

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THEORY U

He [the free human being] must sacrifice his puny, unfree will, which is controlled by things and instincts, to his grand will, which quits defined for destined being.

Martin Buber

In this last subchapter heading we will look at aspects of experiential spirituality that involve larger groups and organizations. They are better known under such expressions as *social technology* or *organizational learning*. However, terminology notwithstanding, the principles we will illustrate resonate with everything we have explored previously.

In the world of business, governance, or within Civil Society—at the macro level—two opposing tendencies are gaining momentum. On the one hand forces of destruction supported by rising fundamentalism—religious/cultural, political, and economic—are gaining strength and, through manipulation and coercion, bringing about growing disruption and destruction at a global scale. On the other hand here too we witness waves of new consciousness arising silently and largely unnoticed, involving profound social innovation. This will lead humanity to a marked choice, between a barren, soulless, and mechanized society driven by the pursuit of the bottom line or the possibility of sustainable societies with expanded choice, fuller citizen participation and complex degrees of integration of all stakeholder needs. The latter is a scenario that requires the encouragement, development, and sustenance of a whole new awareness.

That a “spiritual revolution” is afoot in the world of business has been recognized recently by magazines such as *Business Week*.¹ One very simple reason for that stems for the pressing need for change, adaptation, and survival in a world in constant and unpredictable change. Otto Scharmer, working in the field of organizational learning, distinguishes three levels of organizational complexity:

- dynamic complexity: visible in the delay between cause and effect in space and time
- social complexity: the greater this complexity, the more it is necessary to adopt multistakeholder approaches
- emerging complexity characterized by continuously unfolding sets of challenges, and lack of clarity about who the stakeholders are.

The latter is the challenge encountered by many of the larger entities at work in the global arena. The higher each level of complexity, the less can one resort to past experience to address current and future challenges. Due to this high degree of dynamic complexity, according to studies, attempted efforts at restructuring and reengineering businesses failed at a rate of 70% in the 1990s.² That major changes have affected global business is made graphic in yet other ways. Many corporations that ranked highest in their field have downsized or disappeared in the last decennia. In 1976 the largest part of world corporations were based in the US; by 1995 only seventeen of these were still in the US.³

There is a growing general loss of confidence at all institutional levels. Leaders in schools, hospitals, the public sector, and businesses have a diffuse feeling that the present situation will hit a wall within the next ten years or earlier, and that new solutions will not

appear in time. They feel isolated and trapped and unable to come up with genuine solutions.

An example to illustrate this point is the health care system in the US, where 80% of the budget is devoured by five behavioral issues: smoking, drinking, overeating, stress, and lack of exercise.⁴ Thirty billion dollars per year are spent on bypasses or angioplasties. Half of the bypasses clog up again in a few years, the angioplasties much earlier. The reason for this colossal failure is that less than 10% of patients take on lifestyle changes in the intervening time. In other words, the system uses tremendous resources of energy and funds to temporarily palliate behavioral problems without addressing systemic, durable change.

More and more executives attribute their success in business to an active and disciplined adoption of spiritual practices in their daily work and life. But transformational approaches are also promoted at a larger-than-individual level and even increasingly affect the content of technological innovation. An example of technological innovation is that of the Xerox 265 DC copier, which is 97% recyclable.⁵ The motivation for innovation was derived from a concrete experience of a dozen engineers on a spiritual retreat in northern New Mexico. Seeing a Xerox paper carbon on top of old motor oil at the bottom of a pit, they decided to build a machine that would not cause pollution.

Recently, organizational change has been perfected to the point where groups can be led to subtle and durable consciousness shifts in their way of operating together, even when individuals have not faced a corresponding change of consciousness on their own. What the individual may not achieve for herself, she may achieve in a group. In other words, new social technology can act as a vehicle and instrument for the attainment of new ways of operating. The results translate to a higher degree of performance, adaptation to changing business environment and customer needs, and the evolution of complex networks of mobile and evolving stakeholder relationships.

Much of the impulse to change the way of seeing the business world comes from the important breakthroughs achieved in the so-called New Science, promoted through Quantum Physics, Systems Theory, Chaos Theory, and many other new and evolving branches of knowledge. In effect, through these new sciences the focus has moved from space and substance to the ideas of relationships and processes. Particularly in quantum physics, scientists have discovered with growing surprise that our material world does not rest on predictable particles in static relationship to each other, but on evolving, dynamic sets of relationships that engender states of probability that are not fully determinable and are constantly evolving. The particular sets of evolving relationships form the building blocks of the new physics, just as particles and waves did in the Newtonian science of the past.

Margaret J. Wheatley articulates how the premises of the New Science have engendered a whole new worldview in the world of business.⁶ Quoting Fritjof Capra, she reiterates that “the universe is beginning to look more like a great thought than like a great machine.” The whole and the parts are given equal focus in this new approach, whereas in the mechanistic approach the whole is understood as the sum of the parts. This is a “both and” rather than an “either/or” viewpoint. The relationship between whole and parts is mirrored in the relationship between observer and observed, in the realization that

the two influence each other. We know from quantum physics that—at the quantum level at least—our environment is co-created through our acts of observation.

Margaret Wheatley applies with great inner coherence all the principles of the New Science to organizational learning. The focus of new organizational development is placed on processes and qualities: setting the conditions for clear intent; paying attention to patterns, direction, and internal rhythms; agreeing on how people can work together; and becoming better observers, learners, and colleagues are placed at the center of a new way of working in organizations. This is a shift towards “organizations of processes and relationships.”

At the first level we can place the element of vision. No organization can be effective without clarity about what it wants to become. In creating a vision, people create a power, not a destination. The same vision must permeate the whole of the workforce. A strong identity is paramount to the health of the community and how it adapts to change. The clearest vision goes together with individual freedom, allowing people to embody organizational values in uniquely individual fashion. This creates differences to start with, but over time, with the sharing of learning and information, orderly patterns emerge. A strong vision, clearly but freely articulated, is reflected in how values are conveyed and spoken of at every level of the organization, and a pattern of ethical behavior emerges. This combination of strong vision and individual freedom also enables an organization to retain direction and purpose through chaotic times.

At the center of the vision stand organizational values. Values are the most powerful force of attraction in an organization. But by far the most important is meaning, the idea that you are meant to be there and that your contribution counts. New values do not generate new behaviors. Only “social technology,” consciously applied, can allow for the emergence of new attitudes. And at the center of all this stands a clear commitment to the quality of communication and free flow of information.

Focusing on the quality of relationship means seeing the organization as the place that facilitates energy flows. In view of a certain goal, the attention would go to the energy and the relationships required to achieve the desired outcome, rather than to traditional expertise. Widening participation is one of the most effective organizational strategies. This is based on the premise that people support what they create. Things are not perceived as real if people are not called to participate in their creation, and consequently they will not commit afterwards.

The organization’s relationship to information is crucial. Information should be sought from everywhere and circulate freely so that as many people as possible can interpret it. What is generated from this circulation of information keeps the system able to constantly adapt to new conditions. A free flow of information is necessary for a new orderliness to arise, once we abandon the idea of control.

