather than by linear subdivision, should be considered. The former respects relationships, the latter ignores them.

## **21. PATTERN LANGUAGE FOR PARTICIPANTS**

This section gives a very provisional outline of the "windows" through which any participant might choose to perceive a "conference" and the possibilities for action there. In its final form, distributed to participants, each item here could have attached comments and advice as a kind of "how-to-do-it" or "recipe" book open to subsequent amendment by participants themselves.

### **1. Meeting patterns: Organization and Services**

"Pattern" is a suggestive general term to describe any particular (and usually familiar) way of organizing the flow of energies in a gathering. Patterns can be combined into a network within a "pattern language". Some of the resulting arrangements are "better" than others, and the challenge is to find arrangements which enhance the hidden quality which makes them "feel right" in a given set of circumstances.

(a) *Macro-patterns* include: Conference, fair, market/bazaar, agora/forum, symposium, workshop, demonstration, drama show, reception, exhibition, court, festival, lecture, pilgrimage, passion play, ceremony/ritual, panel session, sharing, brainstorming, songfest, games, holiday camp, contest, public blessing, celebration, discussion, group meditation, carnival, show/music hall, majlis, dance, happening, procession, retreat, audio-visual.

(b) *Micro-patterns* include: Talking to speaker, speaking to group, sharing with another, protesting, learning, coffee table discussion, swapping information, lobbying/persuading, having fun, changing, distributing papers, receiving documents, show and tell, meeting new people, non-verbal experience.

## **2. Pattern participation: Roles**

Many of the above patterns are "activated" only by the presence of people playing appropriate roles. People may take up these roles irrespective of the formal reason for their participation in the gathering and their performance may be more significant for the gathering than their concerns (see below). These roles may in fact be considered as sub-patterns in their own right.

(a) *Role patterns* include: Speaker, listener, jester, facilitator, writer, therapist, devil's advocate, priest, sympathizer, strategist, rapporteur, interpreter, musician, creative artist, performer, "accompanying person", game organizer, child, ego stroker, agent provocateur, improviser, note-taker, critic, organizer, lobbyist, caterer, adviser, old person, fixer, presenter, animator, super-star, wise person, networker, mediator, handicapped, fan, appreciator, material arranger, discussant, ritualist, chairperson, security person, helper.

## **3. Pattern concerns**

People participate in events because of "concerns" which they wish in some way to advance or promote. These concerns colour the energy content of the patterns through which they are expressed.

(a) *Theoretical concerns* as represented by the intellectual disciplines of which, ungrouped, there are some 1,800.

(b) *Substantive concerns*, namely societal problems and conditions, typically including: population, inflation, unemployment, refugees, energy, environment, illiteracy, human rights.

(c) *Aesthetic concerns*, especially their expression and involving others in that expression: music, song, poetry, art, theatre, dance, textures, perfumes.

(d) *Intangible experiential concerns*: prayer, meditation, power, humour, risk, renewal, ego trip, other negative values, other positive values.

## **4. Pattern perception**

In a complex gathering people need to have some image through which to make sense of the event as a whole and of where it is going, and to help them to decide on how to participate in it. Whatever the images used they are needed to give a sense of continuity and context. Different people prefer one or more different images:

(a) *Structure*: The gathering may be "objectified" in terms of any of the following:

- Agenda, critical pathway, system diagram
- Programme matrix, event timetable, programme "tracks"

(b) *Risk*: Participants may prefer to assess their participation in terms of "risk tracks". Some may be entirely conventional low-risk lecture/discussion type events. Others may be designed to make the participant take or defend a position as a person. Others may involve the participant in some personal transformation process; and some may be high-risk experiments which may fail, as experiments do, providing lessons for the future.

(c) *Ceremonial and celebration*: The gathering may be decided as a grouping of sub-ceremonies culminating or constituting some macro- event. This may involve, or be seen as, the high point of a pilgrimage with associated festival activity.

(d) *Games*: The gathering may be described as a pattern of interlocking games, whether recreational, therapeutic or "serious" in intent. An underlying objective may be the emergence of qualitatively superior games (eg in the style of Hesse's Glass Bead Game).

(e) *Topic tracks*: The gathering may also be objectified as a complex set of interweaving topic ("concern") tracks as is often done in conventional conferences.

(f) *Quest*: The gathering may be attractive to some when interpreted as a mystical quest or an exercise in collective alchemical marriage.

(g) *Learning pathways*: To those oriented towards education, the gathering may best be understood as a complex set of interweaving learning pathways.

(h) *Energy sources and sinks*: Some may choose to see the event in terms of sources of different qualities to be cultivated, energy receptacles to be created and maintained, and energy sinks or traps to be avoided. The whole event may be seen in terms of gathering and using ch'i energy.

(i) *Community*: Some may prefer to experience the event as an "instant community", enriched by the presence of children, old people, the handicapped, etc.

(j) *Imagery and dance*: Such a gathering can also lend itself to comprehension as a pattern of aesthetic images, or as a dance of energies.

(k) *Group formation*: For some there will be ways of using information which could make of the whole gathering a gigantic experiment in forming and reforming groups until the most mature groups emerge suitably empowered and able to relate appropriately to other groups emphasizing other energies.

(l) *Socio-political analysis*: The gathering will lend itself to description and interpretation in terms of power politics and societal dynamics.

(m) *Abstract forms*: Some may wish to see the gathering as energies patterned onto more abstract forms:

- Spiral, hierarchy, network, tensegrity, mandala
- Matrix, torus, polyhedron, knot

(n) *Symbol systems*: Some may be attracted by seeing the interweaving energies at the gathering in terms of a particular symbol system such as astrology, the *I Ching*, any pantheon, etc. These could even be used to identify imbalance in the energies represented, blockages in the evolution of the event, or threshold tests and challenges.

(o) *Catastrophe theory*: The transitions in the event may be best understood by some in the light of the mathematics of catastrophe theory.

(p) *Drama*: The gathering should be dramatic, and some may want to participate in it in such a way as to heighten the dramatic effects and the significance of the event as a whole.

(q) *Psycho-cultural analysis*: The forms and expressions of the gathering can be seen in

psychoanalytical terms with necessary archetypal confrontations.

(r) *Group healing exercise:* The gathering may be seen as a body to be healed and rendered whole.

(s) *Ecosystem:* The various perspectives and processes may be best mapped by some onto an image of some environmental system with different species interacting, procreating and developing somewhat at the mercy of the elements.

(t) *Information processing device:* The whole gathering may be interpreted as a complex bio-mechanical computer processing different types of information, storing it, and forming it into various images of the whole possibly with some final output.

(u) *Taoist group meditation:* The gathering may also be understood as a collective meditation.