Encouraging this shift implies the need to move away from negative feedback (deviations from expected outcomes) to positive feedback that focuses on noticing the new and amplifying it. Some pioneering organizations will go as far as to continue this movement beyond their own boundaries. In a fitting image, information has been compared to a salmon going upstream. The organization ensures the stream is clear so that many more salmon can get to the source, allowing for a rich harvest of new ideas and projects. This is a view as “information as nourishment,” rather than “information as

power.” It is thus the leader’s role to nourish others with truthful, meaningful information.

The new approaches, resting on fresh scientific understanding, have further consequences at the level of systemic change. Learning from what nature teaches us, we know that stable systems do not suppress local disturbances. They support them—which means allowing them to amplify—and thus increase their own stability. The organization should thus prize natural order over control. “The more freedom in self-organization, the more order,” concludes Wheatley.

All the above leads us to truly novel concepts in terms of organizational learning. When an organization goes through a crisis, it can be restored to health by connecting it more to itself, by strengthening existing relationships and creating new ones. Wheatley offers this key insight: “The solutions to a system’s problems are usually within itself. If a system is suffering, this indicates that it lacks sufficient access to itself.” So, “in order to change, the system needs to know more about itself from itself.”

Key to organizational change is the search for new meaning; and this can best be achieved collectively if the group finds the impulse and courage to look at deeply meaningful ideas and challenges, and if it truly wants to see itself. Seeing holistically means recognizing patterns and trends, rather than focusing on individual factors or players. Patterns in a community or organization repeat themselves like fractals: they reappear at every level of observation. When these are perceived, accepted, and owned, a whole new impetus makes transformation desirable, and the energy necessary for change can be easily leveraged.

The proposition of the new science, linking the observer and the object of observation, is enshrined in the framework of Appreciative Inquiry. This premise also blurs the boundaries between inquiry and action. With Appreciative Inquiry D. L. Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva want to complement action research’s one-sided accent on action at the expense of research. “AI has as its basis a metaphysical concern: it posits that social existence as such is a miracle that can never be fully comprehended.” They add that “the action researcher is drawn to affirm, and thereby illuminate, the facets and forces involved in organizing that serve to nourish the human spirit.”⁷

Appreciative Inquiry reverses the positivist paradigm that asks “Does this theory correspond with the observable facts?” into “To what extent does this theory present provocative new possibilities for social action, and to what extent does it stimulate normative dialogue about how we can and should organize ourselves?” This is because there is no such separation between observer and observed as we can safely assume when we work with inanimate objects. Through our hypotheses we create the world we later discover.

AI begins by identifying what is positive in an organization or community and aims at connecting to it in ways that heighten energy, vision, and action for change. It sees the organization as “a solution to be embraced” rather than a “problem to be solved.” This can be said in the form of a new syllogism: Organizations move in the direction of their images of the future. Their images of the future are informed by the conversations they hold and the stories they tell. The stories they tell are informed by the questions they ask, so the questions asked are fateful. Drawn to its ultimate conclusion, this means that

inquiry is already the first form of intervention and action because it determines and conditions the field of action and change into which an organization moves.

The New Leadership

Not surprisingly, the above changes of perspective find themselves encapsulated in a new way of seeing leadership. In *Servant Leadership*, Robert Greenleaf advanced the idea that leadership rests on a state of being, not of doing. Joseph Jaworski moves a step further.⁸ The leader is he who decides to make choices that serve life. This kind of leadership, usually associated with individuals like Gandhi or Martin Luther King, he asserts, is now available to us all. We need to shift from the idea of exceptional individuals with innate leadership qualities to bringing forth leadership qualities in everyone. This is so because we are facing the need to create collectively, and to collectively shape our destiny. Under this lens, leadership is the ability to shape the future, or as Otto Scharmer would say, about sensing which future wants to emerge from our shared efforts. By understanding reality differently, we can let new futures emerge.

Leadership is thus more of a behavior than a role, and that role can be satisfied by different people at different times. The leader is she who most of all embodies the values of the organization. She is also the one who can most effectively help it look at itself, by embracing new ways of thinking. And key to a new thinking is the realization that we live in a world of possibilities rather than limitations.

Leadership and capacity for communication go hand in hand. Being able to listen is, according to J. Jaworski, one of the most important capacities of a leader. A true leader has the capacity to inspire, to communicate to people that they matter and have something important to give. Listening extends further to lending attention to the social environment and the time in which we live, to listen to the “future as it emerges.” The role of leaders, adds Juanita Brown, is “to tend the garden of strategic conversations and make sure that this type of planting and harvesting happens throughout their unit or their organization.”⁹ Such is the role of communication in the new enterprise that this voice is echoed by many others. “Strategizing depends on creating a rich and complex web of conversations that cuts across previously isolated pockets of knowledge and creates new and unexpected combinations of insight,” adds Gary Hammel of the London School of Economics.¹⁰

J. Jaworski has offered us key insights about leadership in conjunction with biography, through a unique book in which he refers to his capacity to embody leadership and how it grew from key life experiences.¹¹ Jaworski was initially a successful lawyer in a growing firm. He was used to success and had everything that outwardly constitutes the perfect life, but was, however, quite unhappy. The new leadership he was seeking was completely intertwined with a new way of being in the world, with finding more about himself.

This desire for change received its impulse when Colonel Jaworski, Joe’s father, took on the assignment of chief prosecutor in the Watergate affair. The shock that the nation

underwent was amplified in Joe's instance by the proximity to the events and the way in which his father shared all his perplexities with him. After a painful divorce, Jaworski undertook a conscious spiritual search, exploring the thoughts of Richard D. Bach, Rollo May, Erich Fromm, and others. Starting on this new path, he had the opportunity to go to Chartres, where a profound spiritual shift awaited him. Within the famous cathedral he "felt unity with the world around [him]." Intending to visit the site for an hour, he ended up staying for an entire day. In his words: "I experienced the most unusual feeling, a sort of ringing in my ears and entire head. . . . It was as if I were in a different energy field altogether. I had experienced that feeling many times out in the wilderness, but this was the first time it happened to me in a structure built by human hands." Here he also started thinking about freedom in an additional way: "freedom to follow my life's purpose with all the commitment I could muster . . . without making it happen."¹²

In a meeting his business friend, Tom Fatjo, told him that he had to give his dream his complete attention, but Joe turned his back on it. After the burial of his sister's young son David—preceded by intense grieving and empathy for his sister—as he looked at the top of the casket he remembers, "I could swear that I saw David sitting on top of the casket. . . . In a firm voice he said, 'Go for it!' I know it must have been my imagination, but I can see it as clearly now as I did then."¹³

Finally he took the commitment of leaving the firm. On impulse he called David Bohm, the famous physicist, who agreed to spend the entire following afternoon with him. This was, in Jaworski's estimate, a life-changing encounter. The conversation spanned the nature of reality, time, and matter. Its contents matured over the years and helped him reorganize his inner world around some very new and revolutionary ideas. This led at first to a fortuitous meeting with his future wife, matured from a lightning decision taken at an airport terminal. Later, reading an article by Tom Cronin—"Rx for Leadership in America"—he decided to call him on impulse. Cronin advised him to call John W. Gardner (former secretary of Health, Education and Welfare), and the latter recommended Joe see Harlan Cleveland (former ambassador to NATO). In this fashion he assembled all of his team, and in less than three weeks he had also raised \$750,000. Through his American Leadership Forum, Jaworski wanted to bring together leaders from various sectors and from all around the country to develop new skills and strengthen their personal connections in order to work together on public issues. Over time, ALF established chapters around the country and worked on initiatives at the local level.

The new venture was centered around the realization that leaders can wake up to the idea that they can make a difference. Its curriculum was truly revolutionary for the time. It required each candidate to face their deepest fears, and in the process develop deep personal connections with their colleagues. The experience had an important turning point in a six-day wilderness experience, testing the individual's faculties of observation, self-reliance, willingness to be vulnerable, and ability to rely on and build up team spirit.

The path that Jaworski initiated with the ALF ideal in 1980 has been perfected in many ways in the development and refinement of organizational learning. We will refer to it in its most encompassing way and in a wide array of modalities in what has been dubbed "Theory U," all the while referring to more pointed and specific approaches.

Theory U

Theory U is an unusual and highly unique approach to organizational development, offering equal doses of theory and practice.¹⁴ Looking at organizational learning through this lens enables us to open a key of understanding under which to view a larger archetype encompassing many variations, such as World Cafés or Future Search, Appreciative Inquiry, Peacemaking Circles, and more. The latter are more specific approaches, all in all confirming the archetypal vision embodied in Theory U.

Theory U's procedures for shifting the social field are basically the same whether at the individual (micro), the group (meso), the organizational (macro), or the social and global systems (mundo). The shift can be observed forming in small groups and networks of people, through new ways of thinking, conversing, and moving into action; finally, at the individual level, through a different and more complete quality of connection to one's true self.

At the four levels mentioned above, we find four corresponding universal metaprocesses:

- thinking
- languaging (conversation/communication)
- structuring (organizing)
- coordinating (forming collective global action)

In the new kind of learning that Theory U explores, we are challenged to “learn from a future that has not yet happened and from continually discovering our part in bringing that future to pass.” This is especially important in an organizational environment going through constant and highly unpredictable change, as is often the case in the new millennium.

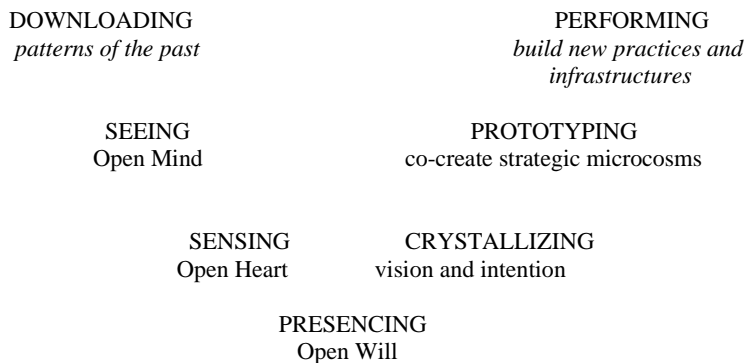


Diagram 1: (modified from *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, p. 38)

The U can be first be summarized in a rather schematic fashion in relation to its overall shape—the left side, the bottom, and the right side (see diagram 1):

- left side of the U: observe, observe, observe in order to become one with the world: sensing. PAST
- bottom of the U: retreat and reflect in order to allow inner knowledge to emerge: presencing. PAST meeting the FUTURE

- right side of the U: act swiftly and with a natural flow. In realizing the emerging future, intentions are both engaged and simultaneously detached.
FUTURE

Moving Down the U

Moving down the U means accessing deeper and deeper levels of awareness. There is nothing magical or new to these. They are in fact those levels of awareness from which natural leaders have instinctively acted over the centuries, but without gaining a clear awareness of what they were doing. Theory U simply makes this learning more explicit and more accessible to all.

Moving up the U means accessing forces that go beyond our own individual or group resources. This new way of organizational learning and acting is best supported by commitment to personal growth. Elements of this cultivation are study, meditation, and commitment to service, but engaging in these practices is not a prerequisite. Theory U and a host of growing practices no longer tie change to exceptional individuals alone, but to groups, institutions, networks, etc. that take their future in hand with some courage and determination.

Let us now look at the U process in more detail, in its seven steps:

- Downloading
- Seeing
- Sensing
- Presencing
- Crystallizing
- Prototyping
- Performing

Downloading

Downloading is the name given to the way of operating in which we listen only to what serves to confirm our usual way of thinking. We hear what is said without modifying the input we wanted to give in the first place. This can be done with great outward politeness, conforming to what the culture of the group or organization has somehow institutionalized. We instinctively know how far we can go and we work from within these set limits in conformity with social rules tacitly and implicitly accepted.

In downloading we see the typical barriers to organizational learning:

- not recognizing what we see due to lack of observation skills
- not seeing what we do and the impact that it has on others and on the whole
- not saying what we think for fear of exceeding the margins of tolerance of the system
- not doing what we say because we did not fully agree in the first place

Downloading means operating from the perspective of being at the center of our world, and looking from the center of our being outward. In a deeper sense we may say that we are kept prisoners of ourselves, our own biases, fears, and prejudices. Stopping downloading is in fact the precondition for entering the U process.

Seeing: Using the “Open Mind”

The shift from downloading to seeing implies being open to hearing discomfoting facts. Three principles can help us move in this direction:

- clarifying questions and intent: good questions play an important role
- moving into the contexts that matter (e.g., context of customers or recipients of services, suppliers, partners, etc.) and their attending needs
- suspending judgment and connecting to wonder

In seeing we enter a place of dialogue, or at least the first stage of it, what we could call debate. When we decide to look and truly see, new powers are summoned to our help. People will enter the space of change if they can participate in seeing the larger picture.

Practices that help move the field into seeing are:

- brainstorming in order to defer judgment
- cultivating interest in what others with similar intentions do (e.g., talk to people with high level of expertise in the field)
- collecting interviews in which people share their stories
- working in small-groups, especially where the culture of “being nice” is very strong.

In seeing, our individual attention moves from the center of our being to the boundary with the collective, the organization.

Sensing: Using the “Open Heart”

This is the step where perception starts to happen from the whole field and, as a result, individuals start realizing how they participate in building the common reality and start taking responsibility for their common predicament. This is also the stage in which the group can fully start thinking together. Dialogue evolves from the level of debate (listening to the facts) in seeing, to a greater heart quality (empathic listening) in sensing.

The above step encourages the collapse of the boundary between the observer and observed, and the observer begins to see himself as part of a larger system. A container that sustains the practice of sensing focuses on four levels:

- prepare a *physical space* that is inviting and not distracting; care for physical needs
- tend to the *time-space*, corresponding to the creation of an energetic agenda that facilitates the movement through the U
- create *relational space*: facilitators establishing relationships with the participants prior to the meeting, having clear roles outlined, and paying attention to process
- strengthen *intentional space*: invite clarity of purpose within a core group

Additional key principles that support a collective shift of the group into sensing are:

- *practice “deep diving”*: this is no longer about creating dialogue around facts but about developing empathy (e.g., by inviting first-person sharing)
- *redirect attention*: stay with each example offered and build upon the previous ones an emerging picture
- *develop a sense for pattern*: model and invite people in sensing the emergence of patterns and trends

- *practice deep listening dialogue*: an example is what is developed in Nonviolent Communication
- *open the heart*: foster the capacity for appreciation; this can be done through expression of appreciation between co-workers.

Various practices can move a group from seeing into sensing:

- *breaking in small groups* to tackle one aspect of a question and reporting back to the whole group. The idea here is that the whole is reflected in the parts, like a hologram.
- *taking of interviews*. The transcripts generated are given to meeting participants. People in turn take out selected passages they find most representative of systemic problems. Interviewers share with stakeholders passages from what touched them most.
- *creating organs for collective sensing*, such as Future Search Conferences, the World Café format, or Appreciative Inquiry for exploring questions that matter to the group/institution. These will actually also help move further down the U.

A group that wants to move into sensing within a context of a retreat or workshop has to articulate a clear intention and core questions around which the intention is organized. In the process, the participants offer comments only to place the question into context, not to voice opinions. After taking as much time as needed, a picture starts to emerge. This is strengthened if the facilitator encourages silence. Themes start to emerge and the facilitator helps the group go from secondary to primary themes. Finally the contents of the primary themes can be distilled in accord with what strikes the deepest chord with the participants.

The group will start to ask itself: What is it that wants to emerge? What is keeping the system from working at full potential? Who are those excluded from it? What could reconnect the system to its original goals?

Presencing: Using the “Open Will”

Presencing can be compared in the image of the U to the space between in-breathing (going down the U) and the out-breathing (going up the U). The mystery of the bottom of the U is that once this special kind of connection is established, nothing immediate happens, at least in the moment. It’s just a connection that has to be maintained and developed in order to allow a group to tune into future possibilities.

Presencing is the act of connecting with the source of highest future possibility and bringing it into the now. In that moment we access our highest self, and the boundaries between three types of presence collapse:

- the presence of the past
- the presence of the future
- the presence of one’s authentic self

What counts at the bottom of the U are not ideas but practices! Presencing is not different from what acts as the source of creativity of all true art. Various concrete practices make possible this unique yet fleeting encounter with our real self, individually and collectively. An example is offered below in the case of Future Search Conferences.

In presencing our individual attention moves further than in sensing. It reaches further beyond the boundaries of the organization and it crosses into new dimensions of reality beyond the present. The bottom of the U is such an encompassing experience that everybody has a deeply personal way of expressing it. “When I am part of a social field that crosses the threshold at the bottom of the U, it feels as if I am participating in the birth of a new world. It’s a profound, quieting experience in that I feel as if I’ve been touched by eternal beauty. There is a deep opening of my higher Self,” says Betty Sue Flowers in the book *Presence*. “Moving through the bottom of the U is becoming aware of the incredible beauty of life itself, of becoming re-enchanted with the world,” Joseph Jaworski offers. And further: “When the sort of commitment you are talking about happens, you feel as if you’re fulfilling your destiny, but you also feel as if you’re freer than you’ve ever been in your life. It’s a huge paradox.” Otto Scharmer explains, “For me, the core of presencing is waking up together—waking up to who we really are by linking with and acting from our highest future Self—and by using the Self as a vehicle for bringing forth new worlds.”¹⁵

What appears between the lines from the quotes above is that at the bottom of the U we can experience being two, rather than the one persona we most usually identify with. We can recognize a dialogue between our daily self and our most eternal Self. The real questions at the bottom of the U become therefore: “Who am I?” and “What is my purpose in life?” How effectively we can engage on the ascending side of the U will depend upon how we can answer those two questions.

Presencing implies a complete shift in the orientation to our personal will. The future has intentionality, and presencing can also be said to be pre-sensing and bringing into presence the highest future potential. This is what Martin Buber would call the future that “stands in need of you in order to be born.”

Some key practices help us to move into this little known and used, but very effective inner space:

- *encouraging a conscious practice of silence*. In profound silence a sense of connection and collective creation emerges.
- *encouraging a place in which more people can take risks*. Presencing is often initiated by anyone in the audience who is able to speak from a place of great honesty and courage, or express a core truth that everybody resonates with.
- *creating circles of support*. In *Theory U*, an example is given of the *Circle of Seven*. The seven women of this group have the feeling that they have the possibility of invoking a higher being in their midst. When that is the case they feel that they are both fully individual and yet do not matter as individuals alone. The individual in fact feels more attuned to her true self. When what they call the “Circle Being” is present, time slows down and people do not feel the urge to speak casually. Unique bonds are formed among the participants and significant accomplishments made possible. There is often a moment of great silence before the shift begins.
- *developing collective cultivation practices*. An example of this is the cultivation of an ethos of communication such as can be done through the introduction of the practice of Nonviolent Communication

The above measures encourage a yet deeper level of listening that we can call “generative listening.” Here we are no longer just deeply connected to other human beings—we are also present to the larger dimensions of our social environment, and to the emerging future that involves all those who are present.

Before moving into the ascending arm of the U, I want to offer a concrete image of a social technology that can make presencing a reality: the so-called Future Search Conferences. But the same could be said about Appreciative Inquiry, World Cafés, or Peacemaking Circles and many other processes. Through a highly formalized technology such as a Future Search Conference, we can render the notion of presencing more concrete and tangible and underline the preconditions necessary for truly coming in dialogue with the future that wants to emerge.

An Illustration: Future Search

Future Search is a technique that has been developed by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff.¹⁶ It has evolved from and shares similarities with Search Conference (Eric Trist and Fred Emery), a precursor of the technique; Dialogue Group (David Bohm); Open Space Technology (Garrison Owen, 1992); and Participative Strategic Planning Conferences (Kathleen Dannemiller and Robert Jacobs, 1993).

The format consists in preparing the ground for as diverse and meaningful a group of stakeholders as possible to share a three-day conference around a theme of great meaning for the future of a business, organization, or community. In a sequence of three days—an afternoon followed by a full day and another morning—individuals look at the organization or issue at hand from the perspective of past, present, and future. Finally time is given for action planning that will crystallize the intentions set through the conference into the future. We will return to these in more detail. There are three wide categories of use for a Future Search Conference:

- helping stakeholders create a shared future vision for organization or community
- helping stakeholders discover shared intentions and take responsibility for their own plans
- helping stakeholders implement an already existent vision

The Future Search model works best with groups from thirty to one hundred, with an optimal amount of sixty-four or fewer. The limitation stems from wanting each group of stakeholders to hear from the other groups. So, it does depend on how many people can sit comfortably at a table that allows them to listen to as many other stakeholders as possible. Groups of sixty-four are ideal since each stakeholder can be represented in eight tables of eight individuals each.

Future Search rests on some basic principles, seemingly simple but also very foundational. The process allows everybody to experience change at the organizational/community level without having to previously master any new skills. Nobody is asked to give up their beliefs or change their minds. It does not seek to change people, but rather the conditions under which they interact and relate to each other. Individuals find the opportunity to tune into different parts of themselves, parts that they do not usually experience and put to use.

Everyone in the process has to be equally empowered. The facilitators devolve as much responsibility as possible to groups and individuals. This is done by shared leadership within the groups and by self-managed tasks given to them. In a group there is a discussion leader, a timekeeper, a recorder, and a reporter. When there are logistical or other problems, the facilitator helps the participants come up with their own solution.

The famous maxim “think globally/act locally” is also central to the unfolding of the conference. At the beginning the group looks at global trends because these affect local conditions. At the end of the three days, action planning closes the loop, showing how local choices affect the larger whole. The participants make a link between the personal and the global in the first day when they see the global, organizational (or community), and personal timelines side by side. The Search enables the meeting between self, community (organization), and world, not to mention the meeting with the emerging future.

Other than the above there are some very general overall basic ground-rules:

- all ideas are valid
- listen to each other
- observe time frames
- seek common ground and action
- differences and problems are acknowledged, not worked on

Finally, key to the success of Future Search is the repeated alternation of complementary kinds of activities or rhythms. Each of the five tasks of a conference is approached in three kinds of work of approximately forty-five minutes each: information base, finding of patterns/trends, and presentation to the large group

The above goes close in hand with alternating formats: working alone, in small groups, or in the large groups. A subtle but key element of the Search is the alternation of awake time and “soak time,” which explains why three days for a total of sixteen hours of work are much more efficient than two packed days. In fact, the night is so important that breaks are taken in the middle of a task that is then resumed the next day. By breaking in the middle of the activity, Future Search improves learning and makes starting in the morning easier. Finally, throughout the conference participants alternate between looking outward (first day and action planning) and looking at themselves both as individuals and as stakeholders.

There are some other minimal, basic prerequisite conditions for success:

- the whole system must be present in the room: this encourages the formation of as many new relationships as possible. The greater the diversity of encounters, the greater the potential for innovation.
- focus on common ground and future, not on problems and conflicts. Common ground is the prerequisite for action planning. However, knowing exactly where people stand is a factor that strengthens collaboration.
- public responsibility for follow up. People are encouraged to sign up for action groups and intentions are declared publicly.

Preparation for the conference is already an important stage for setting the conditions of success, key among all of them the selection of stakeholders. These are in general:

- people with information
- people with authority and resources to act

- people who are affected by the organization/community's actions
- other criteria that the organizers themselves may find important

Structure of a Future Search

As stated above, a Future Search Conference most typically involves from thirty to one hundred people, with an optimal number of sixty-four. The structure involves a movement from past to present to future, alternating work in mixed groups, stakeholder groups, or self-selected groups. It is based on five tasks of two to four hours each, spread over three days for a total of sixteen hours. The model rests on the sequence past–present–future–action; from past trends to present potential to desirable (ideal) future and its implementation.

FIRST DAY

PM

- review of the past (mixed groups)
- exploration of the present: external trends (stakeholder groups)
-

SECOND DAY

AM

- trends continued
- focus on present: taking responsibility (stakeholder groups)

PM

- creation of ideal future scenarios (mixed groups)
- identification of common ground

THIRD DAY

AM

- confirmation of common ground
- action plans (stakeholder groups and self-selected groups)
-

Let us now review the succession of days and tasks in more detail.

Day 1, Afternoon: PAST–PRESENT

FIRST TASK: Focus on the Past (mixed groups)

Butcher paper is set on the walls with title themes: “personal,” “global,” and “x” (community, organization, issue), and dates placed along a timeline every five or ten years. The three timelines are aligned chronologically. People seek events and milestones inwardly, write them on their notes, then transfer them onto the butcher paper. The activity involves lots of moving around. At this point in the day, transitioning to the present is important so that people don't lose sense of purpose.

SECOND TASK: Focus on the Present (stakeholder groups)

This is the stage of the building of the “mind map.” The methodology was developed in the mid-1980s. It is a way to allow ownership of the organization's “collective mess.” It makes visible a broad pattern of concerns for everybody together. The conference task is

written in the center of the map. On the sheet are mapped all the trends that converge on the theme. Each new trend is added with a line of a different color, and accompanied with concrete examples. The purpose of the mind map is for all to face the confusion and live with the anxiety that is generated from it. With mind mapping, strong feelings invariably come up to the surface. After the map is complete, people place seven dots on it, color-matched by stakeholder groups. This is a visual tool for the dialogue the next day. Since the dots show which group cares about what, people can start seeing patterns out of the mess; they also start to think and claim ownership. The confusion helps people realize that no person or group has the absolute truth and that solutions have to be sought together.

Day 2, Morning: PRESENT

SECOND TASK: Focus on the Present (stakeholder groups)

The whole group returns to the mind map. Here are highlighted the branches that have significant clusters of dots, that can also be listed separately on a flip chart. There is a large group discussion without interpretation in front of the mind map before returning to work in small stakeholder groups. At this stage stakeholders make their own version of the mind map and focus on what issues they find more important. They are asked to look at what they are doing and what they are not doing. They can return to sensing and owning, together with taking responsibility for what they feel they have achieved (“prouds”) and what they feel they have fallen short of (“sorries”). When the groups share their prouds and their sorries, hope starts to emerge from the previous state of confusion. By expressing publicly the perception of their own behavior and owning it, the stakeholder groups also go beyond blaming and denial.

Day 2, Afternoon: FUTURE

THIRD TASK: Future (mixed groups)

Individuals return to mixed groups to prepare ideal future scenarios. The groups are asked to place themselves ten to twenty years into the future as if it were happening right now, by providing images of what has been achieved and what obstacles can be overcome. It is important to act out the future one wants as if it had already happened. This provides a contrast and reason for closing the gap with the past and creating the motivation for seeking to bridge it.

In mixed groups the whole conference notes three focus areas: common future themes, potential projects, and areas of unresolved differences. Lists are first made by the small groups, then merged and posted on the wall. People are also asked to provide creative presentations of their scenarios. The spectators are asked to listen to the presentations and write themselves notes about patterns that they see emerge from what they hear. The group is now feeling on top of the world, a situation they could not have reached had they not been in the depth of confusion previously.

FOURTH TASK: Future: Finding Common Ground

People are given time to revisit their places of agreement (from the day before) before the willingness to commit is formed. Groups return to three flip charts: the common future, mostly listing general values and aspirations; potential projects; and the unresolved differences that will not be worked on. Lists are cut into strips so that the participants can put related items together later.

Day 3, Morning: FUTURE and ACTION PLANNING

FOURTH TASK: Future

The group reviews the lists, leaving aside areas of conflict. This is the time to decide to work on common ground. The group gathers at the wall and individuals group similar themes by moving the strips around until they feel satisfied that all related items are placed together. At this point anxiety rises again. Now is the time to decide to act on what is possible rather than looking at the past. This means being willing to start working on the future without permission from above, or negotiation.

FIFTH TASK: Action Planning (stakeholder or self-selected groups)

The group now moves into action planning. Future Search generally proposes two rounds of planning. In organizations people generally meet in stakeholder groups or already formed taskforces to begin planning. In communities or issue groups they may go once more through the stakeholder groups or immediately build voluntary coalitions.

In the first round of planning, people start planning their actions, both what to do and with whom to carry it out. Then they report to the larger group. After the first round a chance is offered to reorganize in any way the groups wish. Individuals are asked to “place a stake in the ground,” to publicly state on which issue they want to work, so that others may join if interested.

Reviewing the whole, we can see the patterns emerge more clearly. The journey starts with despair and climbing out of it (seeing). It then moves into acquiring empathy for other stakeholders and taking responsibility (sensing); from there into future scenarios (presencing). At this point there is the danger of sliding back into the known past, instead of letting oneself move into the future and start climbing the other side of the U. Another time of confusion follows in the transition between ideal futures to action planning.

Future Search does not seek to reduce complexity; on the contrary, it is acceptable to let people be overwhelmed for a time. This complexity is made bearable and tempered by the encompassing potential offered by the variety of stakeholders. The more groups included, the rationale goes, the larger the potential for new solutions to emerge.

Anxiety is seen as an important and useful factor. There is no need to alleviate or speed through moments of uncertainty and anxiety. Without anxiety the process would not move forward as it does. Chaos and confusion have a stimulating role. In contentment we accept things as they are; when we admit confusion and disorder—A. A.’s “powerlessness”—we open up to new opportunities. The facilitator has to know how to stand in confusion, rather than resort to the temptation of offering comfort, and in fact invite the participants to stay in the “confusion room” a little longer than they are willing to. Participants need to experience fully, avoiding the trap of retreating and rationalizing. Given the chance, people realize that they can live with polarities, such as their positive

and negative feelings, and still find common ground. Every time a group goes through a new threshold of uncertainty and anxiety, new energy is unleashed.

As we see from Task 5, defined as action planning, Future Search does not stop at presencing. It would not be effective, nor worth the time investment if it did. The stage of crystallizing is already very present and that in itself allows to launch the germs of prototyping. How this will unfold lays outside the scope of a Future Search.

What has been illustrated through the process of a Future Search could be repeated through the practices of World Café, Appreciative Inquiry, or Peacemaking Circles, to name just a few. World Café is a practice based upon seven principles that can be conjugated in a quite flexible manner.¹⁷ The key ideas are: setting a context by clarifying purpose and inviting the key stakeholders; creating a hospitable space that invites to dialogue; exploring powerful questions that matter and that unearth assumptions, and move the participants forward; encouraging everyone's contribution; cross-pollinating and connecting different perspectives; listening for patterns, insights, and emerging questions; and harvesting collective discoveries. Practically speaking, this is done by setting up café-style rounds of conversations between sets of four or five participants. The Café generally consists of three rounds of twenty to thirty minutes each, followed by a dialogue among the whole group. The number and length of the rounds varies depending on the focus and intent. In the basic module, in each successive round one member stays at the table of origin, while the others move to other tables. Participants are invited not only to share verbally, but also to write and draw on paper set over the tablecloth. Each one is asked to hold or carry what emerged from their conversation to the successive conversation. The format of the table conversation is alternated with times of reflection and the larger sharing in which new insights, discoveries, and new questions can emerge. World Café offers a format that is very flexible—in fact, continuously evolving—which allows anything from small groups to very large ones.

The techniques quoted above—Future Search, World Cafés, Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space Technology, Peacemaking Circles, etc.—can be used alone or in combination with each other.¹⁸

We will now return to Theory U to acquire a clearer understanding of how presencing can be capitalized upon and be made a solid ground for stages of organizational transformation, ultimately leading to new infrastructures and to a wholly reformed organization.

After presencing we move into the right hand of the U, but the whole of the ascent is only possible through a constant return to and connection with the state of mind of presencing. Moving through the right hand of the U is about reintegrating the wisdom of the will, heart, and mind in the context of practical applications. In organizational terms, the new usually initiates with an emotion or feeling; the feeling lets a new idea emerge; the idea or insight is inserted into a context; and only then can you develop the form that links insight and context. “The rational mind is usually the last participant on the scene,” concludes Otto Scharmer. Here we face three organizational enemies: executing without improvisation and mindfulness, endless reflection without a will to act, and talking without a connection to source and action.

Moving up the U

Once the connection with presencing is established, it needs to be maintained and developed in order to tune into future possibilities. From now on we need to keep presencing in order to move up the right side of the U.

Crystallizing

Crystallizing means sustaining true and continued presencing and starting to operate from that level of new awareness. It facilitates the emergence of a living imagination of the future. Peter Senge calls it a “practice of grace.” Joy is most often present, but otherwise it’s a feeling of aliveness and presence to the moment.

Key principles of crystallizing are:

- *letting come*: it is important to have completely let go of the old beforehand
- *inviting the larger community*: including all stakeholders.
- *creating an ad hoc infrastructure*: e. g., a one- to two-day workshop for sensing and crystallizing.
- *building infrastructures across institutional boundaries*: establish small groups of diverse and highly motivated individuals that could form a core group, and create deep connections between them.

Some facilitating elements of practice are the following:

- *brainstorming* about initiatives to take
- *practices of silence*: e. g., field walks done in silence.
- *enhancing the quality of connection*, especially between facilitators.

This stage has already been reached to varying degrees by the practice of Future Search Conference, World Café, or others.

Prototyping

Prototyping marks the real beginning of what can be called co-creating. After securing the previous two steps this is the stage of exploring the future by acting. This is the art of “action research,” and a way to integrate the knowing of head, heart, and hand. The idea has been expressed as “failing often [on a small scale] to succeed sooner.” Here, more than ever, practice on a daily basis is paramount. In fact, the key element is to detect the opportunity and act in an instant, and this is the very heart of moving up the U.

Prototyping is done by creating actionable solutions, implementing them and reviewing them quickly. To have a chance to succeed, the new must be sheltered and a cocoon formed around it. In fact, prototyping can start in a small, unpretentious context, and need not be advertised loudly. In order to ensure success, one can focus on working with experienced practitioners in places where there is an obvious incongruity and great need.

To sustain the momentum of prototyping it is useful to:

- establish daily team practices at the beginning of the day, possibly with the use of silence
- pay great attention to the composition of the core team; select the prototyping project with great attention to its relevance, meaningfulness of the innovation introduced, appropriateness to the people involved, feasibility, and ability to

replicate; set in place the infrastructure for the prototyping project, its projected milestones, and review processes.

The direction of change impressed upon the whole field constitutes the next step to what M. Wheatley calls 'letting the system see more of itself.' At this stage the connection reaches into what we could call a stage of self-realization. It is aptly defined in the last stage of Appreciative Inquiry. The four stages used by AI are called Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. In broad lines they cover the aspects of Past (Discovery), present projected into the future (Dream), listening to the future that wants to emerge (Design), and into concrete action steps (Destiny). This is what the practitioners draw as conclusions from what emerges in the Destiny phase, which originally used to be called Delivery.¹⁹ The old term "did not convey the sense of liberation that the AI practitioners were experiencing." They presently equate this phase to a stage of positive protest or a strategy for positive subversion. This stage encourages people to turn to those who have the knowledge and the enthusiasm, rather than those who have the position and title. This is why it liberates destiny. The writers conclude: "AI can accelerate the nonlinear interaction of organizational breakthroughs." "At some point, apparently minor positive discoveries connect in an accelerating manner. Suddenly, quantum change, a jump from one state to the next that cannot be achieved through incremental change alone, becomes possible." The new kind of learning "goes beyond adapting to challenges and solving problems. Instead such learning focuses on imagining possibilities and on generating new ways of looking at the world. . . . an ability to see radical possibilities."

Performing

The prototype must now be embedded in an institutional infrastructure that allows it to grow and operate from a larger system. For small groups and institutions this infrastructure may simply be a set of supporting places, social practices (Nonviolent Communication, Future Search Conferences, World Café, etc.), with the accompanying rhythms that allow encounter and its unfolding.

The larger the institutions—whether a transnational corporation or a global NGO—the more presencing and all the following steps imply being in dialogue with the larger social environment. This is where a new vision of the social future can start to emerge. From this vantage point we can start to fathom a future that has no point of contact with mere political thinking or any other abstract thinking of the past. In order to visualize the scale at which performing operates, we will refer to the following diagram. The three intersecting circles inside relate to the main functions of the institution. The larger circles refer to the areas of the greater social field: the economic (business), the political (governance at its various levels), and what this book defines as the cultural and identifies as the growing field of action in the creation of new values by Civil Society.

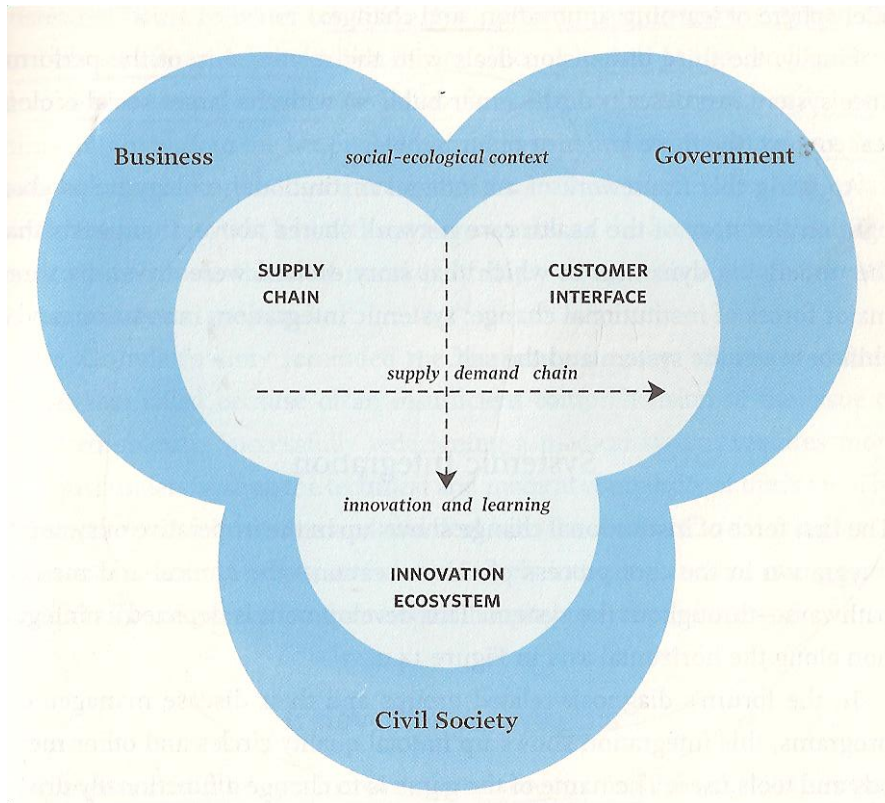


Diagram 2 (from *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, p. 219)

The larger the size of the organization, the more its focus of interest and reach will be a microcosm of society as a whole. In a sense, concludes Scharmer, “organizations are not one but three.” This is shown inside the circle by the three intersecting circles characterizing, respectively, the supply chain or manufacturing function; the customer interface or delivery function; and finally in the continuous pressure to create more value, the third circle defines the innovation function (see diagram 2).

Together with the three spheres and flowing from them are three axes:

- horizontal axis: stream of value creation in the supply-demand chain
- vertical axis: parallel streams of innovation and learning
- surrounding (enveloping) axis: living connection to the evolving social context. This third axis defines the relationship of the inner circles to the outer circles, without which change at the meso and macro levels is most often frustrated at present.

The horizontal axis needs to integrate the growing levels of emerging complexity through approaches that integrate all stakeholder interests. The innovation function (vertical axis) needs to work across functional boundaries, here too integrating the needs of all stakeholders. If these two views alone were to be considered the system would soon reach a limit and still be unable to see itself. The example of the American health care system makes this imperative quite graphic. Once it has been discerned that the system as a whole works downstream of the five causes of illness—smoking, drinking, overeating, stress, and lack of exercise—in order to palliate to their effects, the obvious shift consists

in seeing from the perspective to the larger whole and start working upstream of the causes of illness. This is what Scharmer calls the relationship between the system and the self, the capacity of the system to ask the larger questions, through continued return to presencing and deeper qualities of attention and commitment.

In this larger context effective learning structures are of major importance. They rest on some key ideas:

- inclusiveness of all stakeholders, as we have illustrated in concrete processes
- primacy of expertise: professional, personal (quality of leadership), and relational (attention to communication)
- application of specific tools and fields of practice for the above areas of expertise
- learning structures for sharing and learning: in effect, new infrastructures that allow the system to travel through the steps of the U more consciously
- enhancement of the quality of connection in relationships
- encouragement of actors of change who have passion

We can now attempt to draw some inspirations for the next movement to the macro or global level.

The history of modern times after the Renaissance can be distinguished in the rise of four forms of governance and social structures. The rise of the nation-state has brought into being the public sector and the centralized model of authority. Socialism has revived this form beyond its time. Moving against the rigidity of the mercantilistic idea, driven by the nation-state, the private sector arose. Now the system acquired more dynamism and was able to adjust to the response of the periphery through commercial competition and markets. This innovation was responsible for industrialization, new economic expansion, and unheard-of growth. It translated in the rise of the liberal market system.

Unbridled economic growth was accompanied through the ills that the present world knows only too well. Social and environmental costs are externalized from the system, causing increasing poverty and environmental degradation. Until the end of the century the various social sectors mitigated the effects of unregulated economic growth through labor negotiations, and social and environmental regulatory steps in what has been dubbed the Welfare State, the third form of governance. In the reality of the global market this approach is hardly possible any longer. Proof of it is the fact that larger and larger segments of the world population are externalized from the equation, and so is the global environment. No regulatory steps, even at the international level, will be able to confront the surge of global warming.

At present a new actor has entered the scene, global Civil Society and its network of NGOs, many of them global in scope. For the first time, at the end of the millennium, it has started to acquire consciousness of itself. This third force effectively introduces to the negotiating table a new social actor: public opinion. At this level we find no longer the state or the market alone, nor negotiation of selected stakeholders, but larger and more inclusive stakeholder dialogue. At one level this can simply continue the geometry of power of the negotiated settlements of the Welfare State. On another level a shift is possible to a higher stage of dialogue and infrastructural innovation. At the communication level this will mean a shift from negotiations at communication levels

two and three with negotiations resting on relative force of the represented parties, to the generative dialogue of level four in which all stakeholders have equal importance.

At present Civil Society faces the risk of being co-opted in a superficial and instrumental fashion. This would amount to token concessions, rather than true and full dialogue. If the dialogue is such that the agenda and process are transparent and open to all stakeholders, new social actors are effectively empowered to participate in the decision-making process. In the event of true participation and full equality, a stakeholder process would resemble the one we have illustrated at length in the Future Search Conference. When the conversation moves to level four of presencing, new emerging futures can be sensed, recognized, and willed into being. In World Cafés these places of breakthrough or emergence are often recognized as moments of magic, and with expressions as “the magic in the middle of the table” or the “voice in the center of the room,” implying something that goes beyond the ordinary logic of human deliberation. This realization goes hand in hand with the necessity to move from a mechanistic worldview to the understanding of the enterprise or community as a living system, coevolving with the emergent future.

When the stage of presencing is reached, this will be spontaneously accompanied by the desire for and creation of the seeds of new institutional infrastructure. To sustain a deeper level of transformation, society will need new kinds of infrastructures for collective presencing and cocreation.

The changes toward the integration of the three areas of social reality would require, among other things, that

- the market sector open up to the reality of costs that it externalizes (environmental consequences, cultural degradation, etc.)
- the public sector enlarge the sphere of participatory decision-making processes (referenda, public dialogue)
- Civil Society moves from fighting the consequences of the system at their final point towards inaugurating new forms in cross-sector pioneering initiatives upstream.

Moving up the right side of the U leads to the creation of a new social reality. The trajectory from presencing to performing evolves from a practice of repeated presencing in the step of crystallizing. This can be compared to maintaining a new consciousness. It is also a way of collectively exercising new faculties. In prototyping, the organization steps into new territory. Concretely speaking, this leads to new steps taken in an unprecedented way and, when successful, to stages of qualitative change and growth. Finally, performing means creating a wholly new organization that is able to recreate and master in a conscious fashion the stages of the U process. Genuinely new infrastructures make possible the practices of co-sensing (left side of the U), co-presencing, and co-creating (right side of the U). When the process happens on a large scale, or when many organizations engage in its principles, the whole social environment is affected.

We have finished the exploration of the experiential tools for individual and social transformation with a broader phenomenological portrayal of the process in archetypal terms with Theory U. This may be a larger process present in everything we have

portrayed so far, either partly or fully. An example from the place of our beginning will suffice: Twelve Steps. Obviously the archetype acquires a different dimension here since the goal of Twelve Steps is not organizational development but individual regeneration. So, we can rather look at one side of the U as the part that the group contributes to the individual and to the ascending part of the U as the individual's contribution to the shaping of the group, and eventually the organization itself.

The whole life of an alcoholic or addict is an endless, repetitive act of downloading, a denial of reality. Initiating the Twelve Step process means being willing to use the open mind, and this is what is done when we acknowledge our powerlessness and open up to the idea of a higher power (steps one to three). This is just the first breach in the armor that surrounds the addict and that nullifies all his well-meaning efforts. A second significant step comes from the individual involving himself with an open heart in making a moral inventory and letting himself be touched in his feelings through an understanding of the pain he has caused to others (steps three to seven), thereby acquiring new empathy. Finally, at steps eight and nine the candidate jumps into the crucible of the transformation of his will when he goes through the point zero of making himself completely vulnerable and powerless, in making amends to all those he has hurt. This is truly a turning point, equal to presencing. Past and future meet in the willingness to make oneself truly powerless, but new, deeper power emerges that connects an individual with his higher self.

In all the successive stages the individual goes from being supported by the organization to becoming an active supporter and shaper. At step ten what has been taken from the previous stages becomes an ongoing practice. This is what allows presencing to become a source of continuous inspiration, and what we know from the word *crystallizing*. The text speaks of "continuing to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it." The stage of presencing cannot be reached once. It has to be returned to over and over again. Step eleven means fully taking responsibility for our lives and being able to carry others, part of which is the taking up of an active discipline of prayer and meditation. The recovering addict is now putting his shoulder to the wheel, not just for his personal recovery, but for the good of the group and eventually of Twelve Steps itself. This is the equivalent of prototyping, although we should define it here with a different word. Finally there is in step twelve the complete dedication to and adoption in daily life of the goals of Twelve Steps ("carrying the message to alcoholics and practicing the twelve steps in all affairs"), which means contributing to the continuance and regeneration of the group. Not surprisingly, from the accrued effects of all these steps practiced by thousands of individuals over many decades, not only is AA effective in its group work, but it is also very innovative, solid, and efficient in its organizational structure.

Having arrived back where we began we can now formulate some tentative conclusions about the emerging field of experiential spirituality and social technology as a whole.

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- 3) *Breaking Boundaries*, Pattison, (Princeton, NJ: Pattersons/Pacesetter Books, 1996) quoted in *Appreciative Inquiry: Handbook for Leaders of Change*, Second Edition, David L. Cooperrider, Diana Whitney, Jacqueline M. Stavros, (Brunswick, OH: Crown Custom Publishing, Inc., 2008; San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2008), 395.
- 4) Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future*, 329.
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- 9) Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, *The World Cafe: Shaping Our Future Through Conversations That Matter*, (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005), 143.
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- 12) Ibid, p. 38.
- 13) Ibid, p. 70.
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- 16) Marvin R. Weisbord and Sandra Janoff, *Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities*, (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995).
- 17) Brown and David Isaacs, *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures through Conversations That Matter*.
- 18) In an experience reported by the University of Texas, San Antonio, both World Café and Future Search Conference were used with the idea of breaking down organizational barriers, between six executive MBA classes. The six groups held their own “Temperature Check Cafes” and these were followed by an Integration Café from which it was assessed that it would be important to “work in the space between the units.” At this point rather than using a World Café format the six units convened a Future Search Conference of about sixty people from across the units in order to have a whole-system conversation. From the FSC were generated six initiative thrusts. Out of these four were taken to be explored in a subsequent Action Café. (*The World Café: Shaping Our Futures through Conversations That Matter*, 140-143) Another example of collaborative use of techniques is the World Café book itself, whose research, according to the authors, was conducted in the spirit of Appreciative Inquiry. (*The World Café: Shaping Our Futures through Conversations That Matter*, 7) Finally, an example of Appreciative Inquiry is fully illustrated in the case of AMX, an information technology giant using AI in conjunction with Future Search conferences in every region of operation. AI forms the basis of inquiry and the process culminates in a two-three day Future Search Conference. The two are used to accelerate and sustain long-term change. (See: David L. Cooperrider, “Resources for Getting Appreciative Inquiry Started: An Example OD Proposal” in *Appreciative Inquiry: Handbook for Leaders of Change*, 385-393).
- 19) Cooperrider, *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook for Leaders of Change*, Part 2, Chapter 7: “Destiny: What Will Be?”